

The Hour of Judgment ^{part 1}

GOD'S LAST MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

As we move through the everlasting gospel message given in Revelation 14, we arrive at another Biblical theme: the judgment. John declares to the end-time inhabitants of earth, “Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come” (Revelation 14:7). At first glance the hour of God’s judgment may seem to be out of place in a gospel setting. Not so, as we are about to find out. The truth of the judgment is a most wonderful message. It is good news of the highest order and an essential report for all to hear. Any misapprehensions we may have about the idea of a judgment can be categorically wiped away by understanding the everlasting gospel. This is because the judgment is a crucial component of the gospel. Notice these words recorded by the apostle Peter:

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17, NKJV).

Yes, the judgment is a solemn event; yet we can see from this verse that the issue in the judgment is the gospel. And the gospel is a message of glad tidings. It is the good news of salvation given by God in the gift of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Jesus is the Savior of all (see 1 Timothy 4:10). He has ransomed the human race (see 1 Timothy 2:6). The gospel calls every individual to respond to that gift, since all have been impacted by it, experiencing temporal life as a result of God’s grace. All are, therefore, included in

the judgment at one point or another, for the judgment in its simplest form is our response to the gospel (see John 3:16-21). In other words, the judgment is not so much what God decides as it is what we decide. The judgment is basically a revelation of our decision to accept or reject the Lamb slain for our sins. This is one reason why Jesus says:

“That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36, 37).

Three Biblical Reasons for the Judgment

Why will we have to give an account of every word? Why, according to wise King Solomon, will God “bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”? (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Our words and our works testify to the decision we have made concerning the Savior of the world. What have we done with the Lamb slain for our sins from earth’s foundation? How have we handled the gift of life that has been given to us in God’s Son? If we have accepted Him, or even responded to His beckoning voice, it will show in our lives in love to God and to our fellow man.

The Bible gives a number of reasons for the judgment. One of the most important is that we would refrain from passing judgment on our fellow human beings. We cannot judge



one another because we cannot read the heart—only God can. This is why judgment is His alone.

“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way” (Romans 14:10-13, NKJV).

Stop judging one another! That’s the message of these verses. God has a record of all good and evil. He is infinite in mercy and, at the same time, He will by no means clear those who have not availed themselves of His mercy (see Exodus 33:5-7). Leave every soul in the hands of Jesus. He died for us. He is our Savior. He has borne our sins, paying that terrible price in our place. Instead of judging others, try not to be a stumbling block to your neighbor. Don’t allow a judgmental attitude to spring up in your heart causing others to reject God’s love and the gospel. This leads us to a second reason for the judgment:

“Not every one that saith unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

In other words, many who profess faith in Christ are only professors. They do not know the Lamb. He does not know them. They may take His

name, calling themselves Christians, and even do wonderful works. Yet they are workers of iniquity, violators of God’s law of love. Now remember, we are not to judge. God has a day of accounts. No one who may seem to be getting away with falsehood now, will then (see Galatians 6:7). Yet these people offer their works rather than the righteousness of Jesus as a reason they should be saved. The bottom line: We are not saved by our works in the judgment.

A third reason for the judgment, and one that is even more important than the first two, is found in the book of Revelation:

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night’” (Revelation 12:10).

The Bible teaches that we have an accuser. He opposes the work of Christ and the salvation of the lost. His name is Satan and he is accusing all sinners of being unworthy of the favor of God.

The devil is opposing our salvation. He is defiantly opposing the salvation of every soul for whom Christ died. This is his full-time occupation. Day and night he hurls railing accusations against God’s ransomed people, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Here is another look at the work of our adversary:

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him” (Zechariah 3:1). He points to our failures, our sins, and defects, to the plain fact that we are sinners. He makes his case that none deserve to be saved or even protected from the consequences of sin. And he has a point:

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

Yet, unworthy and unrighteous as we are, we have One who speaks in our defense:

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1, NIV).

Note this point with care. Christ speaks to the Father in our defense not because the Father is against us and Christ is for us. *Satan* is the accuser of the brethren, not God. The *devil* is bent on our destruction; God is solely focused on our salvation. “For,” said Jesus, “the Father Himself loveth you” (John 16:27).

Satan the Accuser, Not God

Now back to the reason for the judgment. What do the accusations of Satan have to do with the judgment? Everything! Rebellion and sin began in heaven (see Revelation 12:7-9). It began with Lucifer (Satan), once an anointed, covering cherub (see Ezekiel 28:12-19; Isaiah 14:12-14). From the very beginning of this war against God, Lucifer claimed that God was unfair. He claimed that obedience to God’s commandments was a standard that could not be kept. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, Satan exulted. His insinuations were seconded by their failure. God must now make one of two choices: (1) allow justice to be visited upon man for breaking His commandments; or, (2) forget about His commandments and His justice and let sin and sinners live as they please.

God chose the first, but immediately implemented the eternal plan of redemption, pledging to send His only Son, as a man, to be the receiver of that justice.

“God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His

justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25, 26, NIV). God is fair. God is just and merciful. In mercy “He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.” In justice He gave Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

In giving His Son to pay the price for all sin, God has clearly demonstrated that He is just as well as merciful. Sin could not go unpunished;

the issues involved in this controversy over sin. The accusations of the accuser have been cast out of the minds and hearts of all the heavenly beings by the revelation of Calvary (see John 12:31, 32; Revelation 12:10).

Yet Satan still has a foothold in the minds of mankind. This is why He has come down to earth with great power. He is trying to overwhelm us with the idea that God is vindictive, that He is unwilling to save, that we must be punished or at least do major penance for our sins. This is why the hour of judgment involves *God's* vindication as well as ours. (More on that in our next study.) But

sins because Jesus has paid the price for our sins, the price of justice (see 1 John 1:9). Justice has been served on Jesus and the wonderful tidings of pardon have come to the world.

Yet all do not know this. That is why Satan continues to accuse (see Revelation 12:10-12). It is neither God nor heaven, but every nation, kindred, tongue and people, who need to understand this wonderful truth. Even though they know it not, Jesus is defending the entire world from Satan; for if left without a mediator, Satan would take the lives of all in a moment (see John 10:10; 1

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therefore, God, in the person of Christ, took that punishment. Jesus demonstrated on the cross of Calvary both God's justice and His mercy. In the words of the psalmist:

“Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed” (Psalms 85:10, NKJV).

God has been faithful to the principles of justice and, at the same time, has poured upon the world abundant mercy. Yet Satan still accuses God of being unfair. “How can you let them be saved? They are sinners. They have broken Your law. They deserve to die.” These accusations come against all, for all deserve immediate death due to sin.

God has allowed Satan's accusations to be heard, because He is fair. Yet they no longer have weight in heaven. God has been as clear as crystal concerning

there is coming a day, a wonderful day, when the accuser of the brethren will be silenced forever, not only in heaven, but in our own hearts and minds.

The book of Isaiah communicates this awesome truth with this simple, beautiful promise:

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 54:17).

This is one reason why we have an Advocate with the Father. Jesus is our defender and our righteousness. He opposes the railing tongue of Satan and his cohorts, be they men or demons, by the fact that He died for us. God is merciful and just in dealing with our

Peter 5:8). Consider this wonderful truth of Christ's global mediation as it is stated in the Bible:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1, 2).

This is why God asks Christians to mediate for all men, to pray for those who mistreat them, and to intercede for those who sin (see 1 Timothy 2:1-6; Matthew 5:42-44; 1 John 5:14-16). God asks His children to do what He is doing in heaven. He asks those who represent Him in this world to do just that, to carry His example of love, forgiveness and

intercession around the earth. When that is accomplished, when the entire world understands this wonderful gospel through the witness of those who claim to be followers of God, the end will come (see Matthew 24:14). With this powerful testimony before them, everyone makes a decision for or against the Lamb.

Boldness in the Judgment

Jesus Christ gave His life for the world (see John 6:51). Knowing and believing that every human being stands as a child of God, a purchase of the blood of Jesus, is vital to our own comprehension of God's love. Yes, many are "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), but they are children, nonetheless. They may be prodigal sons, but they *are* sons.

Believing God's love seals us in the judgment. Once we recognize the value of our souls and the depth of God's love for the entire human race, we will find faith and hope to overcome Satan and sin. Recognizing the burning love God holds for us, while we are yet in sin, will give us confidence to believe and trust that His love is changeless. And to see and understand this quality of love prepares us to stand boldly against Satan's accusations in the day of judgment.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.... And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:14, 16, 17).

Did you catch that last line? We can have boldness in the day of judgment *because as Christ is, so are*

we in this world. How is Christ? Christ is perfect; He is sinless; and He is complete. As He is—perfect, sinless, complete—so are we who know and believe His love in the world. We are "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10).

Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, all are destined to be fully vindicated from the accusations of Satan forever. God cannot, however, violate our freedom of choice. Vindication is my destiny and yours, but God will not force us to accept salvation.

The truth of the judgment calls us to put our faith in Christ for salvation. This faith in Christ transforms the life, producing good works (see James 2:17, 18). Our works testify to the genuineness of our faith. Our works tell God and the devil that we trust in Jesus for salvation. This is why when the disciples asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28, 29, NKJV).

The very first work to be considered in the judgment is whether we have personally believed the gospel. Have we accepted our salvation through the Lamb slain for all from earth's foundation?

Yes, God has a full account of our lives; because, for those who trust in Jesus, He is not going to let anything be missed (see Psalm 56:8; Malachi 3:16). God will not allow even one sin to slip by that Satan can point to as being overlooked. God will respond to Satan's accusations by saying, "Yes, I know they are sinners. I have a complete record of their sins. In fact, I have a few sins listed here that you have not brought up. But let's get one thing straight, once and for all. I sent My Son to save these sinners. He paid the price for their sins." Then God will take the whole record of our lives, will point first to our belief in Jesus, then to our

fruits of repentance and obedience and will say, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" (Zechariah 3:2). Then come the prophet Daniel's own words describing his heavenly vision:

"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, *until* the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom" (Daniel 7:21-22, NKJV). The little horn power is the chief advocate of Satan. He is an instrument used to accuse us of sin up until the very end of time. We will spend more time on this later. But notice the central message of the verse. God's people will be vindicated in the judgment. The judgment is, for those who place their trust in Jesus, a time of favor and final victory over our accuser. Let's read this powerful verse again and make it an anchor for the soul:

"I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them *until* the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom" (Daniel 7:21-22, NAS).

Summary

Praise God! No one who places his or her trust in the Lamb needs to fear the judgment. The judgment will bring an end to Satan's accusations. It will bring final and complete vindication to undeserving sinners through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Amen.



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