

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR
HOW GOD DEALS
WITH THE BELIEVERS' SINS—
THE GEHENNA OF FIRE IN THE KINGDOM

There are many places in the Bible that mention God's punishment for the defeated Christians in the millennial kingdom. We will take a look at these places now. Later, we will draw a conclusion concerning them.

THE ENTRANCE INTO AND
THE POSITION IN THE KINGDOM

Let us first consider Matthew 18:1-3. "In that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens? And He called a little child to Him and stood him in their midst and said, Truly I say to you, Unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens." Here the disciples asked a question concerning the kingdom of the heavens. It is a question concerning greatness in the kingdom. It is not a question concerning salvation and perdition, but a question concerning being great or small, high or low, in the kingdom. The Lord Jesus showed us that unless we turn and become like little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Following this, verse 4 says, "He therefore who will humble himself like this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens." Verse 3 gives us the condition for entering the kingdom, while verse 4 gives us the way to be great in the kingdom. Verse 3 says that we must turn and become like children before we can enter the kingdom, and verse 4 says that if we continue to be children and humble ourselves, we will be the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens. This shows us that in the kingdom we should continue in the same way that we begin. The direction we face when we enter the kingdom should be the same direction we face when we continue in it. To enter into the kingdom of the heavens, we must turn and become like little children; and to be great in the kingdom of the heavens, we must continue to be humble like children. Here the Lord continues to bring up the matter of being like children.

Following this, the Lord said, "And whoever receives one such little child because of My name, receives Me" (v. 5). Whoever receives someone like this child because of Christ's name, that is, someone who turns to become like a child and who continues to be humble like a child, receives Christ. "And whoever stumbles one of these little ones who believe in Me, it is more profitable for him that a great millstone be hung around his neck and he be drowned in the open sea" (v. 6). This word indicates that stumbling others is a bigger problem than suffering and being killed in an ignoble way. Suppose someone kills you and casts your body into the sea. You are not even buried properly. Indeed this would be an unfortunate tragedy. But if you stumble others, your fate will be worse than this. Verse 7 says, "Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! For it is necessary for stumbling blocks to come, but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes."

THE GEHENNA OF FIRE IN THE KINGDOM

Verses 1 through 7 are the general words of the Lord. We will just mention them briefly. We want to pay more attention to the words beginning in verse 8. The Lord Jesus expanded on this matter to point out that it is not only wrong to stumble others, but it is a serious and grave matter even to stumble yourself. Verse 8 says, "If your hand or your foot stumbles you, cut it off and cast it from you." Who does "you" refer to here? In verses 3 through 7, "you" refers to the disciples who asked the question in verse 1. After the Lord Jesus answered them, He told them to be watchful and not to stumble others. The Lord's words in verse 8 are directed at the same people. If a hand or a foot stumbles you, it is better to cut it off and cast it away. Of course, this need not be taken literally. If your hands steal and your feet walk in improper paths, that is, if there is sin and lust in you, you must deal with them. "It is better for you to enter into life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire" (v. 8).

The Lord shows us that if Christians tolerate sin, they will suffer either the casting into the eternal fire with both hands and both feet, or the entering into life with one hand or one foot. This shows us clearly that there are those who deal with their sins and lusts in this age and who will enter into the kingdom with one hand or one foot. There are also those who will leave their lusts unchecked and will be cast into the eternal fire. The fire is an eternal fire, but it does not say that they will remain in the eternal fire forever. What the Lord Jesus did not say is as significant as what He did say. If a person has become a Christian but his hands or feet sin all the time, he will suffer the punishment of the eternal fire in the kingdom of the heavens. He will not suffer this punishment eternally, but will suffer it only in the age of the kingdom.

What does it mean to cut off a hand or a foot? When a man cuts off his hand or foot, he can still sin. If he does not have a foot, he can travel by car. If one of his hands is cut off, he can still sin with the other hand. It is not necessarily the Lord's intention that we cut off a hand or foot, for even if we do cut off a hand, we still cannot remove our lust. Therefore, this word must not refer to the outward body, but to the inward lust. What we have to cut off is that which drives us to sin.

Another thing that we have to realize is that the person spoken of here must be a Christian, for only a Christian is clean in his body as a whole and can thus enter into life after dealing with his lust in a single member of his body. It would not be enough for the unbelievers to cut off a hand or a foot. Even if they were to cut off both hands and both feet, they would still have to go to hell. In order to enter the kingdom of the heavens, it is better for a Christian to have an incomplete body than to go into eternal fire because of incomplete dealing.

Following this, verse 9 says, "And if your eye stumbles you, pluck it out and cast it from you; it is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be cast into the Gehenna of fire." This shows us that if a saved person does not deal with his lust, he will not be able to enter into life, but will go into eternal fire. The eternal fire here is the Gehenna of fire. The Bible shows us that a Christian has the possibility of suffering the Gehenna of fire. Although

he can suffer the Gehenna of fire, he cannot suffer it forever. He can only suffer it during the age of the kingdom.

Matthew 18 is not the only portion of Scripture that says this. Other portions of the Bible also contain the same teaching. For example, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7 contains clear words of the same kind. Matthew 5:21-22 says, "You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders shall be liable to the judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the judgment of the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, Moreh, shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire." At the beginning of chapter five, we read that the Lord Jesus saw the multitude. But He did not teach the multitude; rather, He taught the disciples (v. 1). The Sermon on the Mount is for the disciples. Therefore, the one who reviles others in verse 22 is a brother. He calls another brother Raca, that is, good-for-nothing, or Moreh, that is, a fool. When he calls his brother this way, he shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire. This does not refer to an unsaved person, for an unsaved person will go to hell even if he does not call anyone Moreh. Every time the Bible talks about works, it refers to one who belongs to God. If such a one does not belong to God, there is no need to mention such things. This is a saved person, a brother, but because he has reviled his brother, he is liable to the Gehenna of fire.

Verse 23 says, "Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you." Many times others hold things against us on purpose, and there is nothing that we can do about it; but if others complain because of our reviling, we have to be careful when we offer up our gift at the altar. If you think poorly of a brother and have spoken something against him, you have to go to him and deal with the matter. "Leave your gift there before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (v. 24). The important thing is to be reconciled to your brother. Verse 25 says, "Be well disposed quickly toward your opponent at law, while you are with him on the way." Your brother is the plaintiff, and you are the defendant. Now he is bringing you to court: "Lest the opponent deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison." Such a thing will happen in the kingdom. The kingdom is very strict.

Tonight I will speak a few frank and serious words. No two brothers or two sisters who are at odds with each other can appear in the kingdom together. In the coming kingdom, there will only be love and mercy; only those who love and show mercy to one another can be in the kingdom of the heavens. If I am involved in an argument with a brother, and if the matter is not dealt with in this age, then in the future, either both of us will be barred from the kingdom, or only one of us will get in. It cannot be that both of us will enter in. It is not possible for us to have a problem with each other and yet reign at the same time in the millennium in the future. In the kingdom all the believers are in one accord. There are absolutely no barriers between any two persons. If while we are on earth today, we have some friction with any brother or sister, or if we cause a hindrance to any brother or sister, we have to be careful. Either we will go in and the other will be excluded, or the other will go in and we will be excluded, or both will be excluded. The Lord says that while you are with him on the way you have to be reconciled to him. That

means that while you and he are alive and before the Lord Jesus comes back, you have to be reconciled to him. The Lord Jesus will not tolerate two enemies complaining about each other in the kingdom. Today we may harbor complaints about others very easily; but these complaints will either keep us outside, keep others outside, or keep both us and others outside the kingdom. It seems that the church today is very free, but it will not be like this in that day. "While you are with him on the way," says the Lord. If you die, or if he dies, or if the Lord Jesus returns, the way is ended. Hence, you have to settle the matter quickly before the Lord comes back and while both he and you are on the way. "Lest the opponent deliver you to the judge." The judge is the Lord Jesus. "And the judge to the officer." The officer is the angel. "And you be thrown into prison." This shows us clearly that a brother who has offended another brother will suffer very severe punishment.

If you study this passage carefully, you will see that the prison here is the Gehenna of fire in verse 22, because verse 23 begins with "therefore." The words from verse 23 on are an explanation of the words in verse 22. Verse 22 says that anyone who calls his brother Moreh will be liable to the Gehenna of fire. Verses 23-25 follow by saying that those who are not reconciled to their brothers will be put into prison. Hence, the prison in verse 25 is very clearly the Gehenna of fire in verse 22. We are clear that there is no possibility for a Christian to perish eternally, but if a Christian has any unrepented of and unconfessed sins, which are not forgiven, he will suffer the Gehenna of fire. Notice the severity of the words of the Lord in verse 26: "Truly I say to you, You shall by no means come out from there until you pay the last quadrans." There is the possibility to come out if one has paid off everything. In the coming age, there is still the possibility of forgiveness, but one cannot come out until he pays the last quadrans and clears up everything with his brother.

Verses 27 through 30 form another section. This section is similar to the preceding one. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman in order to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." The commandment in the Old Testament says that we should not commit adultery, but the commandment of the New Testament says that we cannot even have adulterous thoughts. The word woman in the original language refers to another man's wife. If the woman is not another man's wife, there would be no possibility for adultery, because adultery is unfaithfulness in marriage. If this is not another man's wife, this cannot be considered adultery; it is fornication. The Bible judges fornication, but not as much as it judges adultery. Here it is saying that an adulterous thought is produced towards another's wife.

Second, the scope of the word in the original language for look here is not as broad as that of our word look. The word look brings too many under the category of this sin. In the original language it does not imply a casual looking but an intentional looking. Looking could simply be glancing at something accidentally on the street. Watch may be a better word because watching is an intentional looking. Furthermore, in the original language the watching here is done with a specific purpose. We could translate, "every one who watches a woman with the purpose of lusting after her." What the Lord condemns are not the sudden thoughts that enter your mind. What He is dealing with is the further watching for the purpose of lusting, after a sudden thought

comes in. In other words, our sins do not lie in Satan's inciting of the flesh by giving us filthy thoughts. Our sins lie in the further watching after Satan has given us a sudden thought. This is adultery. Sudden thoughts are from Satan. Watching is from you. Sudden thoughts are temptations. Your watching is your accepting of the temptations. We must know how to differentiate between these two things.

Verse 29 says, "So if your right eye stumbles you, pluck it out and cast it from you." If your right eye causes you to watch, pluck it out and throw it away. "For it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna." If the lust is not removed, if the sin is not dealt with, a person will be "cast into Gehenna." Then verse 30 says, "And if your right hand stumbles you, cut it off and cast it from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to pass away into Gehenna." These are words that the Lord Jesus spoke to the disciples. Christ told those who belonged to Him and who desired that their righteousness would excel that of the Pharisees and the scribes (v. 20) that they have to deal with their sins. If they allow sin to develop in them, though they will not eternally perish, there is the possibility that they will "pass away into Gehenna." This is what the Lord shows us in the book of Matthew.

FEARING HIM WHO HAS AUTHORITY TO CAST INTO GEHENNA

Now let us look at what other places in the Bible say concerning this matter. Luke 12:1 says, "Meanwhile, when the myriads of the crowd were gathered together so that they trampled on one another, He began to say to His disciples first." He did not speak to everyone, but to the disciples first. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." The Lord's word proves that the disciples are not the hypocrites; they are the Lord's people. Then in verses 4 and 5 the Lord said, "My friends, Do not fear those who kill the body and afterward have nothing more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear Him who, after killing, has authority to cast into Gehenna." The Word of God is clear enough. It tells us, not once, but many times, that it is possible for a Christian to be "cast into Gehenna." It says this clearly here. The Lord told the disciples not to fear those who kill the body but afterward can do nothing more. They should not fear what some can do to their body, as long as this is all they can do. But they should fear the One who can cast them into Gehenna.

The verses following also prove that the ones spoken of here are the disciples, that is, the believers. Verses 6 and 7 say, "Are not five sparrows sold for two assaria? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your head have all been numbered. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows." Only Christians are sparrows. The unsaved ones are not sparrows; they are crows. In Matthew the lilies in the field refer to the Christians and so do the sparrows. The sparrows neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns (Matt. 6:26). This refers to Christians and not to unbelievers. Here we are told clearly that it is possible for God's "sparrows" to be "cast into Gehenna." Note also that it says the hairs of these ones have all been numbered. God would not exercise that much care on unbelievers. Therefore, what is meant here is that those belonging to the Lord need not fear what others do to their bodies. The One they must fear is God, for God has the authority to cast them "into Gehenna." We have to fear

God who has the authority to deal with our souls. We have no fear of those who can only kill our bodies.

The next two verses, verses 8 and 9, are very precious. "Moreover, I tell you, Everyone who confesses in Me before men, the Son of Man will also confess in him before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God." Christians can be divided into two classes: those who confess His name and those who do not. Some confess His name while others do not. Some are prepared to be persecuted while others are not. Some will only be Christians secretly. They desire man's glory. Others confess the Lord openly and are ready to be martyrs. Hence, you can see whom the Lord is talking about in these verses in Luke 12. We should not fear any suffering that comes through confessing His name. If we do not confess His name, our sin is more serious than all other sins. Consequently, He will not confess our names before the angels of God. When you take verses 1 through 9 together as a whole, you see that the "casting into Gehenna" in verse 5 is equivalent to the Lord not confessing their name before the angels in verse 9. The confessing before the angels can be illustrated by an example. Suppose a teenager has done something wrong and ends up in jail. His parents or other family members can bail him out of his trouble and let him slide by. But suppose that the child is really bad, and his parents feel that he needs some suffering. As a result, his parents will not bail him out. The same is true with the believers. Unless the Lord confesses our names, we will fall into punishment.

There is a wonderful word in Revelation 3:5. "He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." At the beginning of the kingdom, before the judgment seat, the angels of God will take the Christians up to God. The book of life will be there. In the book of life the names of all the Christians are recorded. There will be many angels and many Christians. The Lord Jesus will also be there. One or more angels will then read off the names from the book of life, and the Lord Jesus will confess some of the names. Those whose names He confesses will then enter the kingdom. When the names of the others are read, the Lord will not say anything. In other words, He will not confess their names. The angels will then put a mark against these names. Hence, the overcomers' names are clean in the book of life, while the defeated ones' names are marked. As for the unsaved ones, their names do not appear in the book of life at all. One group does not have their names in the book. Another group has their names there, but their names are marked. And still a third group, by the time of the kingdom, has their names preserved in the same way as they were first written in the book.

If your name is marked at the judgment seat, that does not mean that you are through and are no longer saved. Revelation 20:15 says, "And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." This shows us that those whose names are not recorded in the book of life will be eternally in the lake of fire. Those whose names do not appear in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. This is at the beginning of the new heaven and new earth. We cannot say that the ones in Revelation 3 do not have their names written in the book of life. We can only say that their names have been marked. By then they will not be thrown into the lake of fire because their

names are already in the book of life. Eternal salvation is most secure; it can never be shaken. But on the other hand, there is a danger. If we tolerate sin, if we do not forgive others, if we commit adultery, if we revile the brothers, if we are afraid to suffer, to be ashamed, to be persecuted, and to confess the Lord, we have to be careful, for God will cast us "into Gehenna" so that we may be punished temporarily.

THE HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH

There are similar passages in the Bible that speak of these matters. Revelation 2:11 tells us that those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death, and Revelation 20:6 says that one group of people will not die again and that the second death will not have authority over them. The second death is the lake of fire at the end of Revelation 20. This means that the defeated ones will suffer the hurt of the second death. Although they will not suffer the second death itself, they will suffer the hurt of the second death. Once a person is saved, he will not suffer the second death. But this does not guarantee that he will not suffer the hurt of the second death.

We know that the time of the lake of fire and brimstone is the time when the new heaven and the new earth begins. Satan, the world, and death will all be cast into the lake of fire at that time (Rev. 20:10, 14). Also at that time a man will be cast into the lake of fire if his name is not recorded in the book of life. That will be the time when unbelievers are officially put into the lake of fire. However, during the millennium, the defeated Christians will suffer the hurt of the second death. Of course, this dealing will not be like the dealing that the unbelievers will have; it is not for eternity. If a Christian is joined to the world and if he loves the world and the things of the world, the Lord will allow him to go into corruption, to suffer a little of what the unbelievers will suffer. This is what being hurt by the second death in Revelation 2 means, and this word is spoken to Christians. The word "hurt" in the original language means to injure someone and to damage him. The second death will cause pain for some. From the time of the great white throne on, there is the second death itself, which is the suffering for eternity in the lake of fire and of brimstone. But in the millennium there is only the hurt of the second death. If some Christians have not dealt with their sins, they will still suffer the hurt and pain of the second death.

THE END BEING TO BE BURNED

Let us now read two passages from the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 6:4-6 says, "For it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and yet have fallen away, to renew themselves again unto repentance." These verses describe a person who has many qualifications. It is impossible for him to be an unsaved person. He has seen the light. He has seen the revealed God, the Only Begotten of the Father. He has known the love of God, and he has tasted the heavenly gift, the unique gift, Jesus Christ. In the Bible, gifts as a plural noun refer to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and gift as a singular noun refers to the unique gift, the only begotten Son of God, as in John 3:16. This gift is different from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This person not only has God and the Lord Jesus, but has also become a partaker of the Holy Spirit. He knows God, he has tasted the Lord Jesus, and he has the Holy Spirit living within him. Furthermore, he has tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age. The powers of the coming age are the powers of the millennial kingdom. The gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit are particularly abundant in the millennial kingdom. The

millennial kingdom will be full of works of power, miracles, wonders, and other such things. To say that one has tasted the powers of the coming age is to say that one has tasted the things of the millennial kingdom. Hence, this person is definitely a saved person.

If such a person leaves the word of the beginning of Christ today and slips and falls, there is no repentance for him. He cannot start all over again to believe in the Lord Jesus. He has too much history with the Lord already. He has received so much rain. He has fallen and does not bring forth good things for God, but has brought forth thorns and thistles. He, like "the earth, which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and brings forth vegetation suitable to those for whose sake also it is cultivated, partakes of blessing from God. But if it brings forth thorns and thistles, it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned" (vv. 7-8).

Notice three things about such a person and his end. First, he is disapproved. The word "disapproved" here is the same word as that used in 1 Corinthians 9:27 where Paul said that he feared that though he had preached the gospel to others, he himself would be rejected and would not be used by God anymore in this age and in the kingdom. To be disapproved, to be rejected, means that God will reject such a one and will not use him anymore in the kingdom. Second, such a person is "near a curse." The verse does not say that he will receive a curse, but the punishment that he receives is similar to a curse. He will not perish forever, but he will suffer the hurt of the second death and will suffer the Gehenna of fire in the kingdom. Third, his "end is to be burned." What is this? For example, a few weeks ago, I intended to burn up some land in Jen-ru. Could I burn the land forever? Could I burn the land for even five years? The burning here refers to something temporary.

Here it speaks about burning, whereas Matthew 5 says that some will be liable to the Gehenna of fire. If you put these two passages together, they match each other. If a Christian receives all these wonderful things but does not bear good fruit to God, but rather thorns and thistles, he will be burned. However this burning will only be for a while. Even an elementary school boy knows that if you burn a piece of land, the burning will stop after all the thorns are burned up. The burning in the kingdom will go on at most for a thousand years. How long it will actually burn depends on you. If you have brought forth many thorns and thistles, then there will be more burning. If you have brought forth few thorns and thistles, then there will be less burning.

How many things are there in us that are still not dealt with? How many things have not been cleansed away by the Lord's blood, and how many things are not yet confessed, dealt with, and settled with the brothers and sisters? These are the thorns and thistles referred to by the Lord. In Matthew 5 the Lord said that one cannot go out from there until every quadrans is paid. All the debts have to be paid. When everything is burned away, all the debts will be paid.

A Christian is likened to a field, and his improper behavior is likened to thorns and thistles. Suppose I have a five-acre piece of land. Is it possible that after it has been burned by fire, only two acres are left and three acres are gone? This is impossible. What is burned are the thorns and

thistles. The field itself cannot be burned. In other words, only those things in Adam that are cursed, that should be removed but have not been removed, are to be burned. They are the object of the burning of the Gehenna of fire. The life that God has given us cannot be touched by fire. Therefore, after the thorns and thistles are burned away, the land will still remain. No part of it will be taken away. There is absolutely no problem with our salvation, but there is so much that has grown on top of it, so much that has come out of the flesh. If these things have not been dealt with by the blood of Jesus, we must pass through quite a bit of dealing.

Now let us look at another place, Hebrews 10:26-29. "For when we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of bulls and goats for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire, which is to consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without compassion on the testimony of two or three witnesses. By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing?" These verses refer to someone who has rejected Christ and returned to Judaism. He thinks that by spending a few dollars he can buy a bull or a goat as an offering for sin. But if someone has come to know Christ and returns to Judaism, he is trampling underfoot the Son of God and is regarding His blood as a common thing. He is treating the Lord like a bull or a goat. To him there is no difference between the Lord and a bull or a goat. The verse concludes, "And has insulted the Spirit of grace." While the Holy Spirit is giving him grace, he is insulting Him by going back to Judaism. These verses show us the way of an apostate. I will not say that such a one is saved; rather, I will only say that such a one may be saved. Perhaps he is not saved. The apostle does not tell us if such a one is saved or not. He only says that if a person has come to Christ and then returns to Judaism, he will suffer worse punishment. His end is an expectation of judgment and fervor of fire. Here we see a kind of fire.

In addition to all of these passages, we also have the Lord's own words in John 15. Verse 2 says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it." These are not branches that have nothing to do with Him; these are branches in Him. What is indicated here may not refer to the temporary punishment, but to the discipline of this age. But look at verse 6: "If one does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Some branches will be thrown into the fire and burned. Some branches have sprouted and have borne green leaves, but do not have fruit. Though they have life inwardly, they do not have fruit outwardly. The Lord Jesus said that they would be cast out, dried up, and burned in the fire. Here we see clearly that Christians may have to pass through the fire.

Having read all these passages, we can conclude that if a Christian does not take care of his sins properly, there will be punishment waiting for him. The Bible shows us clearly what kind of punishment this will be. It is not an ordinary kind of punishment but the punishment of the "Gehenna of fire." But it is the fire in the kingdom, not in eternity.

The question now is this: What kind of sin will bring us into this state? Once a person is saved, it is important that he deal with his sins. None of the sins that he has confessed, repented of, dealt with, and made recompense for under the blood of the Lord Jesus will come back to him at the judgment seat. All of these will be gone. Even the greatest sins will be gone. But there are many

sins which will not be passed over. These are the sins that one regards in his heart. Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, / The Lord will not hear." What are the sins that the heart regards? The heart is where our love and desires lie. The heart represents our emotion. It represents the psychological man. If the heart regards iniquity, the Lord will not hear us. Many confessions are made only because the person knows that he has sinned. There is no hatred for the sin nor condemnation of the sin. Such a one the Lord will not hear. Moreover, if we have a problem with another person that has not been solved, or if there are things that need to be forgiven but have not been forgiven, or if we have wronged others or the Lord, we have to deal with these things in a specific way. At the same time, we have to put these things under the Lord's blood. Only then will these things be dealt with, and we be delivered from the coming judgment.

SUMMARY

Now let us summarize what we have seen. The future of Christians is very simple. For a saved Christian the question of the new heaven and new earth, including all eternity, is solved. But the age of the kingdom is controversial. No one dares to say anything about what will happen. What we have to solve today is the problem of the kingdom. In the kingdom there are many ranks of Christians. Many will reign with Christ because they have worked faithfully and have undergone persecution, reproach, and suffering. Some may not have undergone persecution, reproach, and suffering, but they do not have sins either. They have lived a clean life. Although they have done nothing that deserves special merit, they have at least given a cup of water to a little one for the sake of the Lord's name (Matt. 10:42). They will also receive a reward, but their reward will be very small.

In the age of the kingdom, some Christians will receive a reward in the kingdom. Some will receive a great reward; others will receive a small reward.

Those who will not receive a reward are also divided into a few categories. One group will not enter into the kingdom at all. The Bible does not tell us where they will go. It only says that they will be kept outside the kingdom in the outer darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 13:28). They will be left outside the glory of God. Second, there will be many who, in addition to not having worked well, have specific sins not yet dealt with. They are saved, but when they die, they still have sins which they have not repented of and dealt with. They still have the problem of sin with them. These ones will be temporarily put into the fire. They will come out only after they have paid all their debts. This will last at most until the end of the kingdom. I do not know how long this period will actually be.

There are still many things which we are not clear about concerning the future, but the Bible has shown us enough. Although there are details which we have not yet seen, we do know what the children of God will face. Some will receive a reward; some will go into corruption. Some will be put into prison, and still some will be cast into the fire and be burned.

The matter of our salvation is quite clear. When a man trusts in the Lord Jesus, both salvation and eternal life are settled for him. But after a person is saved and up until he dies, his works, that is, his failures or his victories, will determine his fate in the kingdom. Our God is a just God.

On the one hand, our salvation is free, and those who believe will have eternal life. No one can overturn this fact. On the other hand, we cannot sin at will just because we have received eternal life. If we bring forth thorns and thistles, we will be burned. If the Lord Jesus cannot disassociate us from our sins and if we have not settled everything in our lives, God has no choice but to chastise us in the future. He has no choice but to cleanse us with specific punishments, so that we can be together with Him in the new heaven and new earth. God is a just God. What He has prepared is also just. Once we have seen these things, we must learn the lesson and take the warnings from God.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE IN READING THE BIBLE

Concerning the way we study the Bible, I would like to mention a few things. First, there is a group of people who believe only in grace. Whenever they read about things related to the kingdom in the Bible, they apply it to the Jews. If you listen to their sermons and read their books, they invariably push everything related to the kingdom onto the Jews. Everything related to grace is for the church, and all the terrible things are for the Jews. To them, everything burdensome, difficult, and demanding is for the Jews, not for us. This is foolishness. God's Word is for His children, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. Some say that Paul never specifically said that his Epistles were written to Gentiles, and therefore, they are not for Gentiles. But this kind of explanation explains away and cuts apart the Word of God. Others say that the portions of the Scriptures quoted earlier refer to unbelievers only. But how can the distinction between overcomers and non-overcomers exist among the sinners? This is foolish talk. The Word of God shows us these matters in a clear and definite way. We have to eat what God has given us, whether it is sweet or bitter. When men hear about grace, they are happy; when they hear about the kingdom, they are unhappy. But the Word is balanced. On the one hand, we see grace; on the other hand, we see righteousness.

There is the fable of the eagle and the cat. Once a cat met an eagle. The eagle said to the cat, "The sky is really great. It has this and it has that. Would you like me to take you up to the sky?" The cat said, "No, I do not care to go there." When the eagle asked why not, the cat said, "There are no mice in the sky. If there were mice there, I would go. But since there aren't, I won't." Heaven is so holy; sin, the world, and Satan are not there. If God brings you to heaven, will you be able to live there? If we do not turn today, we will have to wait until we are worthy to enter in. It is true that the Lord Jesus has saved us, but subjectively speaking, if we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work the Lord Jesus into us, God will have to chastise us that we may receive the benefit and be counted worthy to be with Him. If we only preach grace without preaching the kingdom, the church will suffer and God's children will suffer; and when the kingdom comes, there will be even greater suffering. I must speak as I ought to speak.

I admit that after my speaking in these few days, some will increase their opposition against me. If these are my words, I am willing to see them opposed. Even I myself would oppose them. But if these things are the Word of God, and if God has spoken them, what can I do? How I wish that I did not have to talk about these things. How I wish that I could preach something that everyone would like to hear. I am not Matthew. I am not Mark. I am not Paul. I did not write the book of Hebrews, and I did not write Revelation. If I were the writer, I could change things. But these things are God's Word. God has spoken them and determined that they should be so. My friends,

when you read the Bible, you have to read what God has said. You must not consider what man has said. You should only care for what God has said.

The greatest difficulty today in studying the Bible lies in the prejudice in the mind of God's children. They have what they consider as truth and what they consider as heresy. They think that everything that matches them is truth, and everything that does not match them and that differs from them is heresy. Regardless of how scriptural a basis there is for it, any thought or concept contrary to theirs is considered heresy. But if that is one's attitude, he is through. At issue today is what God has said.

I am happy in my heart because I can preach the "heresy" of God's Word and I can oppose the "truth" in man's teaching. Today we have to be clear before the Lord. We cannot be under any other authority but that of God's Word. I know no other authority. I do not know what theology is; I do not know what man's word is; I do not know what the tradition of the church is. I only know what the Bible says, and only what it says counts. We must subject ourselves to it only. We cannot change God's Word. The Word of God tells us the destiny of His children. It tells us what we will experience in the kingdom. We must pay attention to these issues because sooner or later we will face them again. If we pay attention to them we will be careful how we live on earth today.

The second thing that we must realize is that only those who understand the truth can oppose heresy. One heresy cannot oppose another heresy. But all heresies are not pure heresy; they are the truth plus a little error. Heresy is to add wrong things to right things. Add a little of man's thought to God's thought, and you will have heresy.

Because Catholicism does not fully know the truth in the Bible, it preaches the doctrine of purgatory. If you do not know the truth that we have released in the last few meetings, you will not be able to tell whether the doctrine of purgatory is right or wrong. Now that you have heard these messages, you will realize that the doctrine of purgatory is absolutely wrong. You can say that it is heresy. In the Bible we see that God's discipline of the Christians happens in the millennium, but Catholics say that there is a purging going on today. They say that if a Christian does not live up to standard on earth today, he will not be able to go to heaven. Hence, he must be purged. Therefore, they say that as soon as a Christian dies, he begins to be purged and is purged until the job is done. However, there is absolutely no such teaching in the Bible. The Bible never says that as soon as a Christian dies, he will be purged in Hades. The Bible shows us that there will be the discipline in the kingdom in the future, but there is no purging in Hades today.

Second, Catholics make another grave mistake. They think that if they secure for themselves indulgences while they are alive or if the priests pray for them after they die, they will be relieved of some of the purging of purgatory. But the Bible never says anything like this. The Bible says only that he who has mercy on others will obtain mercy. Praying by the priest will not do anything for the dead. The Bible never teaches us to pray for the dead.

Third, Catholics tell people that a man will not be saved until he has been completely purged in purgatory. This is an absolute overturning of the teaching of the Bible. The Bible shows us that

there is no other name in heaven or on earth besides that of the Lord Jesus whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Only He can save us. Apart from the Lord Jesus, there is no salvation. Discipline and chastisement are not for salvation but for sanctification. The matter of our salvation is settled long before God disciplines us, but there are still things in us that do not match Him. There are still imperfections and areas that are not up to standard. Therefore, there is the discipline in this age and the discipline in the coming kingdom.

Once a person is clear about the biblical truth, he will see the heresy in Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church takes a few verses and utilizes them for her own purpose. But if we know the biblical truth, we will realize that the doctrine of purgatory annuls grace. Thank God that, although I am a filthy sinner, through the Lord Jesus I am now saved. When I die, I do not have to be purged any further, because salvation is not of me, but of the Lord Jesus. Surely I am saved. Now we know what discipline is. Discipline is God's means to make us perfect as He is perfect. He chastises us so that we will be like Him, even the same as He is. This has nothing to do with our salvation. It is a matter within His family.

Finally, only after we know this will we be able to deal with the heresy in Protestantism. Today among the Protestants, two kinds of errors are being promulgated. First, one group of Protestant theologians proposes that since a man is "once saved, always saved," he can get away with anything in his conduct. Since a Christian is saved eternally, they say, he could be evil until the day he dies and still be in the kingdom. He would, however, occupy a lower position in the kingdom. His greatest loss is confined to occupying a lower position in the kingdom. This kind of teaching will make a man loose and irresponsible. What then is grace to them? To them grace is an excuse for looseness and licentiousness.

There is another group of Protestants who say that after a man believes, there is still the possibility that he will not be saved. Perhaps he can be saved and unsaved again three or four times within a day. If that were the case, the book of life would get very messy indeed. A brother once said that if we are not eternally saved once we have believed, then the book of life will be extremely thick. My name alone would be deleted and inserted many, many times. If a man is condemned as soon as he sins and if he is bound for hell as soon as he transgresses, we must wonder whether salvation is by grace or by works.

Both of these groups are too extreme, even though both have their scriptural basis. The Bible shows us clearly that when a man is saved, he is eternally saved. The Bible also shows us clearly that it is possible for a Christian to be "cast into Gehenna" temporarily. But the problem is that some brothers hold onto one side, insisting that salvation is eternal and that there is no such thing as discipline in the kingdom, while other brothers hold onto the other side, insisting that if we can be "cast into Gehenna," eternal life is shaky, and therefore we can go into eternal perdition. But if we see the difference between the age of the kingdom and the eternal age and the difference between the temporary punishment of the millennium and eternal punishment, we will be clear that a Christian can receive punishment in the future, but at the same time, God has given His sheep eternal life, and they can never lose it. This knowledge gives us the boldness to say that once we are saved, we are eternally saved. After a man has been saved by grace, he will never perish again. Thus, not only have we properly settled the problem of the purgatory of Catholicism, but we have also made a clear distinction between eternal salvation and discipline.

May the Lord grant us grace tonight and show us that the matter of eternal salvation is solved because of the work of Jesus of Nazareth, but as for one's situation in the kingdom, it is determined by the person himself.