

# Study Guide for the Week of January 22, 2006

## *The Bible and The After Life—The Final Judgment*

*This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at [www.saintpauls-umc.com](http://www.saintpauls-umc.com).*

This week we'll study scriptures related to the Last Judgment. Within this biblical idea are two concepts: 1. Each of us, at our death, will give an account for our life – we will be judged and consigned to heaven or hell. 2. There will come a day when this earth will cease to exist as it is, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and there will be a Judgment Day upon which all will be judged. How these two relate to one another is the subject of debate. Some believe the second judgment would be for those alive at the time of Christ's Second Coming; others, that it will include the dead who were not Christians. In the Hebrew Bible this day of reckoning was called "the Day of the Lord" and this concept was sometimes used to describe a day when God would punish Israel, yet not the final judgment. At other times this phrase did point to the Last Judgment. Let's study a few of these passages this week...

**Monday – Read Joel 2:1-32** Joel foretells the coming Day of the Lord as a day of judgment, a day when God's just wrath will be poured out upon those who have done evil and those who have turned their back on God's laws. But notice in this chapter the intent of these warnings – the intent was that the people would turn to God. Notice the judgment here seems to be one that comes from an army. What in this chapter points toward God's compassion? The Old Testament's final words are about the Day of the Lord. **Read Malachi 4:1-6.** Jesus called John the Baptist the "Elijah who was to come." What is God looking for from us according to today's readings? What will bring wrath or judgment upon us?

**Tuesday** – For the rest of our readings this week we'll study the Gospel of Matthew, which has a major emphasis upon Judgment Day and the Kingdom of Heaven, as we will experience it in the future. The Beatitudes (Jesus' "blessed are..." statements) all point to those God will bless with life in the Kingdom of Heaven. **Read Matthew 5:1-12** – what does Jesus teach us here about Judgment Day and the afterlife? Read these verses again, aloud, and reflect upon them. Finally, use them as the basis of your prayer time with God – asking God to help you be like these who will be satisfied in the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Wednesday** – Let's take a look at the rest of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount today, and what he says in it about judgment, hell, heaven and how he will judge on judgment day. While the entire Sermon on the Mount points toward these themes, we've chosen verses that specifically mention one of these topics. You may want to make a list of what we should or should not do to enter heaven at the last judgment. **Read Matthew 5:20, 5:21-24, 5:27-30, 6:9-15, 6:19-21, 7:1-5, 7:13-14, 7:15-20.** Finally read and reflect upon the meaning of **7:21-23.** Use today's passages to guide you in prayer.

**Thursday** – **Read Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:36-43.** What is Jesus saying about life now, and about the Last Judgment? **Read 13:47-50.** **Read 18:1-9.** What does it mean to become like a child as it relates to faith? **Read 19:27-30.** What do you make of the teaching that the first shall be last and the last first?

**Friday** – **Read Matthew 24:36-44.** What is the point of this passage concerning Judgment Day? Read the three parables of judgment in Matthew 25. What does each parable teach about Judgment Day? What is God looking for from us? How do we reconcile these ideas with the teaching of the scripture that we are saved from wrath by God's grace, through faith, and not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Let's end our study looking at the "Day of the Lord" again – **Read II Peter 3:8-14.** This Sunday we will turn our attention to what heaven will be like – invite a friend to worship!