

THE EXECUTIVE JUDGMENT MESSAGE OF MATTHEW 25:31-46
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper was originally to study statements appearing in Mrs. White's written works relevant to the executive phase of the judgment. As our study has progressed we have leaned more and more toward making the major emphasis of this paper an attempt to determine whether or not the scenes of the judgment, pictured by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46, where He compared His work to that of a shepherd and the people to sheep and goats, represent a literal occurrence or a parabolic portrayal of a general truth. If it is to be accepted as a literal event one must attempt to determine where this event occurs in the sequence of events constituting the concluding phases of the great controversy. Is it to be superimposed on Revelation 20:12-15, or is it to be understood as presenting a compacted picture of what actually occurs in the investigative judgment (this would be then the 'sheep' portion of Matthew 25), and in the post-millennial judgment as recorded in Revelation 20:12-15 (for the 'goats'), or is it to be understood as a judgment occurring independently of these two well known judgments, as Matt. 25:31 would seem to suggest when it declares Christ will sit on His throne and all nations will be gathered before Him when He comes in His glory and all the holy angels with Him? If it stands alone is it pre or post-millennial? It would seem to be obvious, in the light of Revelation 20 and 21, that if this Matt. 25 passage is to be taken literally, as an independent judgment, that the time of its occurring must be pre-millennial because of the reward given to the righteous – the invitation to inherit the kingdom and the reception of life eternal. But if it is a pre-millennial judgment scene, that Christ is describing, if it is to be considered, for example, as occurring at the second coming of Jesus, how is the chronology of 1 Thess. 4:13-17 to be viewed? What would one then understand as being the 'position' of the saints when Paul concludes v. 17 by saying we are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord? Shall one understand "and so shall we ever be with the Lord" to be an equivalent to something like "and we went straight to heaven?" or would this phrase by Paul allow for the judgment scene presented in Matthew 25 by Jesus, to be the chronological 'successor' to "caught up...in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," thus making the sequence, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and off to the judgment?

One must also ask if Jesus' words to the 'goats' in v. 41, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" doesn't require that at least part of this scene be post-millennial, if this passage of Scripture is to be considered a literal description of a literal event. If one answers 'no' to this last question it might be because one is going to suggest that Jesus was picturing a literal judgment to take place at His second coming; that as the righteous were to receive life

eternally then (v. 34), so the wicked (goats) would go away into everlasting punishment then – at the time of Jesus second coming (c.f. v. 46).

This understanding would of course raise the question as to whether one should understand that there are two lakes of fire in which the wicked burn – separated by one thousand years and prepared for different groups – or whether the wicked, if burned at Jesus second coming, do in fact burn twice.

It is with issues like these before us that we undertake the writing of this paper. We will also be keeping in mind the following thoughts from Mrs. White.

“All who choose Christ’s kingdom of love and righteousness and peace, making its interest paramount to all others, are linked to the world above, and every blessing needed for this life is theirs.”¹

The blessing we seek here is a clear and correct understanding of the aspect of the judgment we are going to study.

“It is not enough to know what others have thought or learned about the Bible. Everyone must in the judgment give account of himself to God, and each should now learn for himself what is truth.”²

“A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given.”³

“In giving us His word, God has put us in possession of every truth essential for our salvation. Thousands have drawn water from these wells of life, yet there is no diminishing of the supply. Thousands have set the Lord before them, and by beholding have been changed into the same image. Their spirit burns within them as they speak of His character, telling what Christ is to them, and what they are to Christ. But these searchers have not exhausted these grand and holy themes. Thousands more may engage in the work of searching out the mysteries of salvation. As the life of Christ and the character of His mission are dwelt upon, rays of light will

¹ Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), p. 313. (Hereinafter referred to as D.A.)

² Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), p. 188. (Hereinafter referred to as Ed.)

³ Ed., p. 189

shine forth more distinctly at every attempt to discover truth. Each fresh search will reveal something more deeply interesting than has yet been unfolded. The subject is inexhaustible.”⁴

As we proceed with our study we will be developing our findings and thoughts along the lines of the following general outline.

I - The Reality of the Face to Face Judgment

II - Works and Faith in the Judgment

III - Which Works are revealed at the Judgment?

IV - A Description of the Matt. 25:31-46 Judgment: It's Physical Phenomena, Time and Rewards

Summary and Conclusion

⁴ Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1941). P. 134. (Hereinafter referred to as C.O.L.)

CHAPTER I

THE REALITY OF THE FACE TO FACE ACCOUNTING TO GOD

Whereas we have often read, or at least heard, that we all “must individually answer to God for our habits and practices”,⁵ we know that we have an individual accountability to God. When again we read that “Everyone must in the judgment give account of himself to God,...”⁶ we know where the accounting is to take place. And when we read “Men who claim to be Christians may now defraud and oppress the poor; they may rob the widow and the fatherless; they may indulge their satanic hatred because they cannot control the conscience of God’s people; but for all this God will bring them into judgment. ... Not long hence they will stand before the Judge of all the earth, to render an account for the pain they have caused in the bodies and souls of His heritage”,⁷ we know the kind of things the judgment will be concerned with.

Again when Mrs. White writes that “Every individual has a soul to save or lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face”,⁸ we know that saved or lost, for life or for death, we will all look on the face of God.

Finally, the reliability of the judgment actions is clearly seen when Mrs. White points out there are two independent sources of information drawn upon – the record books of Heaven and the memory and confessions of men.

“The great day of the execution of God’s judgment seemed to have come. Ten thousand times ten thousand were assembled before a large throne, upon which was seated a person of majestic appearance. Several books were before Him, and upon the covers of each was written in letters of gold, which seemed like a burning flame of fire: ‘Ledger of Heaven.’ One of these books, containing the names of those who claim to believe the truth, was then opened. Immediately I lost sight of the countless millions about the throne, and only those who were professedly children of the light and of the truth engaged my attention. As these persons were named, one by one, and their good deeds mentioned, their countenances would light up with a

⁵ Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), p. 310. (Hereinafter referred to as M.H.)

⁶ Ed., p. 188.

⁷ C.O.L., pp. 178-179. Emphasis supplied.

⁸ Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 488. (Hereinafter referred to as G.C.) Emphasis supplied.

holy joy that was reflected in every direction. But this did not seem to rest upon my mind with the greatest force.

“Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those who profess the truth. ...

As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, and His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, His glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though traced before their vision in letters of fire. ... In anguish of soul each declares his own guilt. ...”⁹

In the light of such an awesome concept we are not surprised to find Mrs. White admonishing, “How important then, that, every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot. ...”¹⁰

This connecting, by Mrs. White, of the concept of face to face accounting with the judgment in which the books are opened leads us back to the question whether Revelation 20 and Matt 25:31-46 don't describe, at least in part, the same event, for in both passages people are presented as face to face with their Judge. In the light of this similarity one might feel forced to conclude that both scenes depict the same event were it not that, while in both judgment passages men stand at the 'bar' of God in the Scripture accounts, the concept of rendering an account which occurs in Matt. 25:31-46 is not explicitly mentioned in Rev. 20. It is also significant that Mrs. White connects the giving of the account by individuals only with the face to face judgment picture presented by Jesus and recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. Note the following as an example of her descriptions of this passage.¹¹

“When you stand before the great white throne, then your work will appear as it is. The books are opened, the record of every life made known. Many in that vast company are unprepared for the revelations made. Upon the ears of some the words will fall with startling distinctness, ‘Weighed in the balance, and found wanting.’ To many parents the Judge will say in that day, ‘You had My Word, plainly setting forth your duty. Why have you not obeyed its teachings? Knew ye not that it was the voice of God? Did I not bid you search the Scriptures, that you might not go astray? You have not only ruined

⁹ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), IV, 384-385. (Hereinafter referred to as T.)

¹⁰ G.C., p. 488.

¹¹ For further examples see appendices B. & C.

your own souls, but by your pretensions to holiness you have misled many others. You have no part with Me. Depart, depart.”

“Another class stand pale and trembling, trusting in Christ, and yet oppressed with a sense of their own unworthiness. They hear with tears of joy and gratitude the Master’s commendation. The days of incessant toil, of burden bearing, and of fear and anguish are forgotten as that voice, sweeter than the music of angel harps, pronounces the words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.’ There stand the host of the redeemed, the palm branch of victory in their hand, the crown upon their head. These are the ones who by faithful, earnest labor have obtained a fitness for heaven. The lifework performed on earth is acknowledged in the heavenly courts as a work well done.”¹²

This accounting of our deeds in the face to face judgment of Matthew 25:31-46 is probably not limited to a dialogue with the Lord for we read, “When parents and children meet at the final reckoning, what a scene will be presented! Thousands of children who have been slaves to appetite and debasing vice, whose lives are moral wrecks, will stand face to face with the parents who made them what they are.”¹³ “The curse of God will surely rest upon unfaithful parents. ... They must meet their own unfaithfulness when the judgment shall sit. Many children will rise up in the judgment and condemn their parents for not restraining them and charge upon them their destruction.”¹⁴

Neither is our accountability in the judgment day limited to the family, for we read:

“There are many who have no desire to become acquainted with their unbelieving neighbors and those with whom they come in contact, and they do not feel it their duty to overcome this reluctance. The truth they teach and the love of Jesus should have great power to help them to overcome this feeling. They should remember that they must meet these very men and women in the judgment. Have they left words unsaid that should have been spoken? Have they felt interest enough for souls, to warn, to entreat, to pray for them, to make every effort to win them to Christ? Have they united discrimination with zeal, heeding the direction of the apostle: ‘of some have compassion, making

¹² Ellen G. White, Child Guidance (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1954), pp. 568-569. (Hereinafter referred to as C.G.)

¹³ C.G., p. 561.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh?"¹⁵

Now note the absence of any element of giving an account by individuals in the face to face judgment mentioned in Revelation 20:12. The following comments by Mrs. White are representative of her statements in this connection.

"The Whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them. ... The wicked see that they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. ... 'All this,' cries the lost soul. 'I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor for wretchedness, infamy, and despair.'¹⁶

"Then many who had professed to be Christ's followers, but who had not honored God in their lives, enumerate their good deeds performed when they lived upon the earth, and entreat to be admitted into the city. They plead that their names were upon the church books, and they had prophesied in the name of Christ, and in his name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works. Christ answers, 'your cases have been decided. Your names are not found enrolled in the book of life. You professed to believe in my name, but you trampled upon the law of God. I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity. Satan and his angels try to encourage the wicked multitude to action; but fire descends from Heaven, and unites with the fire in the earth, and aids in the general conflagration.'¹⁷

We have seen that the giving of an account by the people being judged is an integral part of the Judgment at which Jesus interviews His professed followers. This is apparently because the fact of personal accounting in the judgment serves ultimately the purpose of making clear to interested, but not-directly-involved intelligences, as well as involved people, the detailed basis of a judgment which can reward one professed follower with eternal life which committing another professed follower to eternal destruction.¹⁸

¹⁵ T., V, 255. (Emphasis supplied)

¹⁶ G.C., p. 668.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), III, 86. (Hereinafter referred to as S.G.)

¹⁸ The broader reason for such an accounting is of course to effect the justification of God.

We have also seen that there is no mention of individuals giving an account to God mentioned in either the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy descriptions of the post-millennial judgment.

Therefore we conclude that while one reads in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy two descriptions of men standing at the bar of God, the two accounts can't refer to the same event because while the element of giving personally an account is part of the one judgment scene, it is not part of the other.

Before closing this chapter we should also note that “‘The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.’ The Judge, the Prince of sufferers for the truth’s sake, is on the throne. ...”¹⁹

“Because He tasted the very dregs of human affliction and temptation, and understands the frailties and sins of men; because in our behalf He has victoriously withstood the temptations of Satan, and will deal justly and tenderly with the souls that His own blood has been poured out to save, – because of this, the Son of Man is appointed to execute the judgment.”²⁰

In summary: We have seen that every person must meet Christ face to face in His role of Judge of the earth. We have also found that while there are two accounts of face to face judgment in the Bible, Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 20:12-15, the element of one’s giving an account of himself is only associated with the Matthew 25 account.

Finally we saw that it is because Jesus is our sacrificed-and-risen-again-Savior that He is qualified to be the Judge in the execution of the judgment.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, “Upon the Throne of His Glory,” The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, September 20, 1898 (Hereinafter referred to as R.&H.)

²⁰ D.A., p. 210

CHAPTER II

WORKS AND FAITH IN THE JUDGMENT

When one thinks of works and faith in connection with Christianity the first text that often comes to mind is James 2:8-26. If, however, one is thinking of Christian works in the context of the judgment, then Matt. 25:31-46 is no doubt a key text to remember.

Mrs. White has written many interesting and enlightening comments on the significance of works in the judgment. We will begin our presentation of her position with a quotation regarding Matt. 25:31-46.

“The terrible punishment the King threatened those on His left hand, in this case, is not because of their great crimes. They are not condemned for the things which they did do, but for that which they did not do. They did not those things Heaven assigned them to do. They pleased themselves, and can take their portion with self-pleasers.”²¹

From this quotation it is clear that the Lord will be very concerned about our works when the judgment shall sit. “We should remember the Lord will judge us by what we appear to be.”²² “Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they bear their testimony to justify or condemn.”²³ “All will be justified by their faith and judged by their works.”²⁴

“In the great judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves, will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.

“To every soul a trust is given. Of everyone the chief Shepherd will demand, “Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?’ And ‘What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?’ Jer. 13:20,21.”²⁵

²¹ Ellen G. White, Instruction for Effective Christian Service (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1947), p. 216 (Hereinafter referred to as Ch.S.).

²² Ellen G. White, Councils to Writers and Editors (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), p. 72.

²³ G.C., pp. 486-487

²⁴ T., IV, 386.

²⁵ D.A., p. 641.

The question that immediately comes to mind when one reads such statement is in regard to the nature of works that God gives them so much importance. What, in God's sight, is the significance of good works? Why does He consider them of such great importance as to make them the basis of judgment?

Notice Mrs. White's explanation.

"The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul. And though the eternal reward is not bestowed because of our merit, yet it will be in proportion to the work that has been done through the grace of Christ."²⁶

The reason that the 'Record of Deeds' testifies to the condition of the heart is because Christian works are not only the result of an active relationship with Christ, but they are God's appointed agents to keep Christian experience alive. Note: "It is because this work is neglected that so many young disciples never advance beyond the mere alphabet of Christian experience. The light which was glowing in their own hearts when Jesus spoke to them, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," they might have kept alive by helping those in need."²⁷ Not only do Christian works keep us alive spiritually but they serve to unite us to Christ for Mrs. White writes that – "When we submit ourselves to Christ, [to do the things which are against our natural heart] the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life."²⁸ The result of this blending of our nature into His, Mrs. White says, is "What it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees ... His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."²⁹

In the light of these principles we know that Jesus' character becomes ours as we do His works by His grace. Notice again:

"Oh, what rays of softness and beauty shown forth in the daily life of our Savior! What sweetness flowed from His very presence! The same spirit will be revealed in His children. Those with whom Christ dwells will be surrounded with a divine atmosphere. Their white robes of purity will be

²⁶ D.A., p. 314.

²⁷ D.A., p. 640.

²⁸ C.O.L., p. 312.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Emphasis supplied. For a development of this function of works by Mrs. White see Appendix A.

fragrant with perfume from the garden of the Lord. Their faces will reflect light from His, brightening the path for stumbling and weary feet.”³⁰

“We shall individually be held responsible for doing one jot less than we have ability to do. The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service.”³¹ The reason for this concern by God for us to do faithful and constant service is that others are lost when we don’t work.³² But many people today say they can’t work. To this Mrs. White makes the following answer. “Many who excuse themselves from Christian effort plead their inability for the work. But did God make them so incapable? No, never. This inability has been produced by their own inactivity and perpetuated by their deliberate choice. Already, in their own characters, they are realizing the result of the sentence, “Take the talent from him.” The continual misuse of their talents will effectually quench for them the Holy Spirit, which is the only light. The sentence, “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness” sets Heaven’s seal to the choice which they themselves have made for eternity.”³³

Not only do we lose our talents and cause other people to be lost by our neglect when we don’t work for Jesus, but we in fact give our service to Satan.³⁴ The fact of this service to the enemy of God is revealed by an examination of the record of an individual’s works.

“The hidden selfishness of men stands revealed in the books of heaven. There is the record of unfulfilled duties to their fellowmen, of forgetfulness of the Savior’s claims. There they will see how often were given to Satan the time, thought, and strength that belonged to Christ. ... Money, time, and strength are sacrificed for display and self-indulgence; but few are the moments devoted to prayer, to the searching of the Scriptures, to humiliation of soul and confession of sin.”³⁵ Such an examination also serves to show if sin is “retained in the life, the whole being is contaminated.”³⁶ The result of this contamination is that “The man becomes an instrument of unrighteousness,”³⁷ and as such does not have the character of Christ – therefore he doesn’t do his works.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), p. 135.

³¹ C.O.L., p. 363.

³² See D.A., p. 641.

³³ C.O.L., p. 365.

³⁴ “All who are not decided followers of Christ are servants of Satan.” G.C., p. 508.

³⁵ G.C., p. 488.

³⁶ D.A., p. 313.

³⁷ Ibid.

Another significance of our works is that they reveal whether or not we live in harmony with the will of God as it is expressed in Scripture. “Christ’s rule of life, by which every one of us must stand or fall in the judgment, is “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Matt 7:12”³⁸

Our works also reveal our characters, for we read “They are not aware that the great heavenly Artist is taking cognizance of every act, every word, and that their deportment, and even the thoughts and intents of the heart, stand faithfully delineated. Every defect in their moral character stands revealed to the gaze of angels, and they will have the fearful picture presented to them in all its deformity at the execution of the judgment.”³⁹

Again we read that “The terrible punishment the King threatened those on His left hand, in this case, is not because of their great crimes. They are not condemned for the things which they did do, but for that which they did not do. They did not those things Heaven assigned them to do.”⁴⁰

Finally we learn that we are accountable for our influence, we are judged according to our profession, and our profession is tested by our works, when we read that “We should remember the Lord will judge us by what we appear to be.”⁴¹

In Summary: We have seen that in the judgment we will be examined by our works rather than by our faith.⁴² We have also seen Mrs. White give several descriptions of the nature of Christian works that enable us to understand why God would use those works as the basis of the judgment examination. These descriptions can be summarized as follows:

- 1 – Works reveal the condition of the heart
- 2 – They are an evidence of true faith
- 3 – Christian works are done through the grace of Christ.
- 4 – Works done through Christ’s grace are the basis on which our eternal reward is decided.
- 5 – they keep the Christian experience alive;

³⁸ Ibid., p. 640.

³⁹ T., I, 501.

⁴⁰ Ch.S., p. 216 emphasis supplied.

⁴¹ C.W., P. 72.

⁴² For a fuller presentation by Mrs. White of God’s view of works see Appendix B.

6 – they unite us to Christ in heart, will, mind, and thoughts.

7 –Doing Christ’s works produces in us Christ’s character.

8 – The absence of faithful Christian Works –

a – causes others to be lost

b – means the loss of our talents

c – makes us workers for God’s enemy

9 – Thus a study of one’s works reveals who his Master is.

10 – Our works show whether we love our fellowmen as Christ taught us to.

11 – Our works reveal our character

12 – they will show if we did our heaven assigned task,

13 – and finally, our works are used to test our profession.

Conclusion: “The love of Christ binds together the members of His family, and wherever that love is made manifest there the divine relationship is revealed.”⁴³ Where that divine relationship is not revealed there is no faith, for “a man will reveal all the faith he has.” Therefore, the relationship between faith and works in the judgment is that we are justified by our faith and judged by our works.⁴⁴

⁴³ D.A., p. 638.

⁴⁴ T., IV, p. 386.

CHAPTER III

WHICH WORKS ARE REVEALED AT THE JUDGMENT?

If works are the basis of the judgment because they reveal the outgrowth of the working of Christ's grace, and because they reveal the character, one wonders if only good works are revealed in the judgment. It is obvious that while good works, as the outgrowth of the Holy Spirit's work, if revealed, would show God's power, so, it would seem, a revelation of a man's evil deeds would also serve to show the adequacy of the regenerating power of God in his life, by contrast; such a revelation making clear the total dependence of the man on God's grace when the deeds of the man before and after he became a child of God doing the works of Christ, were compared.

But if such a revelation of the evil works of all people is to be made in the judgment, then what is to be understood as the meaning of the Bible teaching about the blotting out of the sins of the righteous? Are the sins of the righteous blotted out in the sense of not being charged against them in the judgment, though they are revealed there, or are only the good works of the righteous set forth in the judgment? If only the good works of the righteous are set forth in the judgment, can they be truly said to reveal their character?

To answer these questions we will again quote from Mrs. White. The first quotation is from the book Child Guidance.

"In the solemn assembly of the last day, in the hearing of the universe, will be read the reason of the condemnation of the sinner. For the first time parents will learn what has been the secret life of their children. Children will see how many wrongs they have committed against their parents. There will be a general revealing of the secrets and motives of the heart, for that which is hid will be made manifest. Those who have made sport of the solemn things connected with the judgment will be sobered as they face its terrible reality."⁴⁵

Before proceeding further we will list the key points of this quotation:

- 1 – in the judgment the reason for the condemnation of the sinner is read.
- 2 – Parents learn of the secret sins of their children.
- 3 – Children become aware of their wrongs against their parents.

⁴⁵ C.G., p. 560

4 – There will be a general revealing of the secrets and motives of the heart.

Some questions now come to mind. Is the reading of the reason or the condemnation of the sinner to be seen as the source of knowledge from which parents learn the secret sins of their children? Is this “reading” that which Mrs. White refers to when she says that there will be a general revealing of the secrets and motives of the heart? I believe the answer to the first of these questions is No, while the answer to the second may be Yes. Compare the following two quotations.

“Every defect in their moral character stands revealed to the gaze of angels, and they will have the faithful picture presented to them in all its deformity at the execution of the judgment. Those vain, frivolous words are all written in the book. Those false words are written. Those deceptive acts, whose motives were concealed from human eyes, but discerned by the all-seeing eye of Jehovah, are all written in living characters. Every selfish act is exposed.”⁴⁶

“In the day when the Ledger of Heaven shall be opened, the Judge will not in words express to man his guilt, but will cast one penetrating, convicting glance, and every deed, every transaction of life, will be vividly impressed upon the memory of the wrongdoer. The person will not, as in Joshua’s day, need to be hunted from tribe to family, but his own lips will confess his shame, his selfishness, covetousness, dishonesty, dissembling, and fraud. His sins, hidden from the knowledge of man, will then be proclaimed, as it were, upon the housetop.”⁴⁷

In Patriarchs and Prophets Mrs. White concludes these sentences with: “The sins hidden from the knowledge of man will then be proclaimed to the whole world.”⁴⁸

We can now see that whatever is given in the “reading” as the reason for the condemnation of sinner, the specific sins of the sinner is not included. The knowledge gained in the judgment by one person about the sins of another person – parents learning the secret sins of their children, for example – comes from the lips of the sinner – not from God.

The realization of one’s own sins, is the result not of God’s “reading” but of His looking at the individual – which look brings every deed and transaction of the life back to the individual’s memory with a clarity that wasn’t there before.

⁴⁶ T., I, 501. (Emphasis supplied)

⁴⁷ T., IV, 493.

⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), p. 498. (Hereinafter referred to as P.P.).

This may mean that the “reading” of the reason for the condemnation of the sinner is a collective work including all sinners who have rejected Christ.

It is also significant that all this revealing of sin takes place in these quotations in the context of the people being guilty. This means the sins here dealt with would be unconfessed sins, for the Bible teaches us that if we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Therefore the one who confesses is no longer guilty. He has been forgiven and cleansed.

Mrs. White also connects the revealing of sins with unconfessed sins

“His pure eye sees, a witness records, all their sins, both open and secret; and unless they repent and confess their sins before God, unless they fall on the Rock and are broken, their sins will remain charged against them in the books of record. Oh, fearful histories will be opened to the world at the judgment – histories of sins never confessed, of sins never blotted out!”⁴⁹

Mrs. White also connects the repentance of sin with the blotting out of sin.

“The facts should be borne in mind by all who claim to be children of God, that there is a Watcher in every business transaction who records every act and deed of the transactor and that this record will stand just as it is written until the great day when every man shall receive according as his works have been, unless their wrongs shall have been repented of and blotted out.”⁵⁰

In conclusion: It is now clear that the works revealed in the judgment include both good works and evil works. In the case of the lost their unconfessed and unblotted out evil deeds are included, while the only works of the saved that are revealed are good works because all their evil works have been repented of and blotted out. This means that the immediate contrast in the judgment is not between that a man was before he accepted Christ and what he was after he accepted Christ, but between the goodness of those who accepted Jesus as their Savior and the evilness of those who rejected Jesus as their Savior. The respective goodness or evilness is, of course, seen in the person’s works. The importance of these works lies in the fact that because the righteous could only do their good works through the grace of God operating in their lives, and because the wicked were doing those

⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1962), P. 146 (Hereinafter referred to as T.M.).

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, Welfare Ministry: Instruction in Christian Neighborhood Service (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), p. 219. (Hereinafter referred to as W.M.).

things suggested by Satan, that the righteous deeds of the saved reveal the character of Christ, just as the evil deeds of the lost reflect the character of him for whom they worked. Therefore it is obvious that in the judgment the study of works is not to establish either the contrast between what a person was before and after accepting Christ, or, between the acts of the saved and the acts of the lost, but rather it is to show the contrast between the character of Christ and the character of Satan. Therefore we can also see that the revelation of only the good works of the righteous does reflect their whole character, because all their evil works have been overcome through Christ's grace, and as reflectors of His character their deeds are only good.

CHAPTER IV

A DESCRIPTION OF THE JUDGMENT – ITS PHYSICAL PHENOMENA,

TIME AND REWARDS

Its Physical Phenomena

“Before the Son of Man appears in the clouds of heaven, everything in nature will be convulsed. Lightening from heaven uniting with the fire of the earth, will cause the mountains to burn like a furnace, and pour their floods of lava over villages and cities. Molten masses of rock, thrown into the water by the upheaval of things hidden in the earth, will cause the water to boil and send forth rocks and earth. There will be mighty earthquakes and great destruction of human life. But as in the days of the great Deluge Noah was preserved in the ark that God had prepared for him, so in these days of destruction and calamity, God will be the refuge of His believing ones. ... [Ps. 91:9, 10; 27:5 quoted].”⁵¹

“The earth will be convulsed, and there will be dreadful eruptions and earthquakes everywhere. God will plague the wicked inhabitants of the earth until they are destroyed from off it.”⁵²

“More terrible manifestations than the world has ever yet beheld will be witnessed at the second advent of Christ. ‘The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?’ Nahum 1:5, 6. ‘Bow they heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightening and scatter them: shoot out Thine arrows, and destroy them.’ Psalm 144: 5, 6.”⁵³

“But when Christ shall come in glory with His holy angels the whole earth shall be ablaze with the terrible light of His presence. ‘Our God shall come and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.’ Psalm 50:3, 4. A fiery stream shall issue and come forth from before Him, which shall cause the elements to melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ‘The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, Letter 258, 1907, quoted in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, VII, 946.

⁵² S.G., III, 83.

⁵³ P.P., p. 109.

mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.' 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8."⁵⁴

The Time of the Judgment

Not only is the time of Jesus second coming to this earth one of great physical phenomenon in nature, but it is also the time of the face to face judgment of Matthew 25:31-46 which we are studying.

"Besides the coming of the Lord to His temple, Malachi also foretells His second advent, His coming for the execution of the judgment. ... "⁵⁵

"The trumpet of the Archangel will soon startle the living and wake the dead. At that day the wicked will be separated from the just, as the shepherd divides the goats from the sheep."⁵⁶ "We are all judgment bound. 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain [unto the coming of the Lord] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' Christ will then be revealed from heaven, 'taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel."⁵⁷

"When Christ shall come to the earth again, not as a prisoner surrounded by a rabble with men see Him. They will see Him then as heaven's king. ... Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. Then every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. ... "⁵⁸

In this judgment the professed followers of Christ are the focus of attention.⁵⁹ They are each rewarded according to their works, as we have seen.⁶⁰ The righteous are invited to inherit the kingdom prepared for them, but the wicked are burned up. Because the fact of the reward of the righteous is so generally known we won't attempt to establish it here, but the burning of the wicked after the judgment occurring at the time of the second coming of Jesus is perhaps not so well know. Therefore we will

⁵⁴ P.P., pp. 339-340.

⁵⁵ G.C., p. 426.

⁵⁶ C.G., p. 561.

⁵⁷ T., V. 15.

⁵⁸ D.A., p. 739. See also P.P., pp. 339-341.

⁵⁹ See appendix C for a full presentation by Mrs. White on this judgment and this point.

⁶⁰ See also Rom. 2:6.

present several quotations from Mrs. White which set forth this teaching, and which will include some of the Scriptural basis for such a teaching.⁶¹

We will begin by citing Mrs. White's comments on two of Jesus' parables.

"The Savior does not point forward to a time when all the tares become wheat. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest, the end of the world. Then the tares are bound into bundles to be burned, and the wheat is gathered into the garner of God. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' Then 'the Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"⁶²

"The householder, on seeing his invitation slighted, declared that none of the men who were bidden shall taste of his supper. But for those who had done despite to the king, more than exclusion from his presence and his table is decreed. "He sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."⁶³

From those comments on Jesus parables it is easy to see that Mrs. White felt Jesus taught that the wicked would be burned at the judgment occurring in connection with the second coming of Jesus.

Mrs. White also taught that while the wicked would be burned at the second coming of Jesus, this event would be the result of their own neglect to prepare to meet Christ when he should return to earth.

"At the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed 'with the brightness of His coming.' 2 Thess. 2:8. The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked."⁶⁴

"Christ has declared that He will come the second time to gather His faithful ones to Himself: 'Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the

⁶¹ Matt. 13:30, 40-42, 49-50; 25:41, 46; compare 3:12. Note Luke 19:12-27 predicts death to disobedient at judgment, but doesn't specify the means of death. 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2-8; 2 Peter 3:7, 10-12; Rev. 19:20.

⁶² C.O.L., p. 75.

⁶³ C.O.L., p. 307. See also Matt. 13:47-52, especially verses 49, 50. "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

⁶⁴ D. A., p. 108.

clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’ Matthew 24:30, 31. Then shall they that obey not the gospel be consumed with the spirit of His mouth and be destroyed with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Like Israel of old, the wicked destroy themselves; they fall by their iniquity. By the life of sin, they have placed themselves so out of harmony with God, their natures have become so debased with evil, that the manifestations of His glory is to them a consuming fire.”⁶⁵

“By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.”⁶⁶ To sin, wherever found, ‘our God is a consuming fire.’ Heb. 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them.”⁶⁷

The final point we wish to mention in this section of our study is that Mrs. White teaches that the earth is also burned at Christ’s second coming.

“Enoch’s translation to Heaven just before the destruction of the world by a flood, represents the translation of all the living righteous from the earth previous to its destruction by fire.”⁶⁸ “A fiery stream shall issue and come forth from before Him, which shall cause the elements to melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”⁶⁹

To summarize: We have seen that at the second coming of Jesus the great face to face judgment described in Matt. 25:31-46 occurs. We have also found that the judgment is conducted after great physical phenomena which precede and occur simultaneously with the event of the second coming. These physical phenomena bring death to many of the wicked, but the righteous are preserved from harm by the power of God. We then noted that the conclusion to the judgment results in the righteous receiving eternal life, while the wicked are burned by the glory of the Lord, due to their failure to allow the Holy Spirit to consume the sin in their lives while their probation lasted. This burning of the wicked includes the burning of the earth.

⁶⁵ G.C., p. 37.

⁶⁶ D.A. p. 764.

⁶⁷ D.A., p. 107.

⁶⁸ S.G., III, 59.

⁶⁹ P.P., p. 339. Regarding the burning of the earth see above under “A Description of the Judgment – its Physical Phenomena.”

Summary

We have seen that Matthew 25:31-46 portrays a literal judgment; separate from the Investigative judgment prior to Jesus second coming, separate from the work of judgment that occupies the saints during the millennium, and also separate from the executive judgment that occurs at the end of the millennium. This judgment occurs at the time of Jesus second coming, and occurs chronologically after the “caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord” of 1 Thess. 4:17. Christ is the Judge, and the primary subjects are the professed followers of Jesus – true and false. Jesus is qualified to be the judge because of His nature⁷⁰ and because of His work as Redeemer.

This judgment is surrounded by many supernatural manifestations in nature, including the raising of many of the dead.

The judgment begins with each person meeting God face to face, answering for himself when accused by others of some sin, and finally being judged according to the record of his works recorded in the Heavenly Ledger.

The reason for this great attention to the works of the individual, we saw, was because works reveal the character while the character, by its similarity to his, reveals the Master we have chosen. This choice is vitally important because our destiny is indissolubly bound up with the destiny of the Master we have chosen – whatever that destiny may be, when the Great Controversy is forever settled.

We also saw that the record of the righteous shows only good deeds, as all their evil deeds (sins) were repented of, forgiven, and blotted out, which the unconfessed sins (evil deeds) of the wicked are still in the record book.

The purpose of this judgment is not only to demonstrate to whom we belong, but to determine what reward we will receive. The true professors of Christ receive a heavenly inheritance, while unfaithful, or false professors are sentenced and burned. The fact they are destroyed by the same glory of God that gives life to the true follower means that their destruction is due to their own failure to let the Holy Spirit consume the sin in their lives during their probation. The resulting attachment to sin caused them to be consumed when sin was consumed.

⁷⁰ Ellen G. White, R&H, Dec, 22, 1891, quoted in the Adult Sabbath School Lessons, first quarter, 1976, p. 19.

It was also of great interest to us to find that there are many surprises attending the proceedings of the judgment.

In this pre-millennial judgment there are those who receive the eternal reward who are very surprised, having had no reason for hope, but being rewarded for a kind deed done, under the urging of the Holy Spirit, to one of Christ's workers.⁷¹

In the post-millennial judgment there are some who have a very sad surprise, for those while being sure of their rightness with Jesus, have found themselves outside the Holy City New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium. They go to seek Jesus' aid in correcting the mistake that put them on the outside only to hear Him say He doesn't know them.⁷²

We also learned that the earth is burned twice, as are the goats; after the judgment occurring at the time of Jesus second coming, and after the post-millennial judgment.⁷³

Conclusion: Salvation is to be striven for (character is to be developed) during life through faith in Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in response to that faith, and through doing individually the works of faith. The success or failure of this striving is measured in the judgment at Christ's second coming by an examination of our works to determine if we have Christ's character.

⁷¹ See Appendix B, and D.A., p. 638.

⁷² D.A., pp. 639-640. See also S.G., III, 86.

⁷³ For a general description of the judgment by Mrs. White see Appendix D.

APPENDIX A

JUDGMENT OF THE GOATS PICTURED

On the morning of October 23, 1879, about two o'clock, the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I beheld scenes in the coming judgment. Language fails me in which to give an adequate description of the things which passed before me and of the effect they had upon my mind.

The great day of the execution of God's judgment seemed to have come. Ten thousand times ten thousand were assembled before a large throne, upon which was seated a person of majestic appearance. Several books were before Him, and upon the covers of each was written in letters of gold, which seemed like a burning flame of fire: "Ledger of Heaven." One of these books, containing the names of those who claim to believe the truth, was then opened. Immediately I lost sight of the countless millions about the throne, and only those who were professedly children of the light and of the truth engaged my attention. As these persons were named, one by one, and their good deeds mentioned, their countenances would light up with a holy joy that was reflected in every direction. But this did not seem to rest upon my mind with the greatest force.

Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those who profess the truth. Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin. There were also headings over every column, and underneath these, opposite each name, were recorded, in their respective columns, the lesser sins.

Under covetousness came falsehood, theft, robbery, fraud, and avarice; under ambition came pride and extravagance; jealousy stood at the head of malice, envy, and hatred; and intemperance headed a long list of fearful crimes, such as lasciviousness, adultery, indulgence of animal passions, etc. As I beheld I was filled with inexpressible anguish and exclaimed: "Who can be saved? who will stand justified before God? whose robes are spotless? who are faultless in the sight of a pure and holy God?"

As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, and His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, His glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though traced before their vision in letters of fire. Trembling seized them, and their faces turned pale. Their first appearance when around the throne was that of careless indifference. But how changed their appearance now! The feeling of security is gone, and in its place is a nameless terror. A dread is upon every soul, lest he shall be found among those who are wanting. Every eye is riveted upon the face of the One upon the throne;

and as His solemn, searching eye sweeps over that company, there is a quaking of heart; for they are self-condemned without one word being uttered. In anguish of soul each declares his own guilt and with terrible vividness sees that by sinning he has thrown away the precious boon of eternal life.

One class were registered as cumberers of the ground. As the piercing eye of the Judge rested upon these, their sins of neglect were distinctly revealed. With pale, quivering lips they acknowledged that they had been traitors to their holy trust. They had had warnings and privileges, but they had not needed nor improved them. They could now see that they had presumed too much upon the mercy of God.

True, they had not such confessions to make as had the vile and basely corrupt; but, like the fig tree, they were cursed because they bore no fruit, because they had not put to use the talents entrusted to them.

This class had made self supreme, laboring only for selfish interests. They were not rich toward God, not having responded to His claims upon them. Although professing to be servants of Christ, they brought no souls to Him. Had the cause of God been dependent on their efforts, it would have languished; for they not only withheld the means lent them of God, but they withheld themselves. But these could now see and feel that in occupying an irresponsible position in reference to the work and cause of God they had placed themselves on the left hand. They had had opportunity, but would not do the work that they could and should have done.

The names of all who profess the truth were mentioned. Some were reprov'd for their unbelief, others for having been slothful servants. They had allowed others to do the work in the Master's vineyard, and to bear the heaviest responsibilities, while they were selfishly serving their own temporal interests. Had they cultivated the abilities God had given them, they could have been reliable burden bearers, working for the interest of the Master. Said the Judge: "All will be justified by their faith and judged by their works." How vividly then appeared their neglect, and how wise the arrangement of God in giving to every man a work to do to promote the cause and save his fellow men. Each was to demonstrate a living faith in his family and in his neighborhood, by showing kindness to the poor, sympathizing with the afflicted, engaging in missionary labor, and by aiding the cause of God with his means. But, like Meroz, the curse of God rested upon them for what they had not done. They had loved that work which would bring the greatest profit in this life; and opposite their names in the ledger devoted to good works there was a mournful blank.

The words spoken to these were most solemn: "You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting. You have neglected spiritual responsibilities because of busy activity in temporal matters, while your very position of trust made it necessary that you should have more than human wisdom and greater than finite judgment. This you needed in order to perform even the mechanical part of your labor; and when you disconnected God and His glory from your business, you turned from His blessing."

The question was then asked: "Why have you not washed your robes of character and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that through Him it might be saved. My love for you has been more self-denying than a mother's love. It was that I might blot out your dark record of iniquity, and put the cup of salvation to your lips, that I suffered the death of the cross, bearing the weight and curse of your guilt. The pangs of death, and the horrors of the darkness of the tomb, I endured, that I might conquer him who had the power of death, unbar the prison house, and open for you the gates of life. I submitted to shame and agony because I loved you with an infinite love, and would bring back my wayward, wondering sheep to the paradise of God, to the tree of life. That life of bliss which I purchased for you at such a cost, you have disregarded. Shame, reproach, and ignominy, such as your Master bore for you, you have shunned. The privileges He died to bring within your reach have not been appreciated. You would not be partaker of His sufferings, and you cannot now be partaker with Him of His glory." Then were uttered these solemn words: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." The book then closed, and the mantle fell from the Person on the throne, revealing the terrible glory of the Son of God.

The scene then passed away, and I found myself still upon the earth, inexpressibly grateful that the day of God had not yet come, and that precious probationary time is still granted us in which to prepare for eternity.

Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church. Vol. 4, pp. 384-387.

APPENDIX B

RE: SIGNIFICANCE OF GOOD WORKS

10 (Eph. 1:6; 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 2:14; 3:5; James 2:22). Good Works No Plea for Salvation. –Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim part in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is God’s free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ’s sake alone. The troubled soul may find peace through faith in Christ, and his peace will be proportion to his faith and trust. He cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul.

But are good works of no real value? Is the sinner who commits sin every day with impunity, regarded of God with the same favor as the one who through faith in Christ tries to work in his integrity? The Scripture answers, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ’s merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works. It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit. When we have done all that it is possible for us to do, we are to count ourselves as unprofitable servants. We deserve no thanks from God. We have only done what it was our duty to do, and our works could not have been performed in the strength of our own sinful natures.

The Lord has bidden us to draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to us; and drawing nigh to Him, we receive the grace by which to do these works which will be rewarded at His hands (RH Jan. 29, 1895).

Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Jan. 29, 1895 quoted B.C., V, 1122.

APPENDIX C

(Judgment when Jesus comes; why works are important)

“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another.” Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering.

In that day Christ does not present before men the great works He has done for them in giving His life for their redemption. He presents the faithful work they have done for Him. To those whom He sets upon His right hand He will say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.” But those whom Christ commends know not that they have been ministering unto Him. To their perplexed inquiries He answers, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

Jesus had told His disciples that they were to be hated of all men, to be persecuted and afflicted. Many would be driven from their homes, and brought to poverty. Many would be in distress through disease and privation. Many would be cast into prison. To all who forsook friends or home for His sake he had promised in this life a hundredfold. Now He assured a special blessing to all who should minister to their brethren. In all who suffer for My name, said Jesus, you are to recognize Me. As you would minister to Me, so you are to minister to them. This is the evidence that you are My disciples.

All who have been born into the heavenly family are in a special sense the brethren of our Lord. The love of Christ binds together the members of His family, and wherever that love is made manifest there the divine relationship is revealed. “Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” 1 John 4:7.

Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to

them at the peril of their own lives. Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.

How surprised and gladdened will be the lowly among the nations, and among the heathen, to hear from the lips of the Savior, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me": How glad will be the heart of Infinite Love as His followers look up with surprise and joy at His words of approval!

But not to any class is Christ's love restricted. He identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him.

The angels of heaven are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. We know not now who they are; it is not yet made manifest who shall overcome, and share the inheritance of the saints in light; but angels of heaven are passing throughout the length and breadth of the earth, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the imperiled, to win the hearts of men to Christ. Not one is neglected or passed by. God is no respecter of persons, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created.

As you open your door to Christ's needy and suffering ones, you are welcoming unseen angels. You invite the companionship of Heavenly beings. They bring a sacred atmosphere of joy and peace. They come with praises upon their lips, and an answering strain is heard in heaven. Every deed of mercy makes music there. The Father from His throne numbers the unselfish workers among His most precious treasurers.

Those on the left hand of Christ, those who had neglected Him in the person of the poor and the suffering, were unconscious of their guilt. Satan had blinded them; they had not perceived what they owed to their brethren. They had been self-absorbed, and cared not for others' needs.

To the rich, God has given wealth that they may believe and comfort His suffering children; but too often they are indifferent to the wants of others. They feel themselves superior to their poor brethren. They do not put themselves in the poor man's place. They do not understand the temptations and struggles of the poor, and mercy dies out of their hearts. In costly dwellings and splendid churches, the rich shut themselves away from the poor; the means that God has given to bless the needy is spent in pampering pride and selfishness. The poor are robbed daily of the education they should have concerning the tender mercies of God; for He has made ample provision that they should be comforted with the necessities of life. They are compelled to feel the poverty that narrows life, and are often tempted to become envious, jealous, and full of evil surmisings. Those who themselves have not endured the pressure of want too often treat the poor in a contemptuous way, and make them feel that they are looked upon as paupers.

But Christ beholds it all, and He says, It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. While you were feasting at your bountifully spread table, I was famishing in the hovel or the empty street. While you were at ease in your luxurious home, I had not where to lay My head. While you crowded your wardrobe with rich apparel, I was destitute. While you pursued your pleasures, I languished in prison.

When you doled out the pittance of bread to the starving poor, when you gave those flimsy garments to shield them from the biting frost, did you remember that you were giving to the Lord of glory? All the days of your life I was near you in the person of these afflicted ones, but you did not seek Me. You would not enter into fellowship with Me. I know you not.

Many feel that it would be a great privilege to visit the scenes of Christ's life on earth, to walk where He trod, to look upon the lake beside which He loved to teach, and the hills and valleys on which His eyes so often rested. But we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty in the crowded alleys of the great city, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall walk in His steps.

All may find something to do. "The poor always ye have with you" (John 12:8), Jesus said, and none need feel that there is no place where they can labor for Him. Millions upon millions of human souls ready to perish, bound in chains of ignorance and sin, have never so much as heard of Christ's love for them. Were our condition and theirs to be reversed, what would we desire them to do for us? All this, so far as lies in our power, we are under the most solemn obligation to do for them. Christ's rule of

life, by which every one of us must stand or fall in the judgment, is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do it even so to them." Matt. 7:12.

The Savior has given His precious life in order to establish a church capable of caring for sorrowful, tempted souls. A company of believers may be poor, uneducated, and unknown; yet in Christ they may do a work in the home, the neighborhood, the church, and even in "the regions beyond," whose results shall be as far-reaching as eternity.

It is because this work is neglected that so many young disciples never advance beyond the mere alphabet of Christian experience. The light which was glowing in their own hearts when Jesus spoke to them, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," they might have kept alive by helping those in need. The restless energy that is so often a source of danger to the young might be directed into channels through which it would flow out in steams of blessing. Self would be forgotten in earnest work to do others good.

Those who minister to others will be ministered unto by the Chief Shepherd. They themselves will drink of the living water, and will be satisfied. They will not be longing for exciting amusements, or for some change in their lives. The great topic of interest will be, how to save the souls that are ready to perish. Social intercourse will be profitable. The love of the Redeemer will draw hearts together in unity.

When we realize that we are workers together with God, His promises will not be spoken with indifference, they will burn in our hearts, and kindle upon our lips. To Moses, when called to minister to an ignorant, undisciplined, and rebellious people, God gave the promise, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And He said, "Certainly I will be with thee." Ex. 33:14; 3:12. This promise is to all who labor in Christ's stead for His afflicted and suffering ones.

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for Heaven: for we have heaven in our hearts.

But "if thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and He that keepeth they soul, doth not He know it? and shall not He render to every man according to his

works?” Prov. 24:11, 12. In the great judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves, will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.

To every soul a trust is given. Of everyone the Chief Shepherd will demand, “Where is the flock that was given thee, they beautiful flock? And “What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?” Jer. 13:20, 21.

Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 637-641.

APPENDIX D

“UPON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY”

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” Matt 25:31-33.

Christ would have all understand the events of his second appearing. The judgment scene will take place in the presence of all the worlds; for in this judgment the government of God will be vindicated, and his law will stand forth as “holy, and just, and good.” Then every case will be decided, and sentence will be passed upon all. Sin will not then appear attractive, but will be seen in all its hideous magnitude. All will see the relation in which they stand to God and to one another.

At his first advent, Christ came to the world as its Redeemer. He came to plant truth in the hearts of all who would give place to it, who would receive it and be converted. He came to take away the sin of the world, and to fill every heart with pure, healthful joy. He longed to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And in his attitude toward men was a foreshadowing of his work in the Judgment. From the men whom the world had favored, those who found their own enjoyment in fulsome flattery, he turned with gladness to a peculiar people, and showed which class was blessed. He assigned appropriate rewards to those who were faithful and true. Having brought into the world the accumulated treasure of heaven, he bestowed it upon them. He pronounced his blessings upon true merit, upon all who were seeking for that righteousness which it was his prerogative to give. To those who should suffer for his name’s sake, he declared: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” He gave evidence that all the treasures of heaven were at his command, and that in dispensing them he knew no restriction.

Let us mark the partition made between the sheep and goats, and listen to his words to each: --

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answered them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

When God’s people are clothed with white robes, and crowned as true subjects of his kingdom, those who have been disloyal will see the inconsistency of their uniting with the loyal to honor and magnify the law of God, which they have educated themselves to disregard. They have regarded the law of God as null and void, and shall they be trusted to come through the gates into the city? They then find that they have no passport, nothing in them that can change their life sentiments. They have made their choice of false sentiments in the place of truth, and holiness, and righteousness, and they can not change them. Every man who, by his actions, has declared, I will not have this Man to reign over me, will no longer have the privilege of being under that rule.

Those who have tried to lay their plans in councils, and by their superior numbers gain power to oppress the saints of God, to compel them to dishonor and disobey their Redeemer, will understand the work they have done upon the earth, as enemies of God, betrayers of sacred trusts. They will then know how many souls they have deceived and led away from allegiance to God. They will see that they have made themselves responsible for their own destruction and the destruction of God’s property, his own heritage, purchased at an infinite cost. The blood of these souls will be upon their garments. They will understand in that day that they were dealing with Christ in the person of his saints. Whatever influence opposes the truth that God has made it the duty of his servants to proclaim in his name, dishonors him. This is a violence offered to the laws of his kingdom, and he will not suffer it to go unpunished.

“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” The Judge, the Prince of sufferers for the truth’s sake, is on the throne, – he who suffered himself to be arraigned before Herod and Pilate, who was rejected by His own nation, and condemned by the man who had declared, “I find no fault in him,” – he who was lacerated with stripes, spit upon, degraded, and whose holy brow was crowned with thorns. He does not now stand before the bar of Pilate or Herod. He himself is judge, and these men stand before him whom they scourged, and delivered up to the will of his enemies, Pilate and Herod, who suffered the Lord to be scourged; priests and rulers, who clamored for the death of the Messiah; those who mocked him, – all now understand what it means to meet the wrath of the Lamb.

“The hour is coming,” Christ said, “in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.” That voice is to resound through all the habitations of the dead; and every saint who sleeps in Jesus will awake and leave his prison-house. Then the virtue of character we have received from Christ’s righteousness will ally us to true greatness of the highest order. Every action of ours in befriending God’s people will be rewarded as done unto himself.

In the day of final reckoning, Christ does not present before men the great work he has done for them in giving his life for their redemption. He presents before them the faithful work they have done for him. What surpassing love is this! He even mentions the work of the heathen, who have no intelligent knowledge of the law of the Lord, but who have done the very things the law required, because they have needed the voice speaking to them in the things of nature. When the Holy Spirit implants Christ’s Spirit in the heart of the savage, and he befriends God’s servants, the quickening of the heart’s sympathy is contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The grace of God working upon the darkened mind, has softened the savage nature untaught by the wisdom of men. And these uneducated heathen, in all their cruelty, are regarded in a more favorable light than are those who have had great light and evidence, but who have rejected the mercy and reproof of God.

Christ implants his grace in the heart of the savage, and ministers to the necessity of the missionary, even before he has heard or comprehended the words of truth and life. Behold that crowd collected about God’s servant to harm him! But the Lord is working upon the heart and mind of perhaps one man to plead in behalf of his servant; and when the warm council has determined the destruction of the Christian’s life, the intercession of that savage turns the decision, and his life is spared. O, the love that goes forth to the savage for this one act! To such Christ says, in the Judgment: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Ellen G. White, "Upon the Throne of His Glory," Review and Herald (9.20.98), p. 42. Cf. C.O.L.
p. 385.

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