

Chapter Three - Part One

Fear of the Lord

Knowing that one day soon we will be judged by our Lord Jesus Christ to determine where we will spend the coming Messianic Era of one thousand years should instill the fear of the Lord in each of us; the fear of not pleasing Him and not entering the kingdom of heaven. Having the fear of the Lord gives us the incentive and enthusiasm to seek Him daily, by studying His Word, in order to know what it is we need to do to please Him and to enter “*His rest.*”

The fear of the Lord then has to do with issues surrounding the Judgment Seat of Christ:

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.
(Hebrews 4:1)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” **(Philippians 2:12)**

Scripture presents the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
(Proverbs 9:10)

Contrary to the opinion of many within Christendom, the Bible (Scripture), a product of the Holy Spirit through the agency of select individuals (**2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; John 16:5ff**), is a Book that can only be “spiritually discerned” and therefore can only be understood by Christians. This is clearly explained by the

Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the “*church of God which is at Corinth.*”

These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural [unsaved] man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they [things of the Spirit] are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they [things of the Spirit] are spiritually discerned.

(1 Corinthians 2:13, 14)

Gnosis is the Greek word for “knowledge,” and *Epignosis* emphasizes this word to mean a “higher, full, or mature knowledge.” Christians, by the indwelling Holy Spirit (**John 14:17; 16:13; 1 John 2:27**) have the ability to receive the *epignosis* of the Word of God. In and through the study of the Word, Christians have the ability to rightly divide the Word, and within this knowledge, they will come to understand the things concerning their future judgment, things associated with “*the fear of the Lord.*”

The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil.
(Proverbs 19:24)

The fear of the Lord prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened. **(Proverbs 10:27)**

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Greek: Gehenna].” **(Matthew 10:28)**

Fear and reverence for God motivates us to remain steadfast in His Word and in turn, to work at being transformed into the image of Christ. The word “fear” in Scripture is the Greek word, *phobos*, which means “terror, fear, apprehension.” It is a fear relative to events at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This fearful mindset prepares

us to be ready for the Lord by producing fruit through the Spirit, eagerly waiting for His return and having the hope of being found worthy at our future judgment. God says wisdom and understanding of His Word produces a fear of the Lord, a foundational principal to our spiritual growth. God *commands* all Christians to acquire and develop wisdom and understanding by consuming His Word so that they may produce fruit, which will lead to their approval at the Judgment Seat of Christ and to their qualification for entrance into the kingdom.

My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding;

Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her (wisdom) as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures;

Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:1)

Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her.

She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you. (Proverbs 4:7-9)

Many believe that the Judgment Seat of Christ is strictly for rewards, not loss, and that all Christians will be highly rewarded after they are raptured. But Scripture tells otherwise.

...knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men... (2 Corinthians 5:11)

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28, 29)

The previous Scriptures associate the Judgment Seat of Christ with knowing the terror of the Lord. If all Christians are being presented with rewards, why should there be any *terror of the Lord*? Why should *we persuade men* if there is no loss?

Examples of the Judgment Seat of Christ are presented in the parables within the Books of **Matthew** and **Luke**. *A parable is a truth given in story form that explains a previously revealed truth.* Parables were extensively used by our Lord to teach the “mysteries of the kingdom,” which were to be received and understood by the saints. They were not for Israel, whose hearts were dull and could not understand them.

In **Matthew 25:14-30**, the parable of the talents, we have presented a pictorial representation of the Lord's judgment to His sons. Jesus Christ is the Man who is to go away to a far country, to receive a kingdom and then to return. He left his servants (Christians) with His goods (meaning His personal possessions), and each were given a different amount of talents [monetary value] according to their abilities. They were to do business of trading the talents they were given while He was away. The servant who was given five talents traded them for five more and the one given two talents traded them for two more. But the one given one talent, hid the talent, and did nothing with it. When the Man returned, He came back to reckon with the servants, so that they could give account of what they had done with the talents that they were given. The servants who had doubled their portion of talents, were rewarded from the Lord, saying,

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in little things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matthew 25:21)

But the servant who did nothing with the talent he was given was rebuked by his Lord, who called him a “*wicked and lazy servant*” (**Matthew 25:26**) and cast him into the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth (an eastern expression that signifies sorrow and regret).

This parable presents a clear picture of what the future holds for all Christians at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It presents the account of Jesus Christ when He ascended to heaven to prepare a kingdom followed by the prophecy of His return for His Church. He has left His servants, the Church, with His goods (i.e., the Holy Spirit and the Word of God) in order that they may produce good works for the building of His kingdom during this present time. When Christ returns He will judge His servants according to the works they have done.

A life composed of works done in the power of the Holy Spirit will result in rewards and in entering the kingdom. A life composed of works done in the flesh will result in loss and being cast into outer darkness, the darkness outside of Christ’s presence. Christians, at this point, will be shown to be either qualified or disqualified to occupy positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

who will render to each one according to his deeds, eternal (in this context, means “age-lasting” or “millennial”) life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality;

but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness---indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. (Romans 2:5-11)

In the previous Scripture, Christians are divided into two categories, those *walking in the light* and those *walking in darkness*. Those Christians who continue harboring sins of the flesh [walking in darkness] will be treasuring up wrath in the Day of wrath, and only those Christians who patiently endure in divine good works [walking in the light] will possess Millennial life.

There is even a greater warning given to a distinct group of Christians, which is revealed in the Book of **Hebrews**:

For if we sin willfully [fall away; apostatize] after we have received the knowledge [epignosis] of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26, 27)

How can this sin differ from any other sin that Christians can commit and confess? The only way to properly understand the “willful sin” in **Hebrews 10:26**, for which there is no sacrifice [no repentance], is to view it within the context of the Book of Hebrews. The matter pertaining to this sin has to do with “*so great a salvation*” (**Hebrews 2:3**), a salvation relative to the land that God has promised — the occupation of which requires a firm belief (faith) in God’s Word. Within the scope of this salvation, the Book of Hebrews relates this “willful sin” back to the type, the Israelites (less Joshua and Caleb) at Kadesh-Barnea and their refusal to believe God’s promise, to go into the Promised Land and to possess it — the land that God had called them to inherit. And because of their rebellion against God, which clearly demonstrated their lack of faith (**Hebrews 4:2; 10:36-39**), they committed a sin against God for which there was no sacrifice (**Numbers 13**).

Because of Israel’s lack of faith in believing God’s promise that they could enter and successfully occupy the land of Canaan, even after

witnessing God's miraculous acts of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God would no longer permit them (except Joshua and Caleb who did in fact demonstrate proper faith in God's promise) to occupy Canaan; but instead, confined them to the wilderness for a period of forty years, until all (except for Joshua and Caleb) who were twenty years of age and older died (**Numbers 14**). And even though Israel realized their most serious error and exercised repentance (a change of mind), God would not repent regarding His judgment.

Because of the willful sin (apostasy) that they committed against the Lord, there was no room for repentance. The word "apostasy" is the Greek word *apostasia* (Strong's #G646) which means "defection from truth; falling away; forsake."

And Christians, as the antitype, can commit the same exact sin relative to the heavenly land, the kingdom of the heavens, for which they have been called. This willful sin has to do with falling away or "apostasy" after a Christian has come into a mature knowledge of the Word of the kingdom — the things surrounding the heavenly Promised Land.

When one turns back after receiving the message of the kingdom, a kingdom which God has prepared for him and is founded upon Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, then he has committed this willful sin. This will ultimately result in the Christian failing to come into possession of this "*so great a salvation*" at the Judgment Seat of Christ. A Christian committing this act of apostasy, according to **Hebrews 10:29**, has sinned against Christ's work at Calvary, considering it a common thing:

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Before the foundation of the world, God's ultimate plan and purpose for His Son was to award Him a kingdom. Because He regards this

matter at the highest level of importance, He considers the “willful sin” (apostasy, i.e. falling away) of a kingdom believer to be committing an act of complete rejection against Christ, and an act of insult against the Spirit. The word *trampled* in the Scripture above is the Greek word *katapateo* (Strong’s #G2662) which means “to reject with disdain: — trample, tread (down, underfoot).

The Judgment Seat of Christ for some believers will be an awesome and glorious day, but for others it will be the most terrifying day they will ever experience. For those who do not study the Scriptures and are deceived into thinking that *the Lord is not a judging or vengeful God, but is always a rewarding God*, resulting in their failure to follow or fear Him, they will be totally horrified on that Day of judgment.

“For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:30, 31)

At that time, the fear of the Lord will be realized and a just payment will be rendered. Those Christians will wish they were back on earth going through the Tribulation! The good news is that one can repent and make the right choice to know and follow Him right *now*.