To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" 40 And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." 41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me." 44 Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" 45 Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Text: Matthew 25:31-46 A 11/22/26 Ezek. 34:11-16 1 Thess. 5:1-11 Ps. 96 Resp. Ps.: 149
Hymns: 341, 278, 609, 613

EVERYONE WILL FACE GOD ON JUDGMENT DAY

Fellow redeemed in Christ who is coming in kingly glory to judge all people,

Everyone will stand before God's judgment throne one day. The Lord knows how each of us is living while we're here on earth. He knows what's in our hearts. We don't want to go to hell. We want to go to heaven.

Jesus says, "*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory."* Jesus will be doing the judging on the Judgment Day. Think of our Lord's humble birth in the manger in Bethlehem, of His humble entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, and of His humiliation at the hands of His enemies during His trial, suffering, and death. Christ's Humiliation ended when He declared on the cross, *"It is finished!"* (Jn. 19:30). He rose from the dead, ascended into glory, and will shine in all *"His glory"* and power as God when He comes again – as the Bible says, *"the glory [He] had with [the Father] before the world was."* (Jn. 17:5)

Jesus will come, *"and all the holy angels with Him."* The angels were present at Christ's birth when they sang His praises (Lk. 2:11-14). And the angels will come with Jesus on the Judgment Day, the Bible tells us, to gather all people and bring them before His throne (Mt. 13:41; etc.).

There's a song that goes, "I swear there ain't no heaven, and I pray there ain't no hell." A lot of people don't believe in heaven or hell. They think that when a person dies, that's the end of his existence. Many people believe that because God is a loving God He wouldn't make hell. There are people who believe that everyone, including Satan and his evil angels, will eventually end up in heaven. We're told that God made hell also *"for the devil and his angels."* We're told, *"All the nations will be gathered before"* Jesus on Judgment Day (my emphasis). Acts 24:15 says, *"There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."* Jesus says that *"He will separate [everyone] one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."* Jesus says that the unbelievers *"will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"* (my emphasis). The original uses the same word for *"everlasting"* and *"eternal."* Just as we believers will have *"eternal life"* in heaven, so Satan, his evil angels, and all the unbelievers will have *"everlasting punishment"* in hell. Everyone is going to live forever, either in heaven, or in hell.

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" We who believe in Jesus won't be sent away from Him on the Judgment Day. We'll hear Him say to us, *"Come."* We won't be damned, Jesus says, because we've been *"blessed by [the] Father."* On that Day we'll "*inherit the kingdom prepared for [us] from the foundation of the world."* An inheritance isn't earned; it's something children receive simply because they are their parents' heirs. God prepared our inheritance of heaven long before any of us lived. Therefore there's no way we could earn that inheritance.

We're told in the first chapter of Ephesians, *"[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."* God's *"grace"* is His undeserved love. We sinners don't deserve it, yet in His love God chose us before the beginning of time to be His children. The Bible says that through our baptism God washed away our sins (Ac. 2:28; 22:16) and placed His Holy Spirit into our hearts who has given us our faith in Jesus (Jn. 3:3, 5; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21). We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for our sins on the cross and rose again; and we're saved (Jn. 3:16; Ac. 16:31). Jesus says, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life"* (Jn. 6:47). Heaven belongs to us right now by faith in Jesus. On the Judgment Day when we go to heaven we're receiving the inheritance that was ours already on earth by faith in Christ. Jesus says about us sheep on His right hand, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Lk. 12:32)

As Jesus welcomes us into heaven He'll say to us, *"I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."* We believers will say to Jesus, *"Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"* Jesus will tell us, *"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."* We'll wonder when we did goods thing to Jesus, since we couldn't see Him to serve Him. But whenever we do

something good to a fellow Christian out of love for Jesus, Jesus looks on it as something good done directly to Him.

The hymnwriter says, "And they who fain would serve Thee best are conscious most of wrong within" (TLH #557:6). We believers will be surprised on the Judgment Day to hear Jesus tell us about the good things we did for His sake. So often we're aware of our sinfulness and how many times we fail to do what God says. We sin every day, and need to repent every day. God has promised, *"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more"* (Jer. 31:34). When we repent, God forgives and forgets our sins. On the Judgment Day, only our good works will be left. God won't read a list of the sins we committed during our life on earth. The only thing the Lord will have to say about us is praise for the good things we did in faith and love.

Jesus won't cite our good works as the reason we deserve to go to heaven. We're saved by faith alone in Jesus. On the Judgment Day, Jesus will point out our good works as evidence of our faith. James makes the point, *"I will show you my faith <u>by</u> my works."* (2:18, my emphasis)

Good works are a natural fruit of faith. Jesus says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit"* (Jn. 15:5). Many times our good works aren't done consciously and we're not impressed by them. As Jesus says, *"When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'"* (Lk 17:10). But God is aware of everything we do out of love for Him. Even though all our works are tainted with sin, yet by faith in Jesus we're covered by His righteousness. For Jesus' sake, God is well pleased with the things we do for Him.

The unbelievers enjoy no such relationship with God, not now, not in eternity. *"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"* On the Judgment Day the unbelievers will hear these words from Jesus which will strike terror into their hearts: *"Depart from Me."* Throughout eternity they can never come back to God. Never again will they have the chance they had during their lifetime to know the living God and His love. Forever and ever all they'll know is to be *"cursed"* by God, to feel the never-ending suffering and total despair that is hell. The Bible warns us that in hell *"their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched"* (Is. 66:24). They'll always be suffering and dying without finally being dead and having their suffering come to an end.

On the Judgment Day Jesus will say to them, *"I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me."* The unbelievers will reply, *"Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?"* Then God will answer, *"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me."* The unbelievers will be surprised to hear Jesus tell them they didn't do anything good to Him. They may remember some good deeds they did during their life. They may hope they had done enough good things to get them into heaven. But Jesus will cite the good things they failed to do for Him as evidence of their unbelief. The book of Hebrews says, *"Without faith it is impossible to please [God]"* (11:6). Jesus says, *"Without <u>Me</u>, you can do <u>nothing</u>"* (Jn. 15:5, my emphasis). If a person's good works aren't done by faith in Jesus, they're not done *"for"* Him, and are therefore not acceptable

to God. Jesus tells us, *"You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"* (Mt. 5:48). Standing before the holy, perfect God, even our best deeds fall short of the standard of perfection He demands of us. The unbelievers will stand before Christ's Judgment throne without having confessed their sins and asking Him to forgive them. They won't be covered by His righteousness. Nothing they did during their life could be good enough to let them earn their own way into God's heaven.

Jesus says the unbelievers will go *"into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."* God made hell for the devil and the other angels who rebelled against Him. God doesn't predestine anyone to go to hell. John 3:17 says, *"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."* God wants everyone to believe in His Son and be saved. If someone rejects Jesus and brings eternal damnation upon himself it's his own fault.

The Day is coming closer when every one of us will stand before the judgment throne of Christ. When faced with eternity, we don't want any bad surprises. Believe in Jesus. Live a life of faith. By faith in Jesus we <u>know</u> our sins are forgiven, and we <u>know</u> we're saved, and we <u>know</u> we're going to heaven! We conclude with these words from Jesus: *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (Jn. 14:1-3). Amen.