

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW

Lesson 32

The Judgments

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at the Kingdom and how it relates to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We said that there is a present/inward aspect of the kingdom in which the King, Jesus Christ, rules over our lives as believers. There is also a future/outward aspect in which Jesus will literally return to earth and set up His Kingdom. We also said that we were committed to majoring on the majors and steering clear of controversy as it relates to the end times and Bible prophecy.

Today we will look at the judgments both past, present and future. When we think of Jesus Christ and His ministry, our image tends focus on such things as His love, compassion, healing, blessing the children, etc. Those elements are certainly true of Jesus, the suffering Servant. However, there is an entire side of Jesus that we forget but will be front & center when He returns: His role as Judge. David in Psalm 9:4 says of the Lord, "Thou dost sit on the throne judging righteously." Psalm 50:6 says "And the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself is judge." When He judges He does so with perfect righteousness and fairness.

John 5:26-27 – Jesus said, "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to *execute judgment*, because He is the Son of Man." (italics mine) As early as John 5 Jesus speaks of His role as Judge! In John 9:39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world..."

During His first coming His judgment was indirect, that is, the truth that He spoke separated the believers from unbelievers and, in effect, was a judgment on unbelievers. At times His judgment was direct – He pronounced woe on cities (Matthew 11:20-24); and on the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-36). But, for the most part His role as Judge was under the surface during His first coming. It will be full blown in the Second Coming.

The Baptist Faith and Message states: According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will *judge* all men in righteousness." (page 15)

In this lesson we will look at 6 Judgments: 1 in the past; 2 in the present and 3 in the future.

Now, you might ask, "If this is a lesson about the end times why are we looking at judgments in the past and present?" Answer: (a) judgments are part of God's plan; (b) judgments are interspersed throughout history and (c) judgments are part of how we are to be living as believers until the Lord returns. There is not just one final judgment at the very end of the age.

I. THE JUDGMENT OF THE CROSS

This took place in the past when Jesus died on the cross. The subjects of this judgment: Satan, demons, death and sin.

Scriptures (read all to the class):

John 12:31 – “...now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.”

John 16:11 – “...and concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged.” The ruler of this world is Satan and he was judged at the cross.

Colossians 2:15 – He disarmed the demonic forces and Satan.

Hebrews 2:14-15 – Jesus Christ became human to die for us in order to rescue us from the devil and the fear of death. Note: He did not destroy Satan but rendered him powerless for those who are believers. Satan still prowls the earth looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8) but for believers he is a defeated enemy!

Romans 6:6-10; 8:1-4 – Sin and death were condemned at the cross! We can still be tempted but we do not have to sin.

Satan’s power and the power of sin & death are taken away for the believer.

II. THE SELF JUDGMENT OF THE BELIEVER

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:27-31 (read to the class)

The context of this passage is how we are to approach the Lord’s Supper but the principle applies to the broader context of how we are to live the Christian life. In verse 28 it says that we are to “examine” or “test to approve” ourselves. Then, combine that with verse 31 of judging ourselves rightly so that we would not be judged by God. In verse 32 Paul goes on to explain that the judging of believers by God was His discipline of believers, not condemning them to hell. In the case of their partaking of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner the discipline was that they suffered from weakness, sickness and in some cases death. Even then – it was not loss of salvation.

2 Corinthians 13:5 says “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?”

This does not mean to be morbidly introspective questioning everything we say, do or think. But, it is a healthy thing to occasionally take stock of where we are in our Christian walk – to examine ourselves. It is a form of self judgment. Plato said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

III. THE JUDGMENT OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE OF THE BELIEVER

We have already mentioned the disciplining of believers when they partake of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. Here’s another passage on believers being disciplined by the Lord. Read Hebrews 12:6-13 to the class.

In verse 6 it is clear that those who are disciplined by the Lord are believers – they belong to Him.

Jesus speaking to the church at Laodicea says, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous

therefore, and repent.”(Revelation 3:19) The writer of Hebrews uses the illustration of a father disciplining his children. So, the issue here is not salvation. What is the discipline designed to do? The Hebrews 12 passage gives us some very important benefits of discipline...

Verse 7 – “It is for discipline that you endure...”

Verse 8 – “If you are without discipline...then you are illegitimate children and not sons” The discipline proves we belong to Him as children.

Verse 9 – just as we respected our earthly fathers, how much more should we respect and be subject to our heavenly Father.

Verse 10 – He disciplines us for our good that we might share in His holiness.

Verse 11 – discipline results in a righteous life even though it may be initially painful.

How do we respond to the discipline? By confessing sin according to 1 John 1:9.

This leads us to and prepares us for 3 judgments that will take place in the future.

IV. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears in their book Doctrine state, “Christians will be judged at the end of this life in a way that is different from the judgment of non-Christians. This life, and what we do and do not do with it, matters greatly.”(page 419)

2 Corinthians 5:10 – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Here we have the actual term “judgment seat of Christ”. Since this is referring to believers, the issue is not salvation – heaven or hell – but the person’s works as a believer.

Dr. C.I. Scofield in The New Scofield Reference Bible states, “The judgment of the believer’s works, not sins, is under discussion here. His sins have been atoned for and are remembered no more forever (Heb. 10:17); but every work must come into judgment. The result is reward or loss of the reward...” (footnote on page 1255)

A further discussion is found in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (read to the class). We know that this refers to believers because the foundation is Jesus Christ (verse 11). The life of the believer is like the superstructure of a house built on the foundation of Christ. Everything we think, say or do contributes to the structure. And, someday our structure will be examined by the Lord – our works will be tested as to their quality.

This is not salvation by works or some form of legalism. Because we are God’s workmanship created for good works, then we should do them! (Ephesians 2:10)

What are the rewards? The short answer is that we do not know for sure. Some descriptions, such as crowns, are most likely figurative. Other possibilities: greater responsibility in the Kingdom(Luke

19:17), seeing the full impact that we have had on people(2 Cor. 1:14) and seeing the Lord face to face(1 John 3:2).

I like what Mark Driscoll says: “Whatever the reward, the important idea is that life matters and God is watching.”(Doctrine, page 420) Amen!

V. THE SHEEP-GOAT JUDGMENT

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46(read to the class)

Verse 31 indicates when this will take place: “...when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, then he will sit on His glorious throne.” The Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Judge and this takes place at His Second Coming following the Tribulation.

Verse 32 indicates who will be judged and it is from this verse that we get the term “sheep-goat” judgment. “The nations” could be translated “gentiles”, so those being judged are individual Gentiles.

Verse 33 – sheep on the right, goats on the left. They are judged individually not as a group.

Verses 34-40 – the King, Jesus Christ, invites those on His right to enter the Kingdom. The basis for their entrance to the Kingdom: their deeds, specifically how they showed mercy to Jesus. It is fascinating that the righteous are not aware of when or how they did this. Jesus explains that when they cared for “these brothers of Mine, even the least of them” (verse 40) that they cared for Jesus. Now, who are “these brothers”?

Dr. Louis Barbieri, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* writes, “The expression ‘these brothers’ must refer to a third group that is neither sheep nor goats. The only possible group would be Jews, physical brothers of the Lord.”(page 81)

Now, when would this have happened? When were these Jews cared for? The best explanation seems to be during the 7 year Tribulation. During that time Jews will be terribly persecuted (Matthew 24:15-21). A Gentile who goes out of his way to help a Jew during that time would be putting his own life in danger. So, Jesus’ argument is that one who cares for a Jew during the Tribulation would prove that he is a true follower of Jesus Christ. Is this works salvation? No. As Barbieri states, “His works will not save him; but his works will reveal that he is redeemed.”

Verses 41-46 – The opposite is true of the goats, the ones on Jesus’ left. Through their actions, specifically how they failed to care for and extend mercy to Jews, they proved that they were not true believers in Jesus Christ. They went to eternal punishment and the believers to eternal life (verse 46).

APPLICATION: What does this say to us today? Two things: (1) We need to be a friend to the Jew. This goes all the way back to Genesis 12:3 and it is still true. (2) Our deeds prove our faith in Jesus Christ – James 2:24; Ephesians 2:10. We are saved by grace thru faith but we are saved for works.

Another way I have heard it expressed: we are saved by faith alone but faith is never alone.

VI. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Scripture: Revelation 20:11-15(read to the class)

We get the name from verse 11 – “...a great white throne”. Who is judged? Most conservative scholars agree that it is unbelievers.

Dr. Scofield states, “...the ‘dead’ can only be the wicked dead, from the beginning of human history to the setting up of the great white throne in space.”(*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, footnote, page 1375)

Dr. John Walvoord states, “Thus it may be assumed that verses 11-15 refer to the judgment of the wicked dead, who according to verse 5 would not be resurrected until after the thousand years and will have no part in what is called ‘the first resurrection’”.(*The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, page 982)

Another point of support that this is unbelievers is the fact that no one is rewarded out of this group; no one is ushered into heaven or eternal life – only punished, thrown into the lake of fire.

The lake of fire is the final destination of the wicked called “the second death” in verse 14. The statement “death and Hades gave up the dead” (verse 13) means that the physical bodies of unbelievers will be joined with their spirits which have been in Hades.

This is a terrifying passage to read but the fact remains that these things are true and real. We cannot simply wish them away and think happy thoughts. In Lesson 30 we looked at the Biblical Doctrine of Hell. Remember, Jesus spoke more of hell than heaven because He doesn’t want us to go there!

The Baptist Faith and Message states, “The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.”(page 15)

APPLICATION PRINCIPLES

Rather than bickering about end times prophecy or trying to predict the Second Coming, we should...

- (1) Be living every day in obedience to our Lord.
- (2) Carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth, no matter what the cost, to inform and challenge people to trust Jesus Christ before it is too late.