JUDGMENT

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

JUDGMENT

by Watchman Nee

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 18:

Notes on Scriptural Messages (2), Issue No. 36

ISBN: 0-87083-589-0

Scripture Reading: Heb. 9:27

This is one of the most serious verses in the whole Bible. It makes one feel uncomfortable when reading it and displeased when hearing it. "And inasmuch as it is reserved for men to die once, and after this comes judgment." This is what I want to speak about today. The matter which has been reserved has two parts. The first part is that man will die. The second part is that after death there is judgment. If you can escape the first thing God has reserved—death, you can also escape the second thing God has reserved—judgment. According to God's appointment, first, everyone must die, and second, everyone must receive judgment after death. If the first appointment, death, is fulfilled, then the second appointment, judgment, will also be fulfilled. Our friends who are sitting here need not ask if they will receive judgment; they only need to ask if they will die. The topic of my message today is judgment. This is something unpleasant to your ears and something about which I do not like to speak. But we do not have a choice. Unpleasant as it is, you must hear, and I must speak. If death is real, judgment must be real. If you are bound to die, you are bound to receive judgment. If you can escape death, then you can also escape judgment.

The Bible tells us many things that are facts. If you believe them, they are facts. If you do not believe them, they are still facts. A fact is not going to change into a non-fact just because of disbelief. A fact is always a fact.

One fact which the Bible tells us about is God. It does not matter whether or not you believe there is a God; God is a fact. For example, the sun is in the sky,

and whether a blind man believes in its existence or denies its existence, the sun is still a fact.

Another fact which the Bible tells us about is sin. It does not matter if a man believes or refuses to believe that there is sin; the fact of sin still remains.

The Bible not only tells us the facts about God and sin, it also tells us about death. This again is a fact. The Bible speaks about death more often than men do in their daily conversation. If you believe that death is real, it will come to you. If you do not believe that death is real, it will still come to you.

The Bible tells us another fact about the future. Many do not pay much attention to this fact because it is about the future. But this fact is as real as the three mentioned above. This fact is judgment. Judgment will occur whether you believe in the fact, or whether you do not believe in it. All kinds of sins—small or big, civilized or crude, attractive or ugly, committed by reputable people or disreputable people—are subject to judgment by God. Judgment from God is a fact. You can choose to believe or deny it; nevertheless, judgment is a fact. I have disregarded formalities to straightforwardly tell you about this. I do not need to spend time to cite evidence to prove that there is judgment. Facts do not require proof. God is there just as the Bible says He is. The Bible speaks of God at its very beginning. It never elaborates any proof as to how there is a God. Facts do not require proof. The Bible does not need to prove that you have sin because, in fact, you have sin. The Bible does not need to prove that you will die because, in fact, you will die. Likewise, the Bible does not need to prove that there will be a judgment because, in fact, there will be a judgment.

My friends, I want to ask you a question today, "Have your sins been resolved?" Perhaps you have heard the gospel a few times, yet you have not resolved the problem of your sin; and you are not yet saved. I must tell you that as certain as death is, judgment is just as certain. You cannot tell when you are going to die. Neither can you tell when you are going to receive judgment. Therefore, resolve your problem of sin today. If it is not resolved, you do not know how dangerous it is. Many people think that judgment is not that important. However, if you do not resolve your problem of sin today and do not deal with the question of judgment today, the judgment will be without mercy for you in the future. I exhort you not to take your meal or go to sleep until this problem of sin is resolved. This question is immensely important.

You must deal with this matter thoroughly before God today. Otherwise, when judgment comes, it will be too late.

THE RESULT OF JUDGMENT

The Bible not only tells us that there will be judgment, it also tells us the result of judgment. In the future, God will judge the sins of all men in the world. He will recompense those who do not know Him and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished by eternal perdition (2 Thes. 1:8-9) and go to hell. While the Bible tells us that God loves the world, it also tells us about the fire of hell. If we have not obtained the grace of forgiveness, this is most dangerous. The unbelievers will depart from the Lord's face and go to hell. This is eternal perdition, and no one can escape it.

EXCUSES AT THE TIME OF JUDGMENT

Some may think, "When I stand before the judgment seat, I will say to God, 'You cannot send me to hell because I did not understand the message I heard.'" Some sitting here today may say, "I do not understand; I am not clear; I can probably reason with God for an excuse when the time of judgment comes." However, God has already answered you long ago. Therefore, you have no excuse.

Please listen: "Ninevite men will stand up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something more than Jonah is here" (Matt. 12:41). In this verse the Lord Jesus speaks of one thing, and that is judgment. Will God Himself condemn men's sins before the judgment seat in the future? God will just sit there and have the men of Nineveh rise up to condemn their sins.

Nineveh was a rather big and famous old city. All the men in that city were sinners. God sent a prophet named Jonah to announce to them that after forty days Nineveh would collapse. The men of Nineveh heard what Jonah the prophet preached. They then proclaimed a fast, put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them, and cried mightily to God. God saw their works. Knowing that they had turned from their evil way, He did not curse them, and they obtained the grace of forgiveness. The Lord quoted this case to prove that the men of Nineveh would condemn the sins of this generation.

The men of Nineveh repented at the word of Jonah. Behold, something more than Jonah is here! Men today have the words from the very mouth of the Son of God. Who has not read the Bible? Who has not read the Gospel of John? No one dares to deny that he has heard the word of God's Son. If you have never heard that the Son of God died for you, there is nothing to say. But if you have heard it, you can by no means escape the future judgment. At the time of judgment, the men of Nineveh will stand up and say, "We heard Jonah and repented; you heard the gospel of God's Son and did not repent. How can you escape this sin?"

Some may say, "It is true that Jonah went to Nineveh to preach and that the men of Nineveh had an opportunity to repent. But I am a country person; no one preaches the gospel to me at the place where I am. God may not be able to condemn the sins of a person like me." However, the Lord mentioned another incident which leaves this kind of person without an excuse.

"The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something more than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42). In the time of judgment, the queen of the south will rise up to answer the argument of this kind of person and condemn the sins of this generation.

This queen of the south is the queen of Sheba. Sheba is today's Ethiopia. This place is even farther south than Egypt. The queen of Sheba came to Solomon from thousands of miles away because she heard of the fame of King Solomon and how much wisdom he had. "Behold, something more than Solomon is here." Our Lord Jesus is greater than Solomon! What He spoke has more wisdom and prudence than Solomon. What He spoke has a greater and deeper effect; it affects the eternal life and the eternal perdition of men. A queen from the south was willing to come from thousands of miles away to hear the words of wisdom from King Solomon. You are just some twenty miles from town. Can you not go into town to find a gospel chapel to hear the word? Even if you are a hundred miles from town, can you not go into town to find a place to hear the word? The queen of the south can condemn your sin because she came from thousands of miles away. Why can you not go from your house? Therefore, those who are not saved will have no excuse at the time of judgment.

NO WAY TO ESCAPE THE TIME OF JUDGMENT

Perhaps some may think, "Since there is judgment, I will find a way to escape." No one should be so foolish; nevertheless, I am afraid that there might be some who have this foolish thought, so I will speak a little concerning this matter. They may think, "Everyone has to die, and judgment will come afterward. I will die and go to Hades. I will hide there and not come out. Those who have been good will be resurrected unto life. Those who have been evil will be resurrected unto condemnation. As for me, I will simply choose not to be resurrected; I will hide in Hades. Would that not be all right?" But this will not work.

Please listen to God's word: "Though they dig into Sheol, / From there My hand will take them" (Amos 9:2; cf. Psa. 139:8). You think that you can escape the judgment by hiding in Hades and by closing up the mouth of Hades. However, God's hand will take you out from there. Even if you can dig into Hades, and even if you can dig so deep that you cannot go any deeper, God's hand will still take you out from there.

Another group of people, today's scientists or aviators, may think that in the day of judgment they will fly an airplane to the sky and stay in the highest place to escape judgment. However, this way will not work. Please listen: "And though they go up into heaven, / From there I will bring them down" (Amos 9:2). You may climb up, but God will bring you down. Even though it takes much effort for you to climb, it is rather easy for God to bring you down.

Some may think, "I will escape to the high mountains and the bushes. Who then can find me?" However, the Word of God says, "And though they hide at the top of Carmel, / From there I will seek them and take them" (v. 3). You may think that there are so many trees in the high mountains that if you hide there you can escape judgment. But God will search and take you out.

Some may think that since they will not be able to hide in Hades, fly to heaven, or hide in the high mountains, they will escape to the bottom of the sea. However, God's Word says, "Though they hide themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, / There I will command the serpent, and it will bite them" (v. 3). You may hide in the bottom of the sea, but God will command the serpent to bite you, and you will have nowhere to escape.

The few conditions mentioned above are just a few pictures that God has painted for you. You may be able to escape man's hand by going to Hades, heaven, high mountains, or the bottom of the sea, but you cannot escape the hand of God. According to the Bible, there is no way to escape and no way to reason.

OTHER CONDITIONS DURING THE JUDGMENT

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the works of power which took place in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who have been exalted to heaven, to Hades you will be brought down. For if the works of power which took place in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until today. But I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matt. 11:21-24). Friends, please listen. The more you hear the gospel the better it is. Before the judgment seat in the future, you will have that much less to say. If today you still commit sins, live for the world, seek your own pleasures, and consider sinning as your career, I beg you to consider the question of judgment. You will not live forever, and you will not be exempted from judgment. Judgment is as sure and definite as death.

I told the people in Shanghai that they would become like Tyre and Sidon in the future. Tyre and Sidon were once very flourishing, but today they are just places for laying nets. Because they were filled with sins and evil, God sent fire and brimstone to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah completely. Two years ago, an American archaeologist went to Sodom to search for historical evidence. He saw that the whole land was filled with traces of sulphur. O Shanghai, what Tyre and Sidon went through was easier than what Shanghai will have to go through during the judgment days. What Sodom experienced was easier than what Shanghai will have to face. Before the Lord was born, God's Son had not died to bear our sins, and man did not know about sin and judgment. They could still have an excuse. But you have heard that God's Son has died for you. If you do not resolve the problem of your sins today, I would shed all my tears for you! If we who preach the gospel had enough tears, we would shed them all for you! The future judgment will be extremely serious. The world will pass away, and you will pass away; all the worldly pleasures will also pass away. But the judgment will not pass away.

HOW TO ESCAPE JUDGMENT

I have to say something regarding the way for man to escape judgment. To escape judgment, we must first ask why we will be judged in the future. Because every man has sinned, every man must be judged. If you can escape sins, you can also escape judgment.

"Judgment" in the original text is the same word as "righteousness" and "condemnation." When we come across "judgment," we can change it to "condemnation." For instance, to read "after this comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27) is the same as "after this comes condemnation." Sin is a matter that no one can escape. If man had not sinned, we could tear down this meeting hall because we would not need it. I could also change my job. I am not preaching here because I have no other way to support my living. I could give up being a Christian. I could burn up this Bible, and I could have the boldness to do all kinds of things. But sin is real, and it is a solid fact that we need a Savior. I know that there is a Son of God who bore my sins, and I know that there is a Son of God who shed His blood to redeem me from sins. I know that once the problem of sin is solved, the problem of judgment will also be solved. There is a way, and there is salvation.

What way did God use to save us from sins? I have sins, and sins deserve judgment and hell. However, God's Word tells us that God's Son has died for our sins. God's Son has died for us. "God's Son"! This term is sweet to my mouth, finer than music to my ears, and poetic to my inspiration.

God's Son has come and died for me. God's Son has borne my sins and received the punishment for sins on the cross. Therefore, I am saved, and I am now free. This is the gospel! My purpose is not to bring you tidings of woe by telling you that you will die and receive judgment. I have shown you judgment first to make you aware of your need; you need a sin-bearing Savior.

Let me tell you a story: during the Civil War in the United States of America, there were two brothers. One lived in the North, and the other lived in the South. They both were drafted into the army. The South lost, and many soldiers were taken as prisoners by the North. The one who guarded the captives was the older brother. He found out that his younger brother was among the prisoners. He dared not say anything. At night, he took off his clothes and let his younger brother wear them to escape for his life. (At that

time the prisoners were to be executed the following morning.) He put on his younger brother's clothes and became a prisoner for him. The next morning, the older brother was executed by a firing squad. Later someone discovered that the dead one was not the right person. They still could try to catch the younger brother. But according to the law, they had to let the younger brother go because his brother had died for him. No person can die twice. Oh! This is but a very small example of the cross.

Please do not misunderstand my words. Do not think that the Lord Jesus came to serve society, preach universal love and equality, and become a model for mankind. I have read through the New Testament at least one hundred times and have never found such a teaching in the Bible. This is not the glad tidings. These are tidings of woe that come from the devil and hell. The Bible tells us that Jesus came in order to be judged for us. We deserved death, but Jesus died for us. The Lord Jesus said on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). God had no choice but to leave Him there because He bore our sins. He came from the heavens to make a way for us to go to the heavens. He departed from God and came to this world so that we could draw nigh to God. He suffered poverty so that we could become rich. He came to this earth so that we could be free from the earth. He came to bear sins so that we could be free from sins. He was judged for us so that every one of us who believes in Him could be exempted from judgment. Friends, when you hear the gospel, you always hear about the cross. The word cross means nothing other than the fact that the Lord Jesus has borne our judgment and suffered punishment for us.

I will tell another story. Before the United States was as flourishing as it is today, British and French immigrants lived on the East Coast of that country. Later on, people went for gold in San Francisco and started to dig out pure gold. The news spread to the East Coast, and some traveled to San Francisco to dig for gold. There was a certain couple who discussed selling their property in order to dig for gold; they hoped that by doing this they could make a fortune. Eventually, the husband went, and for over a year the wife received no letter. One day the wife received a telegram from her husband, saying, "GOLD COME." This meant that he had found gold and that she should come. The wife was extremely happy and took her son and boarded a ship headed for San Francisco. In those days transportation was not convenient, and the Panama Canal was not yet open. Neither were there any trains. Traveling from the east to the west took a long time. One day, while

they were on the ship, there was a great noise. At the beginning, she thought that there were pirates on board. She locked the door, sat inside, and would not come out. Later she smelled smoke and realized that something was wrong; perhaps the ship was on fire. She opened the door and discovered that the ship was on fire. She immediately picked up her son and ran to the deck. The lifeboats were being hoisted down. But the last boat was filled with people. Usually when a ship is sinking, the women and children are the first ones to go. Since she had come out so late, everyone else was already in the boats. She begged desperately, and the sailors promised to take one more person. At that juncture there was a dilemma: was the son to live and the mother to die? Or was the mother to live and the son to die? They could not die together or survive together. Either the mother had to die, or the son had to die. Between the two of them, at least one had to die in order for the other to live. Eventually, the mother wrote down her husband's name and address and gave it to the sailors, entrusting them to send the child to her husband upon reaching safety. Then the mother said to her son, "My son! When you see your father, tell him that your mother has died for you in the fire and in the water so that you could see his face." This is a small picture of the Lord Jesus' death for us. May we hear Jesus saying to us, "Sinners, I died for you on the cross so that you can see the face of the heavenly Father. I died, and you live. Please believe sincerely."

My only purpose is to show you that death and judgment are sure. However, God loves us and has prepared a salvation for us. His Son has died for us. Friends, please accept Jesus Christ as your Savior today.

Please listen to this verse: "He who believes into Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Please pay attention to the word "condemned," which is "judged" in the original language. In other words, "He who believes into Him is not judged; but he who does not believe has been judged already." This verse is not spoken by me, but by God and the Lord Jesus.

Please listen to another verse: "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" (John 5:24). This verse tells us that if one hears the Lord Jesus' word and believes in His Sender, (1) he has

eternal life; (2) he will not come into judgment; and (3) he has passed out of death into life.

I would like to ask you whether or not you have believed in the Son of God. If you have not yet believed, please accept Him as your Savior now. I once sat beside a dying man. If you were sitting by a dying man, I do not know what you would be thinking. I was preaching at a place, and someone came to ask me to share the gospel with a doctor who was about to die. He knew a little about the church, but he was gravely ill with tuberculosis. I arrived at his place and saw him. He said, "I have heard of Jesus, but I have always rejected Him." I urged him to rest, but he said, "I am a doctor. I know the degree to which my illness has reached and that I will die. I was a military doctor and have met many different kinds of people and have committed many sins. I regret that there is now no way out. I have committed all these sins, and there is no peace in my heart. After I die, I will not be able to meet God." He kept speaking this way, but I read John 5:24 to him. When he heard these words, he realized that God desires to give man life and that as long as man would believe, he would obtain eternal life and not come into condemnation, but would pass out of death into life. When he received this word, he had peace. There was an absolute difference between the first part of the time that I had with this man and the second part. When I arrived, he was in tears; when I left, he was able to shake my hand and thank me. I know that some day in heaven I will meet him again. But friends, please do not wait until that day to believe; do not wait until your last opportunity to believe. Please say to God now, "God, right now I receive Your Son." Oh, God's Son has died for you and has borne the judgment for you. Therefore, sinners, please come.