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Judgment

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Judgment

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JUDGMENT

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Two Hebrew verbs may be translated "to judge," but shaphat often has the wider meaning "to govern," which probably is the correct implication for "sit on twelve thrones judging twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:29; Luke 22:30). As Creator God has goals for all creatures and will judge human beings justly, within time (Genesis 18:25; Isaiah 1:2-31, etc.) or on "the day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18), when the nations (Jeremiah 25:30-38; Joel 4:1-16) will face divine wrath and the elect of Israel will be delivered. Rather than vanquish enemies by military might (as Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 14: 1-5, 12-15), God will evaluate all human deeds in the heavenly court (Daniel 7:9-10) and "one like a son of man" will receive dominion, glory and kingship" (7:13-14) in conjunction with the chosen people (7:27).

As representative of God, Michael shall defend Israel and the dead will rise, either to live forever or to suffer everlasting disgrace (Daniel 12:1-3). This linking of resurrection with judgment is developed by the Pharisees; in Alexandria some Jews taught that the immortal soul will be judged according to the divine standard of righteousness (Wisdom of Solomon 1:1-15, 3:1-12). Throughout the centuries Orthodox Jews have expressed faith in bodily resurrection, although philosophical considerations led Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) to be ill at ease with the doctrine. In modern times, some Reform theologians lean toward emphasizing immortality of the soul.

The Gospel tradition drew upon the prophets (Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:1-8; Zechariah 9:9-10), Daniel and related apocalyptic texts to emphasize the role of the Messiah in judgment to bring about justice and peace in the final days. Each individual from the nations will be judged with a focus on the corporal acts of mercy (Matt 25:31-46). In a vision the presbyter John saw all the dead being judged according to their deeds (Apocalypse 20:11-15; see 14:13-4, 22:12).

Because of New Testament texts like Romans 9-11, Christians throughout the centuries have written about judgement/salvation of the Jews. Images of hardening of hearts (11:25) led Origen (185?-254?) and others to hope for the reconciliation of Israel only at the end of time; when the dead re raised Israel will be saved.

Emphasizing that redemption comes only by God's grace, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) took the lump of clay (9:21) to refer to all sinful humanity, destined for eternal punishment. For him Jews are condemned because of their reliance on works to gain righteousness (*Expositio quandarum propositionem... Romanos* 56).

If commentators who followed Augustine would have referred to Rom 2:5-6 ("God will repay everyone according to his works," using Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12), they might have avoided such sweeping generalizations.

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