

The Theology of Divine Judgment in the Bible

A Study of God's Past, Present, and Future Judgments and Their Implications for Mankind

Gerhard F. Hasel
Formerly of Andrews University
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The biblical concept of judgment is a major theme in Scripture permeating both the Old and the New Testaments. The topic of judgment has many facets and aspects that call for attention. The expectation of judgment is present in both Testaments and our study will survey major aspects of this theme in the Bible. First we will turn to the Old Testament and then our attention will be directed to the New Testament teaching on this subject. Our discussion cannot hope to exhaust the subject. It seeks to delineate the concept of judgment in its various emphases.

I. Divine Judgment in the OT

1. God as Judge

The OT depicts the Lord as the merciful God who saves, but also as the holy Lord who will punish (Ex 20:5-6; Isa 6:3-5). God is Judge from the beginning. After Adam and Eve fell into sin God enters this new arena of experience by calling man to repentance with the question, "Where are you?" and by judging the serpent who allowed himself to be used by Satan to be condemned to crawl on the belly and to eat dust (Gen 3:14).¹

God is seen as Judge of the whole antediluvian world by bringing a flood over the whole earth, (Gen 6:9), but saving a faithful remnant in the form of Noah and his family (Gen 7:23).² Later God judges the builders of the tower of Babel by confusing their language and thus scattering them (Gen 11:1-9). Abraham knows that God is Judge and appealed to "the Judge of all the earth" (Gen 18:25)³ who will deal justly.

Throughout the OT God is referred to as the One who will judge righteously (Ps 96:10, 13; 98:9). The psalmist cries to God to be his Judge and to judge him according to His righteousness. "Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness" (Ps 35:24; cf. 7:9; 43:1). Thus God is seen as Judge in the past and in the present. As will be seen He is also Judge in the near and distant future.

2. God's Judgments Upon the Nations, Israel, the Individual and the World

a. **God's judgment upon the nations.** There are numerous passages in the OT where statements are made regarding God's judgment upon the heathen nations. In Amos 1:3-2:5 God brings judgment upon Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom,

Ammon, and Moab. This judgment comes upon them because of specific sins which brought their cup of iniquity to overflowing.⁴

In Isaiah 13-23 we find judgment prophecies against Babylon (13:1-22; 21:1-10), Assyria (14:24-28), Philistia (14:29-32), Moab (15:1-16:14), Syria (17:1-14), Ethiopia (18:1-7), Egypt (19:1-25; 20:1-6), Edom and Arabia (21:11-17) and Tyre (23:1-18).⁵ The prophets Joel (3:9-17), Jonah, Zephaniah (2:4-15), Obadiah (chs. 1-6), Zechariah (9:1-17) and particularly Jeremiah (chs. 46-51) and Ezekiel (chs. 15-32) continue with judgment prophecies against the nations.⁶ These prophetic judgment speeches against the nations indicate that God is truly Judge over all the nations and that His sphere of judgment activity is as universal as is the sin and guilt of the nations.

b. God's judgment upon Israel. God is not merely Judge of the heathen nations of the closer and more distant surroundings of ancient Israel. God also judges His own people Israel on the basis of their faithfulness to the norms that govern the beneficent covenant between Him and His people.

God had saved His people from Egyptian slavery in the Exodus miracles and entered into a profound covenant relationship with His people on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19-24). In His covenant He graciously provided in the Decalogue (Ex 20:1-17) the ethical norms that govern the God-man and man-man relationships. God also established the sanctuary and its services so that Israel would not be lost if they fell into sin.⁷ They may indeed be forgiven and restored in full covenantal fellowship with God. The gracious covenant was renewed by Moses (Deuteronomy 27) and later by Joshua (Joshua 24). If Israel, however, should persist in rebellion God would have to judge His people. This judgment comes often in the form of a lawsuit based on the covenant.⁸ This so-called "covenant lawsuit" (*rib*) was announced by the prophets against Israel by Isaiah,⁹ Hosea,¹⁰ Amos,¹¹ Micah,¹² and Jeremiah.¹³ These prophets reveal God's case against Israel to indicate that God's case against His people is based on her covenant breach and that this calls for condemnation and judgment if they do not repent. In a larger sense it demonstrates that God is Lord of History and that the punishment of his people is deserved and righteous,¹⁴ because of their continued breach of the covenant norms (Hos 11:17).

What does the reality of divine judgment upon God's people Israel reveal about God as judge? The first fact that emerges is that God is both prosecutor and judge. As prosecutor He is the plaintiff who prosecutes in order to demonstrate Himself as protector and maintainer of the covenant. As Judge He maintains His righteousness and justice. The second fact that emerges is that God as judge is not capricious or arbitrary. The covenant lawsuit (*rib*) is grounded in the norms or regulations, i.e., the laws, on which the covenantal relationship is based.¹⁵ Israel persists in breaking these laws of God. The third fact that presents itself is that God is the Protector of His people and the One who must intervene when His people have overstepped themselves in disobedience. Thus no curse came automatically upon God's people but the curses (Deuteronomy 26-32) came as a result of purposeful, divine judgment. God brings punishment as a result of deliberate judgment which is grounded in

divine righteousness just as God brings salvation which is grounded in His unspeakable grace and love. Finally, we must be reminded by Isaiah that “the Lord of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness” (Isaiah 5:16, NASB). As we look back in time we can see that the judgments of God on Israel are already a part of history.

c. God’s judgment upon the individual. We must note that in the OT divine judgment also comes to the individual.¹⁶ The story of Eli and his sons need not be rehearsed (1 Sam 3:11-14). In the book of Ezekiel we find the sentence: “And as for you, My flock, thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats” (Ezk 34:17, NASB). Judgment is not collective, but for each individual in the commonwealth of God regardless whether pious or impious. Ecclesiastes 3:17 emphasizes this: “God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man” (NASB). Thus all human beings regardless of whether they are righteous or wicked will be judged by God. Indeed all mankind will be judged. This points forward to a future in which there will be a judgment of all human beings.

d. God’s judgment upon the world. In the first book of the Bible we discover the execution of God’s judgment upon the whole world. The narrative of the Flood in Genesis 6-9 indicates that man’s sins had reached such unprecedented proportions that the human heart was so perverted so that God was no longer able to assist and save humankind.¹⁷ The execution of the judgment of God was experienced in the watery destruction of the wicked antediluvians and the antediluvian world. Yet God, as always, had a remnant that was saved (Gen 7:23). The Flood event is a type of the event of the execution of judgment at the end of time.

The OT contains a number of major passages that deal directly with the theme of a universal apocalyptic judgment at the end of time. For lack of space we will restrict our description of a universal or global apocalyptic judgment to texts and passages in the various prophetic writings of the OT.

The prophet Joel’s major theme is the day of the Lord (*yom Yahweh*). In the first part of the book (1:2—2:17) Israel experiences the judgment of the day of the Lord according to which the Lord leads the armies of the nations to destroy unfaithful Israel. In the second part of the book (2:18—4:12) a faithful Israel is saved by the Lord from its enemies. However, “all the nations” (Joel 3:2, 11, NASB) are called to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (3:12, NASB) where God will “sit to judge” them in the endtime and bring about their destruction while “the Lord is a refuge for His people” (3:16, NASB). Joel predicts a universal judgment on the nations in the apocalyptic end-time (3:1-3; 9-14)¹⁸ in the Valley of Jehoshaphat which is a symbolic designation of the “valley of decision” (3:14, NASB) where God executes His judgment.¹⁹

The book of Isaiah contains a number of passages that deal with the theme of the universal world judgment. In Isaiah 2:6-22 the day of the Lord comes again into view and moves in a masterful picture from Israel (vs. 6-11) to a universal judgment of “everyone who is proud and lofty, and against everyone who is lifted up” (vs. 12, NASB; cf. vs. 17) at the “day of reckoning” (vs. 12). This is the day

of the universal judgment at the time of the end when men hide in “the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs” (vs. 21, NASB; cf. Rev 6:15; 9:20).²⁰

Isaiah 13-23 contain judgments against the nations. The beginning of this section, namely Isaiah 13:2-16, is a prophecy that seems to be universal in its judgment upon “the proud,” “the ungodly,” “the tyrants” indeed “the whole land” (13:5)²¹ and “every man” (vs. 7). It seems to refer to a universal future judgment which involves the whole world and all men.²²

The apocalyptic end-time judgment is clearly presented in Isaiah 24-27.²³ These four chapters have frequently been called the Isaiah Apocalypse. They present a picture of a universal judgment upon the whole earth (Isa 24:1-23). It is a punishment upon the earth’s inhabitants (24:1) and “the host of heaven” (24:21). The earth itself “will be completely laid waste and completely destroyed” (24:3). At that time there will be a resurrection of the dead (26:19), that is, of the righteous dead,²⁴ and “the Lord God will wipe away tears from all their [His people’s] faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth” (25:8). God’s people will rejoice in His salvation (25:9) and sing a song of trust in divine protection (26:1-10).

There are also such passages as Isaiah 59:15b-20 which speak of judgment and its outcome in “absolute and universal terminology.”²⁵ In this passage is found the great principle of judgment: “According to their deeds, so will he repay” (Isa 59:18).²⁶ This passage seems to comprise a universal apocalyptic judgment.²⁷

The universal end-time judgment is understood to be depicted also in Isa 66:15-16, 17, 24. Eternal damnation is the fate of the enemies of God whether Israelite or non-Israelite.

We cannot belabor such pregnant passages as the Gog and Magog prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39 which depicts judgment and events “after many days . . . in the latter years” (Ezk 38:8) and “in the latter days” (vs. 16).²⁸ Also the judgment pictures in Zechariah 9-14 have apocalyptic features that call for more extended treatment. Mal 4:1-3 contrasts believers and unbelievers in the setting of God’s fire of judgment.

3. God’s Heavenly Judgment at the Time of the End

The texts from Joel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Malachi all speak of a universal judgment at the end-time in apocalyptic contexts. The book of Daniel makes its own unique contribution in its wellknown “judgment scene”²⁹ in Daniel 7. The judgment is described three times in this chapter in vss. 9-10/13-14 and in vss. 21-22 and 25-26.³⁰

This apocalyptic vision reveals several major ideas about the judgment it describes:

a. The timing of the heavenly judgment. The flow of events of the vision is the sweep of history from the time of Daniel to the establishment of the everlasting kingdom at the transition of the present historical reality to the future reality of the new age at the time of the end. The judgment is timed to take place in heaven during the end of time after the period of domination of the little horn over the saints of the Most High is ended, i.e., after 1798, and before the

everlasting kingdom is given to the saints (Dan 7:21-22, 25-26) at the second coming of Christ. Thus it is a pre-reception of the kingdom judgment or in better terms a preadvent judgment.

b. The nature of the heavenly judgment. In Daniel 7:10 we read, “The court sat and the books were opened.” The opening of records in the heavenly judgment indicates that there is an investigation in this judgment session. It has been noted that God’s book or books are mentioned outside of Daniel 7:10 six times in the OT (Ex 32:32-33; Ps 56:8; 69:28; 139:16; Mal 3:16; Dan 12:1) and refer in each case to books related to God’s people. The same holds true for the NT³¹ so that the pattern for both Testaments reveals that book(s) of God in heaven have to do with God’s people. Accordingly all professed people of God would be under investigation. This is supported explicitly in Daniel 7:22 which reveals that a “judgment was given for [or ‘in behalf of’ or ‘in favor of’]³² the saints of the Most High.”³³ Thus the heavenly preadvent judgment is investigative in nature, so that we may speak appropriately of an investigative preadvent judgment.

c. The result of the heavenly judgment. In Daniel 7:9-10 the beginning of the heavenly judgment session is depicted. The Ancient of days presides in the presence of myriads of heavenly beings and the records (books) are opened about God’s professed people.

According to verse 14 an aspect of the result of the heavenly investigative preadvent judgment is revealed. The Son of man receives “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” which “shall not be destroyed.” This kingdom of the Son of man will be given to the saints of the Most High who will possess it forever and ever (vs. 17).

In contrast to the kingdom which will be given to God’s people at the second coming of Christ, the little horn’s “dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.” The contrast between the dominion of the Son of man and that of the little horn could hardly be described more starkly. Christ’s “dominion, glory and kingdom” will last forever, but the little horn’s dominion “will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.” Once again it is evident that God’s saving plan succeeds and that even the most powerful counterfeit force on earth will not succeed but will experience eternal destruction. Furthermore, in the heavenly preadvent judgment a final verdict is made regarding those who will inherit the everlasting kingdom.

The investigative preadvent judgment so profoundly depicted in Daniel 7 is complemented in Daniel 8. In this apocalyptic chapter we move again from the succession of world empires to “the time of the end” (Dan 8:17). The end-time grand climax involved the “cleansing” of the heavenly sanctuary, that is, a cleansing, restoring, justifying and vindicating activity which is judicial and redemptive in nature as regards the divine purposes of those that are truly God’s own.³⁴

The last great apocalyptic sequence in the book of Daniel is found in Daniel 11-12. Again there is the movement of successive world empires to the time of the end (Dan 11:40; 12:1). Daniel 12:1-4 depicts the results of the prior judicial-redemptive and investigative preadvent judgment of Daniel 7 and 8. The

advance of Prince Michael is to bring rescue and salvation of “everyone who is found written in the book” (12:1, NASB). There is a climactic onslaught of the enemy on God’s people in “the time of trouble,” but Prince Michael Himself stands up and delivers His people and raises the faithful to “everlasting life” (12:2). “This takes place at the apocalyptic turning point of the aeons and inaugurates the eternal kingdom which is inherited by the surviving remnant and the resurrected righteous.”³⁵

In the book of Daniel the grand climax is not the judgment, as important as it is for the resolution of the sin problem. The grand climax is the manifestation of God’s glory, his rulership over history, his Lordship over life, and the apocalyptic rescue of the faithful remnant and the awakening of the righteous to everlasting life. Thus all of God’s people can live a life of fellowship and communion with God in the everlasting kingdom of the new aeon. The preadvent judgment is a decisive prelude to the accomplishment of God’s final and lasting purpose of redemption for mankind and cosmically for the universe.

4. Divine Judgment and the Sanctuary/Temple

There are a number of passages that relate divine judgment to the place from which such judgment comes or in which God engages in judgment. There is an extensive and representative study on this subject by W. H. Shea from which great value can be gained.³⁶ We shall refer selectively to some aspects of divine judgment in relation to the sanctuary.

a. Divine judgment from the earthly sanctuary. Within the ritual rounds of the cultic year the Day of Atonement was the grand climax.³⁷ It brought about a cleansing of the sanctuary from the sins of the Israelites (Lev 16:19, 30). Every Israelite was to humble himself or herself on the Day of Atonement or “he shall be cut off from his people” (Lev 23:29, NASB). The “cutting off” is an act of judgment being executed upon the impenitent and bringing about the offender’s premature death.³⁸ The judgment on the Day of Atonement brought life or death from the sanctuary depending on the Israelite’s relation to God.

There are various instances in which judgment comes from the earthly sanctuary. The Aaronite sons, Nadab and Abihu, are consumed by fire that “came out from the presence of the Lord” (Lev 10:2) because they offered strange fire before the Lord in the sanctuary (Lev 10:1-7). The murmuring of Miriam is punished by God who came in “a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent” (Num 12:5) to bring judgment to Miriam (Num 12:1-16).

The grumbling of the Israelites causes the Lord’s glory to appear “in the tent of meeting” for judgment (Num 14:10, NASB), but Moses’ intercession causes the Lord to revoke the judgment to a rebuke (Num 14:11-25). Yet the Lord pronounces that only those under twenty years will enter Canaan (vss. 26-35). The sons of Korah are consumed by the Lord from “the doorway of the tent of meeting” (Num 16:18-19, NASB).

In another instance God communicates a judicial decision made in the sanctuary about inheritance. This is communicated to Moses in the sanctuary (Num 27:1-11).

Some Psalms are very explicit on relating divine judgment to the earthly sanctuary. The Psalmist enters “into the sanctuary of God” (Ps 73:17) and perceives from there the end of the wicked. In Psalm 99 the Lord takes His seat upon the cherubim (vs. 1) in the temple in Zion and manifests His acts of grace and judgment in history (vss. 6-9).

The prophet Amos hears the Lord roaring from Zion/Jerusalem (Amos 1:2), that is, from the sanctuary, to bring judgment upon the nations (1:3-2:5) and Israel (2:6-8).

These texts from the books of Moses, the Psalms and the prophets (see also Ezekiel 1-10, and Mal 3:1-3) clearly demonstrate that divine judgment comes from the earthly sanctuary. Yet we must be reminded that the earthly sanctuary is but the miniature of the heavenly sanctuary which is God’s true abode. Thus our attention needs to turn next to divine judgment that issues from the heavenly sanctuary.

b. Divine judgment from the heavenly sanctuary. The subject of the heavenly sanctuary and the judgments that issue from there is important for the topic of divine judgment in the OT. We shall briefly survey the designations for the heavenly sanctuary in the OT and then we will describe the heavenly sanctuary judgments.

(1) Designations for the heavenly sanctuary. The Psalter contains many references to the heavenly sanctuary. In three texts the designation “temple” (*hékāl*) is employed (Pss 11:4; 18:6; 29:9) for the heavenly sanctuary; four times the term *qodeš* is used and rendered “sanctuary” (Pss 60:6; 63:2; 102:19; 150:1) and twice *miqdaš* which is also translated “sanctuary” (Pss 68:35; 96:6) in English. There are three passages which use the word “house” (*beth*) and refer to the Lord’s heavenly sanctuary (Pss 36:8; 29:9; 27:4).³⁹ These passages in the Psalter and at least five texts in the prophetic books of the OT⁴⁰ give ample evidence that there is a sanctuary in heaven and that it is a place of activity. Of course, the famous texts in Ex 25:9, 40 affirm the same.⁴¹

We must add to these typical designations for the heavenly sanctuary two more. The first is “dwelling place” (*mākôn*) and refers to God’s heavenly “dwelling place” or sanctuary⁴² in 1 Kings 8:39, 43, 49 (= 2 Chr 6:30, 33, 39); Psalm 33:14; and Isaiah 18:4.

The second designation is one that is employed in the judgement scene in Daniel 7:9-10 where in the heavenly sanctuary “thrones” are being set up and the Ancient of days takes up His seat on His throne for judgment.

There are a number of passages which speak about God’s throne (*kisse*) which is in heaven and linked to the heavenly sanctuary. This is made very explicit in Psalm 11:4: “The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven.” The intent of these tightly interlocked phrases is to communicate that God’s throne is in His heavenly temple/sanctuary.⁴³ This is the intent also of Isaiah 66:1 where heaven is said to be the throne and earth to be the footstool of God.

God is enthroned on His holy throne (Ps 47:8) in the heavenly sanctuary. This throne of God in the heavenly sanctuary is built upon the foundation of “righteousness and justice” (Pss 89:14; 97:2, NASB) and “is established from of

“old” (Ps 93:2, NASB) and is “from generation to generation” (Lam 5:19). From His throne “his sovereignty rules over all” (Ps 103:19, NASB). The prophet Micaiah “saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left” (1 Kgs 22:19, NASB = 2 Chr 18:18) at the time of a judgment over Ahab. This picture of the heavenly host surrounding the throne of God is akin to the judgment picture in Daniel 7.

It is interesting to observe that God’s heavenly throne is mentioned seventeen times in the OT.⁴⁴ In eight of these passages the heavenly throne of God being located in the sanctuary is clearly and unambiguously associated with judgment.⁴⁵

Having looked at the various designations in the OT for the heavenly sanctuary (“temple,” “sanctuary,” “house,” “dwelling place”) and the “throne” it contains, we are able now to take a brief look at the divine judgments that come from the heavenly sanctuary and from God’s throne.

(2) Heavenly sanctuary judgments. We have just noted that God’s throne in heaven, i.e., the heavenly sanctuary, is in at least eight passages associated with divine judgments. The investigative preadvent judgment in Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 has been dealt with above so that we can pay attention to the remaining texts.

The prophet Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:19 (= 2 Chr 18:18) reports seeing “the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.” From God’s throne comes divine judgment in the form of a spirit of deception and falsehood on the part of the false prophets as they counsel King Ahab. As a result Ahab’s plans lead to disaster and destruction.

The Psalmist praises God in Psalm 9:4 for the fact that God sits “on the throne judging righteously” (vs. 4, NASB) and that as righteous Judge God “has maintained my just cause.” The psalmist moves from God’s favorable judgment over the limited sphere of the believer to a universal sphere. The Lord, he exclaims, “has established His throne for judgment, and He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity” (vss. 7-8, NASB).

In Psalm 11:4-5 the Lord looks from His throne in His holy heavenly temple to “test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked.” This “testing” (*bāhan*) is a judicial evaluation which safeguards the righteous and destroys the wicked. “Upon the wicked he will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup” (vs. 6, NASB), but “the upright will behold His face” (vs. 7, NASB).⁴⁶ God’s judgment will be experienced by the righteous and the wicked; only the righteous will be saved and awakened from death “to behold [His] face in righteousness” (Pss 16:8-11; 17:15; 23:6; 49:15; 73:23-28; 139:18).

The foundation of God’s throne is both righteousness and justice. This is affirmed in Psalm 97:2. The throne of God is the place from which goes forth judgment. The annihilation of the enemies of God (“His adversaries”) is proof of His power and judgment. When God brings His judgments from His throne in the heavenly sanctuary there is no escape for the wicked and this world (vss. 3, 6-9), but the righteous will be delivered (vss. 10-12).

The famous throne vision of Isaiah is narrated in Isaiah 6:1-13. Isaiah reports, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple" (vs. 1, NASB). The "throne" in the "temple" is understood by many students as the throne of the Lord in the heavenly sanctuary/temple.⁴⁷ Accordingly in looking to the Jerusalem temple Isaiah is taken in vision to see the Lord on His throne in the heavenly sanctuary. This is also affirmed by E. G. White. This revelation of the Lord on His throne causes Isaiah to exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! . . . For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (vs. 5, NASB). But one of the heavenly seraphim flies to Isaiah after the confession of his sinfulness and touches his lips with a burning coal. The verdict is announced from the heavenly sanctuary: "Your iniquity is taken away, your sin is forgiven" (vs. 7). Isaiah's confession is thus acknowledged. He receives a favorable judgment. Forgiveness comes to him from the heavenly sanctuary. Upon this salvation act he can respond to the call, "Who will go for us?" (vs. 8a) with the affirmation of service for God: "Here am I. Send me!" (vs. 8b).

There are several additional passages from the Psalms in which judgments come from heaven (Pss 14:1-6; 29:1-11; 53:1-6; 76:1-2, 8-9; 102:12-13, 19-20; 103:6, 19). They have been dealt with admirably by Professor William Shea.⁴⁸ We wish to supplement these with but one additional text aside from some we have already dealt with above (Pss 9:4; 97:2).

In Psalm 18:6 David says, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help; he heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears." In his prayer David rises "to the heavenly sanctuary of God."⁴⁹ God appears in a theophany (vss. 7-15) which confronts the wicked with "hailstones and coals of fire" and "scatters them" (vss. 12-13), but the righteous one is rescued (vss. 16-19).

As in Psalm 18 so there is another majestic theophany in Micah 1:2-7.⁵⁰ God's judgment issues from His heavenly temple.⁵¹ Judicial decisions are made by the Lord God who Himself is Witness, Plaintiff, and Judge at once and at the same time. The verdicts of the court session in the heavenly sanctuary is pronounced on earth and carried out there against the guilty. Read the words of Micah:

"Hear, O peoples, all of you;
 Listen, O earth and all it contains,
 And let the Lord God be witness against you,
 The Lord from His holy temple.
 For behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place.
 He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.
 The mountains will melt under Him,
 And the valleys will be split, like wax before fire
 Like water poured down a steep place.
 All this is for the rebellion of Jacob
 And for the sins of the house of Israel." (Mic 1:2-5a, NASB)

The Judge of the world is the Saviour of the faithful and the judge of the faithless.

It is time now to draw some conclusions on the topic of divine judgment in the OT. (1) We have seen that God is universal judge in the OT. His judgments

are not capricious or arbitrary, but made in righteousness and justice. (2) God's judgments extend from the individual whether righteous or wicked to Israel as a nation and beyond to all the nations and the whole world. (3) God brings judgment upon human beings and their collective social orders (nations) as a result of divine deliberation. (4) The principles of judgment are "their deeds." (5) Judgments of God had been experienced in the past by individual, family, tribe, nation, and nations, and even the whole world. (6) The OT knows a universal judgment in the apocalyptic end-time. (7) The end-time judgment session is depicted as taking place in the heavenly sanctuary in the presence of multitudes of heavenly beings and is best described as an investigative preadvent judgment. (8) Whenever a location comes into view with regard to God's judgment it is always the sanctuary. (9) In ancient Israel judgments came from the earthly sanctuary, but more frequently divine judgment issued from the heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly is but a copy. (10) On the basis of numerous texts in which divine judgments issue from the heavenly sanctuary one may conclude that when judgment comes from the earthly sanctuary it is but an accommodation of God to the earthly counterpart while God's true residence is His heavenly sanctuary where He engages in redemptive and judicial judgment activity. The Lord is not limited to the terrestrial sanctuary. The sanctuary where God truly functions usually in judgment activity is the celestial one. (11) The most profound decisions about the future of God's people who will inherit the eternal kingdom to come at the Second Advent are made in the heavenly sanctuary since 1844. The nature of this divine judgment in the heavenly sanctuary is both judicial and discriminating as it is redemptive and atoning. It is the heavenly preparation for the glorious return of Jesus Christ on the clouds of heaven and for His people to be with him in the everlasting kingdom that He will give to them.

II. Divine Judgment in the NT

1. Divine Judge in the NT

In the NT God is "the Judge of all" (Heb 12:23, NASB). The Father is "the One who impartially judges according to each man's work" (1 Pet 1:17, NASB). Paul speaks of the "righteous judgment of God" (Rom 2:5) that will be revealed on the day of wrath (cf. Rom 2:3) and that God will judge the world (Rom 3:6). While God, the Father, is the judge, He has given authority to judge to Jesus Christ. "For not even the Father judges any one, but he has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22, NASB). "He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man" (John 5:27, NASB). Peter declared that Jesus Christ "is the One who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42, NASB). Paul also declares that God "has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31, NASB).

We may conclude that in the NT both God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son, are designated respectively as the judge of the world. While both are

said to judge, the Father has chosen to judge through the future judgment of Jesus Christ. Because the Father judges through the Son, “the judgment seat of God” mentioned in Romans 10:4 and “the judgment seat of Christ” referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:10 are not to be separated.⁵² Paul reminds his readers that believers are not exempt from future judgment. Even though justified (Rom 5:1; 8:1) and reconciled to God (cf. 2 Cor 5:20-21), believers still will be judged according to their works (1 Cor 3:13ff.).

2. Present Judgment in the NT

The judgment theme of the NT appears to have two major aspects. There is a present aspect of judgment and there is an equally clear future judgment to come. We shall first take a brief look at the present judgment and its meaning in the NT.

The words of Jesus in the Gospel of John are customarily referred to when one speaks of a present judgment in the NT. There is in John 12:31 a statement about the judgment of Satan. “Now judgment [*krisis*] is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out” (John 12:31, NASB). This text may be joined to the one of John 16:11 “and concerning judgment [*krisis*], because the ruler of this world is judged” (NASB).

The “ruler of this world” is Satan (John 14:30; 16:16). He is cast out, probably from heaven (cf. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Zech 3:1-2; Rev 12:9-10) and has no longer access to the presence of God (cf. Luke 10:18; Rev 12:8-9).⁵³ Thus the judgment of “the ruler of this world” is the limitation of the sphere of activity to the whole world “which lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). The “judgment” (*krisis*) that is upon the world of men in rebellion against God⁵⁴ is “condemnation.”⁵⁵

Jesus teaches according to the Gospel of John that he who believes has eternal life. “Whoever believes may in Him have eternal life” (John 3:15, NASB) or “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “He who believes in the Son has eternal life” (John 3:36, NASB; cf. 6:40, 47; 20:31).

The possession of eternal life now in the present does not mean that the believer will not die anymore. Jesus Himself affirms that physical death will still come and that He will raise the believer from death to life. He who believes in Jesus Christ “may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40, NASB; cf. vs. 44, 54). Eternal life is a present reality through faith.

If there is eternal life now for the believer, will the believer enter into judgment? The famous text that is widely quoted is John 5:24:

Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” (NASB)

This text has been used to indicate that the believer does not come into a future judgment whether an investigative preadvent judgment or a final judgment.

Does John 5:24 teach that there is no more future judgment for the believer? Several observations seem to be in order. (1) John 5:24 is part of a

larger unit, namely 5:16-30,⁵⁶ and more precisely John 5:24 is an integral part of verses 19-30.⁵⁷ Thus John 5:24 must not be torn out of its context and made into a proof text to say something the context and its internal setting contradicts. (2) Once John 5:24 is considered in its own context, it must be remembered that the following verses, that is, verses 26-30, contain clear statements about a future judgment. (3) If we keep John 5:24 in its context, we can already affirm that a present judgment of whatever form it consists of does not rule out a future judgment.

Let us briefly analyze the major ideas of John 5:24. First, there are two conditions that lead to eternal life: (a) The hearing of Jesus' word and (b) the believing that the Father sent Jesus. Both "hearing" and "believing" are present active participles, indicating that the believer needs to keep on hearing and believing so as to remain in a state of having eternal life. Accordingly eternal life is not a state or experience that once it is had it can never be lost. The one who continues in a believing state continues to stay in the experience of having eternal life by faith. The correlation of hearing and believing means that hearing and believing assures eternal life now, but a lack of hearing and believing means the loss of eternal life. Eternal life is a present faith reality only for the one who remains in Jesus Christ.

Second, he who has eternal life "does not come into judgment." What does "judgment" here mean? The Greek term translated "judgment" is *krisis*. The term *krisis* has various connotations such as "judgment, condemnation, punishment, etc."⁵⁸ A number of careful students of John 5:24 have pointed out that the best way to render the phrase "and does not come into *krisis*" is to translate it "and does not come into condemnation."⁵⁹ In this case, Jesus does not say that the believer does not enter into any future judgment, but declares "that the believer does not need to fear at the last day that the Judge will condemn him."⁶⁰ It has been noted also that the idea is thus quite like that of Paul according to which the justified believer "does indeed come into judgment but leaves the court acquitted."⁶¹ In short, Jn 5:24 does not deny a future judgment but removes the fear of condemnation in such a judgment because of the abiding faith in Jesus Christ.

Other statements in the Gospel of John contain the same emphasis that for the abiding believer who remains in a vital, dynamic faith relationship with Jesus Christ which includes the bearing of fruit (John 15:2, 16) there is no condemnation.

Jesus states according to John 3:17-18: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge [i.e., condemn] the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged [i.e., condemned]; he who does not believe has been judged [i.e., condemned] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (NASB). It is very instructive to note that the contrast to the term "saved" is the Greek verb *krinein* which should be properly translated as "condemn"⁶² and not as "judge." The contrast is between "condemn" and save."⁶³ These texts affirm accordingly that Jesus Christ's task is to save and not to condemn.

In John 3:19 we find the statement: “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil” (NASB). This text explains how the condemnation takes place. Jesus Christ is the light that has come into the world for salvation. Men, on the other hand, loved the darkness of the world and demonstrated this love for darkness by their evil deeds. The evil deeds prevented them from loving the light which is Jesus Christ. “And this is the judgment [*krisis*]” in the sense of a decision and thus a division that the person confronted by the light, namely Jesus Christ, chooses to love darkness rather than light. The “judgment” here “is not the final judgment. Likewise the judgment is not moved from the future into the present.”⁶⁴ Rather Jesus Christ is a penetrating light that provokes a judgment or decision in the one who meets this light through a man’s own choice that is influenced by his deeds. This judgment or decision has a direct relationship to the eschatological judgment at the end of time.

3. Eschatological Judgment in the NT

The eschatological judgment is clearly taught by Jesus in the Gospel of John. In John 12:47-48 Jesus states, “And if anyone hears my sayings, and does not keep them, I do not condemn⁶⁵ him; for I did not come to condemn⁶⁶ the world, but to save the world. He who rejects me, and does not receive my sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”

The expression “the last day” refers to the coming last day which culminates in the resurrection of the dead and the salvation “to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5).⁶⁷ Thus judgment will take place at the last day. The basis of this eschatological judgment are the decisions of people regarding Christ in the present.

The idea of an eschatological judgment is also found in John 5:28-29: “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” The eschatological judgment is in an hour that is coming, that is clearly future from the point of view of the days of Jesus. It is a time when there is a resurrection for judgment for those who decided against Christ. But there is “on the last day” (John 6:39, 40, NASB) a resurrection to eternal life for “every one who beholds the Son and believes in Him” (vs. 40, NASB; cf. vss. 44, 54). In 1 John 4:17 believers are assured “that we may have confidence in the day of judgment” (NASB).

In the Gospel of John there is much emphasis on the present condemnation and the present decision for or against Christ which determines whether one has or has not eternal life. But in the same Gospel of John there is also much about an eschatological-apocalyptic judgment in the future (John 5:28-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 12:48). Eternal life in the present is contingent upon a continuation of faith and an abiding in Christ which is manifested by bearing good fruit (John 15:2-6).

We shall turn our attention briefly to the Synoptic Gospels now and survey the theme of a future judgment. Only in Matthew do we find the designation “day of judgment” (Matt 12:36) as a future event (cf. Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24). There is

the idea of a great assize (Matt 10:15 = Luke 10:14; Matt 12:41-42 = Luke 11:31-32; Matt 12:36).

Jesus warns in the Sermon on the Mount against a judging spirit. “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged” (Matt 7:2, NASB). In this connection the sayings of Jesus on rewards points also to a future judgment (Matt 5:12; Luke 6:23, 35; Matt 6:4, 6, 18).

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-46) is customarily related to the future judgment. The key to understanding this parable is directly related to the identification of “the least of these my brethren” (Matt 25:40). The “brethren” are hardly the “apostles,⁶⁸ all men in need,⁶⁹ or a future Jewish remnant.⁷⁰ We believe that the “brethren” are all the followers of Jesus,⁷¹ namely Christians. The judgment scene portrays the Son of man, Jesus Christ, judging by dividing the men of the nations on the basis of their having accepted or rejected Him through His agents, the “brethren” which are His followers. Those who have not received His “brethren” in hospitality go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will enter into eternal life (vs. 46).

Peter affirms in Acts 10:42 that Jesus is “appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead” (NSDN). Peter speaks of the Gentiles who live lives of sinfulness (1 Pet 4:3-4) and affirms that “they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead (1 Pet 4:5, NASB).

In the writings of the apostle Paul there is also an abundance of statements referring to a future judgment. We have noted already that Paul speaks of “the judgment seal of God” (Rom 14:10) and “the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10). In both texts the believers are said to “appear” or “stand” before the judgment seat (*bēma*) of Christ/God.

There are numerous passages in Paul’s letters that speak of a future judgment.⁷² There is a future “day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ” (Rom 2:16, NASB).

It is not necessary to belabor further the reality of a future judgment in the NT. The idea of a future judgment is axiomatic.⁷³ It is present in the Gospels, in the book of Acts, in the writings of John, in the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and Jude. In the book of Revelation “the theme of judgment reaches its climax.”⁷⁴

Having seen that the NT maintains the reality of a final judgment we need to address a number of issues that call for attention. Since there is indeed a future judgment, what is the standard of this judgment? Or to put it differently, on what principle or by what standard will human beings be judged? An equally important matter is the matter of the relationship of justification and a judgment according to works. The issue of the timing of the judgment in its respective phases at the end call also for consideration. And finally, the matter of confidence or assurance in view of the eschatological judgment needs to be addressed.

4. The Standard of Judgment

The standard of the judgment is God’s law. In Romans 2:12 the apostle affirms that “all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.” In the larger contest of Romans 2:1-16 it is evident that both Jews and Gentiles will be judged because all have sinned. All will be judged by the law in an impartial

manner. The heathen “who has sinned without the law” (vs. 12a), namely, “without specifically revealed or written law”⁷⁵ but having the unwritten law of the conscience (vss. 14-15) will be judged by the law which he knows just as the Jew will be judged by the “law” revealed on Mt. Sinai. Thus all human beings are judged in the eschatological judgment by the same standard, the law of God. “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty” (Jas 2:12, NASB).

5. Judgment According to Works

The consistent teaching of the NT is that in the future judgment all men will be judged according to works. Paul states in Romans 2:13 “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” This is a justification in the eschatological judgment and is based on the principle that justification comes by works of law. In 1 Corinthians 3:8 we learn that every person “shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.” In the same chapter in verse 13 it is affirmed that “each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work” (NASB). The idea that judgment is according to works is repeated in 2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (NASB).

This idea permeates the NT from the teaching of Jesus (Matt 7:17-18; 10:40-42; 25:31-46; Luke 15:11-32; John 14:12; 15:1-11) and Paul into the book of Revelation (Rev 20:12; 22:12). There is a motif of the believer’s need to fulfill the law (Rom 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal 5:13-14; 6:2). The imperative in the NT is to do the will of God, to keep His law and to manifest the living fruit of justification by faith in Christ through good works.

There seems to be a tension between the affirmation of the whole NT that justification is attained by faith aside from works and the affirmation that the eschatological judgment is according to works. Does this mean that once justification is experienced at the beginning of the believer’s life, the remaining life of the Christian is one of working out one’s salvation with fear and trembling? Absolutely not! The imputed righteousness at the point of conversion is followed by the imparted righteousness in the believer’s life. Paul expresses the idea in Romans 6:22: “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life” (RSV). There is a movement in the faith life of the believer from (a) having been set free from sin which is justification at conversion to (b) the life of faith and obedience by faith (Gal 5:6) which is “sanctification” to (c) the future goal of “eternal life.” Another way to depict the threefold movement is to employ the terms past, present, and future and the respective happenings. The past is the act of having been set free from sin, the present is the experience of sanctification which is the process of a maturing life of faith (not legalistic works) in Christ, and the future is the reward of eternal life. While eternal life is already a present reality for the believer in anticipation of that which comes in the future,

the future will bring eternal life as a full possession based on an irrevocable verdict reached in the eschatological judgment.

The NT teaching of judgment by works teaches for the believer that Christ's accomplishment on the cross with His substitutionary death put us under the rulership of God and Jesus Christ. This is expressed by the words that we now "have become slaves of God" (Rom 6:22, RSV). We are now slaves of God in the sense that we are disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. As followers of Jesus Christ we manifest a dynamic "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6, NASB).

It should be clear by now that the works of the believer in the maturing process of sanctification are not works that add something to justification received by the believer and maintained in his faith life through forgiveness for sins committed. The works of the justified ones are the fruit of justification in the experience of sanctification which are called in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 "your work of faith and labor of love." This life of faith produces works of faith which are a manifestation of faith and not of human effort to gain man-made righteousness, or to add to justification by faith.

Let us once again return to 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good and evil, according to what he has done in the body" (RSV). The "we" in the context of 1 Corinthians 5:1-9 refers to Christians. But it may be wondered in what sense Christians can receive either good or evil. The judgment deals with the entire life of the Christian and the judgment accordingly determines first of all whether the Christian was truly a Christian. If the determination is made that a professed Christian did not remain in an abiding relationship with Christ, he will receive evil. But if the Christian remains in Christ, he will receive good. Thus the eschatological judgment determines on the basis of works (1) whether the person was a true believer and (2) what the reward will be, namely good for the persevering and faithful one and evil for the unfaithful one. By looking for works as the fruit of faith the eschatological judgment testifies to the reality of salvation in the process of the total life of the believer from initial justification through the life of sanctification to the consummation in eternal life as a full possession at Christ's return.

6. Timing of the Eschatological Judgment

We have seen the abundant evidence in the NT about a future judgment which we have called eschatological judgment. Although there is in the NT not a very detailed chronology of the eschatological judgment, there are three phases that can be distinguished in the eschatological judgment.

a. First (preadvent) phase of the eschatological judgment. The timing of the first phase of the eschatological judgment is referred to in Revelation 14 in the call of the first angel flying in midheaven: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, and the sea and the fountains of water" (Rev 14:7). The section to which this passage belongs begins in 11:19 which sees the heavenly sanctuary open.

The expression “the hour of his judgment” refers within the context of the three angels’ messages to the judgment as a process in the time of the end (cf. Dan 7:9-10, 13-14; Dan 8:13-14, 26). The “judgment” (*krisis*) is the divine heavenly judgment in which God judges.⁷⁶ The “hour” (*hōra*) is the period of time,⁷⁷ “a final hour”⁷⁸ of time, before the return of Jesus Christ. This is evident from a comparison of the phrase “the hour of judgment” in Revelation 14:7 with the phrase “the hour to reap has come” in verse 15 within the description of the harvest of the earth (Rev 14:14-20). Accordingly “the hour of judgment” precedes “the hour to reap.” This “hour of judgment” makes possible an hour of reaping. Judgment must precede the harvest.

The NT speaks of eternal life that will be given to the faithful. A result of the first phase of the eschatological judgment is the resurrection of the faithful to eternal life (cf. John 6:39-40, 54; 5:28-29). This first phase of the eschatological judgment precedes the second coming of Jesus, because a decision is rendered in the heavenly judgment as to who among the professed Christians persevered and remained loyal to God (cf. 2 Cor 5:10).

Here a passage such as 1 Peter 4:17 becomes important: “For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God” (RSV). The “judgment” is *krima*, that is, a judging action, and it begins with the household of God. A clearly sequential idea is present. First comes the household of God and then come those who do not belong to the church.

The first phase of the eschatological judgment is the phase normally designated as the preadvent judgment. This preadvent judgment is both investigative and evaluative as has been seen above. That a judgment precedes the second coming of Jesus has been recognized by various students of the Scriptures. Professor H. Lampater writes, “When Paul writes that ‘the saints will judge the world’ (1 Cor 6:2; cf. Matt 19:28) one has to draw the conclusion that the judgment of the community of the ‘saints’ and the judgment of the ‘world’ cannot be one and the same judgment activity. Just as the resurrection of those who belong to Christ precedes the general resurrection of the [wicked] dead, so the judgment of the believers precedes in time the judgment of the ‘nations’ (heathen). . . . The judgment of the church (the members of the body of Christ) is neither in time nor in content identical with the judgment of the world (the non-Christian humanity).”⁷⁹ In a similar vein a commentator on the book of Revelation has concluded that the resurrection and translation of the saints are the result of a judgment prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Human beings are not raised to appear in person in the judgment. Resurrection and translation are the results of prior judgment decisions.⁸⁰ There are several scholars who have also concluded that the judgment in Daniel 7 is a “pre-judgment,”⁸¹ which we call investigative preadvent judgment.

In short, the picture in several NT passages makes clear that there is a first judgment phase in heaven that commences in the time of the end or as Daniel 7-8 reveals, in 1844. This is the commencement of “the hour of his judgment” with the investigative and evaluative preadvent judgment. This preadvent judgment phase comes to an end at the time of the close of probation when names of all who have been entered in “the book of life” (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27; cf. Dan

7:10; 12:1) have come up in review in the evaluative preadvent judgment. Those who have been found worthy will be raised up to everlasting life when Jesus appears and will join those who were found worthy for translation to live with Christ in heaven during the millennium.⁸² This raises the question of the judgment of the wicked which we need to pursue next.

b. The Second (millennial) phase of the eschatological judgment. The sequence of the judgment that begins with the household of God (1 Pet 4:17) by implication moves on to those who do not belong to God. Revelation 11:18 is the conclusion of a long section (Rev 8:2-11:18)⁸³ that climaxes in the seventh trumpet as follows: “The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (RSV). Assuming a sequential order, it may be suggested that “the time for the dead to be judged” may be the time of the millennium when the dead will be judged.

It is during the millennial phase, the second phase of the eschatological judgment, that “the saints will judge the world” (1 Cor 6:2, NASV) and “shall judge the angels” (vs. 3). This idea is associated with Jesus’ teaching: “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28, RSV; cf. Luke 22:30). These texts indicate that God’s people will share in the millennial judgment activity of the Son of man. The idea of judging is, in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, not the idea of “ruling” because the context deals with lawsuits, not government.⁸⁴ It is the idea of judging in the sense of “pronouncing judgment upon.”

The judgment at the great white throne in Revelation 20:11-15 depicts in graphic detail the millennial judgment when “the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done” (vs. 12, RSV). The books are the books of their deeds and those who will be judged in the millennium are those whose names are not found written in the book of life (vs. 15).

Those who will be judged during the millennium will be raised “to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29, RSV) which is “the resurrection of condemnation.” “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (Rev 20:5, RSV). At that time the pronouncement will be made, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41, RSV).

c. The third (postmillennial) phase of the eschatological judgment. The final phase of the eschatological judgment is for a final “rewarding” of the saints and for a final “destroying” of wicked human beings (Rev 11:18) and Satan and his angels (Rev 20:10, 14, 15). The condemnation manifests itself in the final destruction of Satan and his host as well as sin in “the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15). This destruction with fire of “the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8, RSV).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that the biblical teaching on the judgment is not a peripheral subject of biblical thought. The judgment is as basic a theme as redemption and salvation. Judgment guarantees human freedom, the freedom to choose, and human responsibility. Judgment guarantees also that God remains in control in everything. In an ultimate sense judgment guarantees divine righteousness and justice. In judgment God demonstrates universally and with finality the ultimate results of sin and rebellion and it equally manifests divine love. "The judgment of God is understood in the final analysis as an expression of God's love. For the only really radical judgment of sin is that of pure love."⁸⁵ Or expressed differently, "Judgment protects the idea of the triumph of God and of good. It is unthinkable that the present conflict between good and evil should last throughout eternity. Judgment means that evil will be disposed of authoritatively, decisively, finally."⁸⁶ Judgment is necessitated by sin and man's "unceasing rebellion, but not by any vindictiveness in the nature of God."⁸⁷ Divine judgment brings in the reality and the sole existence of the kingdom of God to be inherited by those who love Him and have willingly followed Him.

As believers we may have confidence to face each phase of the eschatological judgment. Paul affirms, "It is God that justifies; who is to condemn?" (Rom 8:33-34, RSV). In Hebrews 6:10 it is stated that "God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed" (RSV). John writes of "love perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment" (1 John 4:17, RSV). Confidence in the day of judgment is confidence in Jesus Christ to whom we have committed ourselves in a total and lasting relationship of daily following. Our works as important as they are do not provide any reason for assurance because they always fall short of the glory of God, but "we may have confidence in the day of judgment" through our Lord Jesus Christ in whom we abide. We are safe in Jesus who is our Lord and Saviour, who forgives us our sins, who is our heavenly Mediator (Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 2:5) who stands good for our debt (Heb 10:10, 19) and through whom we can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16, RSV) because He is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). Our knowledge of Jesus Christ as our Mediator, Advocate, and High Priest makes us confident "in the day of judgment." The Father Himself "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Father and the Son do not want us to live in fear and anxiety but in confidence and joy from now on to the day when Christ appears in the clouds of heaven to take us home with Him.

1. See D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL., 1967), 66-73; H. Möller, *Der Anfang der Bibel* (Berlin, 1978), 35-45.

2. For the connection of the remnant theme with the judgment theme, see G. F. Hasel, *The Remnant* (Andrews University Monograph Series, no. 5; 3d ed., Berrien Springs, MI, 1980), 136-38.

3. See also Pss 94:2; Job 34:17; cf. 1 Kgs 8:32; Mal 3:14. C. S. Rodd, "Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Just? (Gen 18:25)," *Expository Times* 83 (1972): 137-39.

4. On Amos, see N. Gottwald, *All the Kingdoms of the World* (New York, 1964), 94-114; A. S. Kapelrud, *Central Ideas in Amos* (Oslo, 1962), 17-33; A. Neher, *Amos* (Paris, 1950) 49-76.

5. On Isa 13-23, see E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, 1965), I:408-79.
6. See the critical studies of G. E. Wright, "The Nations in Hebrew Prophecy," *Encounter* 26 (1965): 225-37; D. L. Christensen, *Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy* (Missoula, MT, 1975), 127-80.
7. See Gerhard F. Hasel, *Covenant in Blood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1982).
8. J. Harvey, *Le plaidoyer prophétique contre Israël après la rupture de l'alliance* (Bruges-Paris, 1967); H. B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959): 285-295.
9. Isa 1:2-3; 3:13-15; 41:1-5, 21-29; 42:18-25; 43:8-13; 44:6-8; 45:18-25; 50:1-3. See A. Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour* (Leiden, 1973).
10. Hos 2:4-17; 4:1-3.
11. Amos 1:2-3.
12. Mic 6:1-8.
13. Jer 2:4-13.
14. K. Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge* (Sheffield, 1978), 71.
15. See the chapter, "Covenant and Law at Sinai," in Hasel, *Covenant in Blood*, 63-74.
16. A. Gamper, *Gott als Richter in Mesopotamien und im Alten Testament* (Innsbruck, 1966), 216-18.
17. On the universality of the Flood and its implications, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative," *Origins* 5/2 (1978): 83-98.
18. H.-W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia, 1977), 12-14.
19. W. Rudolph, *Joel-Amos-Obadja-Jona* (Gütersloh, 1971), 69-88.
20. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, I, 123-34; H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), 91-115.
21. While it is true that the Hebrew text permits the translation of the word "land" for "earth," the translation of "earth" is supported by the proclamation of verses 6-14 which makes clear that the day of the Lord brings terror and destruction upon all men (vs. 7).
22. Among the commentators who have seen the beginning part of Isa 13 as referring to a divine judgment on the whole world are A. Dillmann, T. K. Cheyne, C. J. Bredenkamp, C. Stenernagel, O. Kaiser, etc. If this is correct, then Isa 13:18-22 moves from the universal judgment to that of Babylon which is typical of the world judgment.
23. M. Lagrange, "L'apocalypse d'Isaie (24-27)," *Revue Biblique* 3 (1894): 200-231; C. Boufflower, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39 in the Light of Assyrian Monuments* (London, 1930), 328-331; Y. Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago, 1960), 384; M. A. Beck, "Ein Erdbeben wird zum prophetischen Erleben (Jesaja 24-27)," *Archiv Orientalni* 71/1 (1949): 31-40; Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, II, 146-261.
24. Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalyptic," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980): 267-84.
25. D. H. Odendaal, *The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40-66 With Special Reference to Israel and the Nations* (Philadelphia, 1970), 106.
26. On the translation problem, see J. A. Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, 1971), 373-74.
27. Odendaal, *Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40-66*, 106.
28. This is part of the final judgment picture of the OT in Gamper, *Gott als Richter*, 219.
29. Gamper, *Gott als Richter*, 219-20.
30. See for details A. J. Ferch, "The Judgment Scene in Daniel 7," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical Historical and Theological Studies*, eds. A. V. Wallenkampf and W. R. Leshner (Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, MD, 1981), 157-76, and W. H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Biblical Research Institute: Silver Spring, MD, 1982), 94-131.
31. See Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15: 21:27. In Rev 20:12 we deal with a post-millennial judgment of the wicked, while in all other instances we deal with the righteous and thus God's people.
32. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1958), 1065, states that *dîn le* in Dan 7:22 means "judgment is pronounced in favor of."

33. The term for “judgment” (Aramaic *dîn*) can mean “judgment” or “verdict” as a result of judgment.
34. See the detailed paper by Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Little Horn,’ the Heavenly Sanctuary, and the Time of the End: A Study of Daniel 8:9-14,” *Symposium on Daniel*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2 (Biblical Research Institute: Silver Spring, MD, 1986).
35. Hasel, “Resurrection in the Theology of OT Apocalyptic,” 280-81.
36. W. H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 1-24: “Biblical Parallels for the Investigative Judgment.”
37. Gerhard F. Hasel, “Studies in Biblical Atonement II: The Day of Atonement,” *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, eds. A. V. Wallenkampf and W. R. Leshner (Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, MD, 1981), 115-33.
38. On the idea of “cutting off” in the OT, see Gerhard F. Hasel, “krat,” *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, eds. J. G. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Stuttgart, 1983), 4:355-67.
39. There is some uncertainty among some commentators whether Pss 29:9 and 27:4 refer to the heavenly sanctuary. Despite a small degree of uncertainty it seems likely that the heavenly sanctuary is in view.
40. See also Mic 1:2-5; Isa 6:1-5; 63:15; Jonah 2:2; Hab 2:20.
41. On Ex 25:9, 40, see the penetrating study by R. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture. A Study of Hermeneutical typos Structures* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 2; Berrien Springs, MI, 1981), 369-88, who shows that the term “pattern” after which the earthly sanctuary is constructed points back to the heavenly sanctuary itself (388).
42. The equation of “dwelling place” and “sanctuary” is found in poetic parallelism in Ex 15:17.
43. So M. Dahood, *Psalms I* (Garden City, NY, 1973), 69-70.
44. Isa 6:1; 66:1; Ezk 1:26 (2 times); Lam 5:19; 1 Kgs 22:19 = 2 Chr 18:18; Pss 9:4, 7; 11:4; 45:6; 47:8; 89:14; 93:2; 97:2; 103:19; Dan 7:10.
45. Isa 6:1; Pss 9:4, 7; 11:4; 97:2; 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18.
46. A. Weiser, *The Psalms. A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1962), 156-58, points to the judgment setting in Psalm 11.
47. So E. König, *Jesaja* (Munich, 1926), ad. loc.; J. Fisher, *Jesajas* (Bonn, 1937), vol. 1, ad. loc.; I. Engnell, *The Call of Isaiah* (Lund, 1949), 27-28; G. E. Wright, *Isaiah* (London, 1964), 35; G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1966), 95; J. Scharbert, *Die Propheten Israels bis 700 v.Chr.* (Köln, 1965), 205; H. Wildberger, *Jesaja* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), 245-46; H.-J. Kraus, *Theologie der Psalmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1979), 92.
48. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 5-7.
49. Weiser, *The Psalms*, 189.
50. See also Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 7.
51. L. C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids, 1976), 270.
52. T. McComiskey, “(b_ma), judgment seat,” *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids, 1976), 2:369-70.
53. Among recent commentators Th. Zahn, A. Schlatter, F. Büchsel, etc. See E. Percy, *Untersuchungen über den Ursprung der johanneischen Theologie* (Lund, 1939), 141-43.
54. D. Guthrie, “Johannine Theology,” *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. M. C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, 1977), 3:630.
55. L. van Hartingsveld, *Die Eschatologie des Johannesevangeliums* (Assen, 1962), 41.
56. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (Garden City, NJ, 1966), 213-14.
57. J. Blank, *Krisis* (Freiburg, 1964), 109-82.
58. W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957), 453-54.
59. Van Hartingsveld, *Eschatologie*, 37; Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 213, 345, and others.
60. Van Hartingsveld, *Eschatologie*, 37.
61. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London, 1955), 217.
62. The word *krinein* which normally means “to judge, separate, distinguish, decide” can also mean “to condemn, punish” (so Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 452-53). In John 3:17-18; 12:47-48 “condemn” is the meaning according to Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, 453; Brown, *John I-XII*, 147-148. C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge,

- 1963), 357, notes that in John *krinein* “can bear the meaning of *katakrinein*,” which means “to condemn” (so Mark 16:16; cf. Mark 10:33; Matt 20:18; 2 Pet 2:6; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 11:32).
63. Brown, *John I-XII*, 345. So already J. Calvin as cited by van Hartingsveld, *Eschatologie*, 37, n. 4.
64. Van Hartingsveld, *Eschatologie*, 39.
65. The Greek term is *krinein* and in contrast with “save” means “condemn.” See above n. 62.
66. See above nn. 62, 65.
67. G. Kittel, “eschatos,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, 1964), 2:697.
68. L. Cope, “Matthew 25:31-45, ‘The Sheep and the Goats’ Reinterpreted,” *Novum Testamentum* 11 (1969): 32-44.
69. J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, 1963), 207.
70. J. D. Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, 1958), 420.
71. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 638; so also D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester, 1981), 851.
72. Pauline texts that are customarily cited are: Rom 2:16; 8:5-13; 14:10, 12; 1 Cor 3:13; 4:5; 6:9; 2 Cor 5:9-10; Gal 5:19; 6:7-8; Eph 5:5-6; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:6. Added may be also Heb 2:1-3; 6:1-2; 10:26-31; 12:23; 29:29.
73. L. Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, 1960), 54.
74. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 866.
75. F. D. Nichol, ed., “Romans,” *The SDA Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC, 1957), 6:488.
76. Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 453.
77. *Ibid.*, 905.
78. H.-C. Hahn, “Time,” *New International Dictionary of NT Theology*, 3:848.
79. H. Lampater, *Die Hoffnung der Christen* (Stuttgart, 1967), 161.
80. J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, 12th ed (Philadelphia, 1865), 1:322-326.
81. F. Düsterwald, *Die Weltreiche und das Gottesreich* (Freiburg, 1890), 177. Cf. S. P. Tregelles, *Book of Daniel*, 6th ed. (London, 1883), 39-41; T. Robinson, “Daniel,” *Homiletical Commentary* (New York, 1892), 19:136, 139; A. C. Gaebelien, *The Prophet Daniel* (New York, 1911), 77. A. Ferch, “The Judgment Scene in Daniel 7,” 176, n. 66, has listed these conveniently.
82. On the millennium and the saints of God in heaven, see A. J. Ferch, “The Millennium, a Golden Age on Earth—Or in Heaven?” *Ministry* 50/5 (1977): 32-35.
83. On the literary structure of Revelation, see K. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1976), 43-59; id., “Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 16 (1978): 401-08.
84. So L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Leicester, 1963), 94.
85. G. Aulen, as cited in Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*, 70.
86. Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*, 72.
87. J. P. Martin, “The Last Judgment,” *Dreams, Visions and Oracles*, ed. C. E. Amerding and W. W. Gasque (Grand Rapids, 1977), 201.

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