
Church in Campbell Weekly News

April 19, 2026 Issue 26-16

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN THE COMING AGE

Some Christians may be greatly surprised to hear that a believer may be cast into unquenchable fire. They may wonder how it could be possible for a saved one to be punished by fire. Concerning this, we need to consider the word of the Lord Jesus. He is the One who said that if we are stumbled by a member of our body, we may be cast into unquenchable fire.

In 9:41 the Lord speaks of reward, and in 9:42-48 He speaks concerning punishment. Both the reward and the punishment will be in the coming age, in the age of the kingdom. In the coming age the one who gives a disciple a cup of cold water to drink because that one is Christ's, will be rewarded. Likeness, the punishment spoken of in these verses will also be in the coming age.

In 9:43 the Lord speaks about entering into life. One aspect of the punishment in the coming age is losing the enjoyment of eternal life. As we have seen, here it is not a matter of receiving eternal life; instead, it is a matter of entering into eternal life. We received eternal life when we were regenerated. But entering into eternal life is a matter of the coming age, the age when the kingdom of God will be manifested. It is still pending whether or not we shall enter into the enjoyment of eternal life in the coming age. We may be hindered by the lust of our hand, the lust of our foot, or the lust of our eye. The lust in our members may cause us to lose the enjoyment of eternal life in the coming kingdom age. Instead of entering into this enjoyment, we may be punished by fire.

When some hear that believers may suffer in the coming age, they may say, "This is serious! How could redeemed ones suffer such a punishment? Isn't the redemption of Christ complete and adequate?" Yes, Christ's redemption certainly is complete and adequate. Nevertheless, it is a fact that redeemed ones often receive some punishment by God in this age. According to 1 Peter 1:7 and 4:12, and 17, the believers may be purged through trials as by fire. For example, 1 Peter 4:12 says, "Beloved, do not think the fiery ordeal among you is strange, which is coming to you for a trial, as a strange thing happening to you." The Greek word rendered "fiery ordeal" is *purosei*. This word means burning and signifies the burning of a smelting furnace for the purification of gold and silver (Prov. 27:21; Psa. 66:10). Peter considered the persecution the believers suffered as such a burning furnace used by God to purify their life. This is God's way to deal with the believers in the judgment of His governmental administration, which begins from His own house (1 Pet. 4:17-19).

Many Bible teachers realize that it is possible that God's redeemed people may suffer God's punishment in this age. Since the redeemed ones may suffer God's punishment in this age, why should we think that it is not possible for them to suffer His punishment also in the coming age? Who has the ground to say that the believers cannot suffer the punishment of God in the coming age? The Bible does not tell us such a thing. On the contrary, the Bible reveals that God knows how to execute His punishment both in this age and in the coming age. For example, a father may consider what is the best way to discipline his child. He may carry out the discipline immediately, or he may choose to wait

for a period of time. He will consider what is the best time to administer discipline to his child. In a similar way, God knows what is the best time for Him to discipline His children, and he also knows the best way.

The New Testament indicates that genuine believers, those who have been fully redeemed by Christ, may still suffer God's discipline, God's chastisement. The fact that God may discipline the believers does not mean that Christ's redemption is not complete or adequate. Even though Christ's redemption is fully complete and adequate, we still need to take Christ and be replaced by Him. We still need to pray and thereby be able to say in a practical way, "No longer I, but Christ." If we do not take Christ in this way, we may be caused to stumble by the lust in our hand, foot, or eye. Then instead of enjoying eternal life in the coming kingdom age, we shall suffer God's punishment.

THE WAY TO ENTER INTO THE COMING KINGDOM

Whether in the coming age we enjoy eternal life or suffer punishment depends on how we live today. We need to have a life of prayer and continually call on the name of the Lord, telling Him, "Lord, it is no longer I, but You. Lord, in every matter of my living may it be no longer I, but You. Lord, I take You as my replacement. Replace me through Your death and resurrection. Lord, I realize that I have been terminated on the cross, and I also realize that in Your resurrection You are living in me. Now I can say in my experience that it is no longer I who live, but You, Lord, are the One living in me."

If this is your experience, then you will overcome the lust in your hand, foot, and eye. You will be a person taking Christ as your replacement, enjoying Him as everything in your daily living, and living Him in a practical way. As a result, nothing will cause you to stumble, and neither will you cause others to stumble. Because you are filled and saturated with Christ, no part of your being will be able to cause you to stumble. Instead of being caused to stumble, you will be able to praise the Lord and say, "Hallelujah, it is no longer I, but Christ! Hallelujah for Christ! Hallelujah for His death and resurrection." This enjoyment today will bring you into the enjoyment of eternal life in the coming kingdom age. This is to enter into the coming kingdom and to be kept away from God's dispensational punishment in the kingdom age, a punishment that takes place temporarily for a certain period of time.

In 9:49 the Lord says, "For everyone shall be salted with fire." This indicates that fire will function as salt, and we shall be salted with this fire. This salt kills the germs of lust that are within us. Although we have been saved and are children of God, we still have many "germs" within us. Therefore, we need the "salt" of "fire," a "fire-salt," to kill these germs and purify us. This is not merely a punishment; it is also a preservation. This fire-salt will preserve us from being corrupted eternally.

If we see what is revealed in these verses, we shall pray, "Lord Jesus, may it be no longer I, but You in my daily living. In all things and in relation to all people, may it be not I, but You. Lord, I need to be a praying person. Through prayer I can overcome the lust that is within me. Lord, I have been crucified with You, and now You are living in me."

Through the cross we have been terminated, and in resurrection Christ has been brought into us. Now we should enjoy Christ and live Him. Day by day we should live a life in His death and resurrection. Then truly it will be, "No longer I, but Christ." If we live such a life, we shall not cause others to stumble, and we shall not be caused to stumble by any lust that is within us. Then in this age we shall enjoy Christ and in the coming age we shall enter into a fuller enjoyment of eternal life, the enjoyment of the coming kingdom

(Excerpts from Life- Studies of Mark Message #28)

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Burdens for Church Prayer

- 2026 Targets, # of baptized:22; # of prayer meeting attendance:35; average Lord's Day and small group attendance:10% increase
- Spread the kingdom of God by preaching the gospel on the WVC campus and by Bible distribution in the community.
- Multiply the number of small groups for the increase and building up of the Body of Christ
- Perfect young working saints with shepherding families as containers for the next generation.
- Practice PSRP, BNPB, and vital small groups.
- Blending in the Body, by participating in conferences and trainings
- Establish and strengthen the church services, including children, YP, ushering, etc.
- Establish a prayer life individually and corporately
- Pursuing the truth and growth in life to live in the reality of the kingdom.

Announcements

- Life-study of Mark MSG 27, 28
- HWMR: 2025 Winter Training, Week 1
- 4/21 (Tue) 7:45pm, Prayer meeting at saint's home
- 4/17-5/15 8th Term FSCC corporate pursuit on Fridays weekly; \$30/person
- 5/1-3. FSCC 6th Grade Conference. \$50/person.
- 5/9, 6/13, 8/8 10am.
On-line Lessons on small groups by br. Minoru
- 5/22-5/25 International Memorial Day Blending Conference will be held in Dallas, TX.
- 6/15-19 2026 Bay Area Bible Camp at FSCC. \$85
- 6/29-7/4 Semiannual Training registration by 5/1
- 7/19-24. NorCal Summer School of Truth.
- 7/29-8/2 FSCC. North America Chinese speaking perfecting training, west coast session.
- 9/4-6 NorCal Labor Day Conference held at Burlingame Hyatt
- Financial Giving:
PayPal/Zelle: churchincampbell@gmail.com
Venmo @Churchin-Campbell
Church in Campbell bookroom account (PayPal/Zelle churchincampbellbooks@gmail.com)