

The Final Examination  
By Ethan R. Longhenry

You walk into the room. You are a bit confused and apprehensive-- what is going to happen? You stand before the teacher, and he gives you the final examination.

Are you ready? Have you prepared yourself? How will you fare?

All of us who have gone through school remember final exams. They were never pleasant, and they often represented a significant part of our grade. The final exam was the last shot at redemption, the conclusion of a successful class, or the final failure. It all depended on our understanding of the class material, the teacher, and the nature of the exam itself.

The Scriptures make it clear that we will all experience the ultimate final examination when the Lord returns: the Day of Judgment.

"The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Since the Day of Judgment is coming for you and me, it is good for us to understand all we can about the Judgment Day and the basis of the judgment!

We do not know when the Day of Judgment will come. Jesus' return is described as being like "a thief in the night" (1Thes. 5:2; 2Peter 3:10). Contrary to the view of many, Jesus' return will not be heralded by a "rapture," then a "great tribulation," and then a "millennium." Instead, the Scriptures teach that Jesus could come at any moment, and when He does return, He will then immediately judge all mankind (Matt. 24:42-25:46). Either we will be ready for His return or we will not be ready. There is no other alternative!

God does not leave us in doubt regarding the basis of the judgment; in fact, you could call it an "open book" exam. We will be judged on the basis of our works, whether we have obeyed Jesus and served Him and His righteousness, or if we have not obeyed Jesus and served evil (Rom. 2:5-11; Rev. 20:12-13). Those works will be judged by the standard of God's Word, just as Jesus promised (John 12:48).

A day of judgment is coming, therefore, and on that day, each and every one of us will stand before God, give an account, and be judged on the basis of our obedience to God (Rom. 14:12).

What shall we do then? Some people live in continual fear, knowing that the Lord is coming, but not knowing exactly when. Yet God would not have us live in fear-- instead, we ought to live in preparation (1Thes. 5:1-10). If we believe that the Bible is true, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and will return one day to judge the living and the dead, then we must live according to that conviction. We must constantly be busy in His Kingdom doing His will (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:16-19)! If we are faithful servants, it will not matter if the Lord returns today, tomorrow, or after our deaths. Let us be prepared for that final examination, and inherit eternal life!

Momma's Cake  
By W. Frank Walton

"And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42).

Christ, in context, challenges us to love Him more than anyone else (Matt. 10:37). To follow Him, we must die to self in order to gain His true and lasting life (Matt. 10:38-39). The price of discipleship is high: we must give our all (Luke 14:33). Yet, the price is low: anyone by faith can give their all (John 6:37; Matt. 11:28)! It doesn't take much of a person to be a Christian, just all of that person there is.

Our Lord assures us that even giving a child a cup of cold water (being kind to an "insignificant" child by being considerate enough that the water is "cold"), is a wonderful deed that God sees and rewards! No one makes a bigger mistake than thinking that if you can only do a little, it doesn't count for much, so you end up doing nothing. Jesus teaches us in the miracle of feeding 5000 with five loaves and two fish, that with Him, little is much (John 6:9). He can bless and multiply our efforts for good (Eph. 3:20-21). There is no such thing as insignificant service in the Lord's kingdom.

So, let me tell you about my Momma's cake. It is the most delicious chocolate cake in the world! (She has a secret way of preparing them). I recently saw in her closet a big stack of chocolate cake mixes. When someone at church has been sick, or has some difficulty, or has an occasion to need some food, my mom bakes them her famous chocolate cake to cheer them up. She is a cake baking machine. (Recently, someone at church said in jest to me, "I've been a little depressed lately...could I get one of those cakes?"). By regularly making a cake, this is a way she can make a contribution to helping others.

She does this because she cannot now, like when I was growing up, teach Bible class, clean the church building, give someone a ride to church, draft blueprints for building a church building, or have the preacher over for a meal during a gospel meeting. She has a debilitating spinal condition called "spinal stenosis" that inhibits mobility. She walks with a cane because she also needs knee replacement surgery. Yet, she is still the indomitable cake baker.

The lesson of Momma's cake reminds me of this nifty poem about finding our place of service for the Lord:

Shamger had an oxgoad;  
David had a sling;  
Dorcas had a needle;  
Rachel had a string;  
Samson had a jawbone;  
Aaron had a rod;  
Mary had some ointment;  
And all were used by God.

So, I urge you to develop your talents, as a disciple of Jesus, and discover your place of service by giving "a cup of cold water" to whomever you can help. God bless you in the service of our Great King, Jesus our one and only Savior. Remember, it's all for Him, who did so much for us. In love, He has changed us, so we can help change the world.

A Moments Wisdom

Men, like kites, should rise against the wind.  
You may give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.  
Most children are afraid of darkness and most men are afraid of the light.  
It takes a great deal of courage to say "No," when most others are saying, "Yes."  
Do what you can, where you can, when you can, and with what you have.  
A big heart accommodates many more people than a big house.