

The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment

Judgment Must Begin

Lesson #2 for July 8, 2006

Scriptures: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:1-13; Matthew 25:31-46; John 3:17-21; John 12:47-48; 2 Corinthians 5:10

1. What is the relationship between the Gospel and judgment? Is judgment essential in God's plan? What happens when people are judged? Does God have only two categories in which to put those who have been judged? What about the wicked? What is the basis on which people are judged? According to their words? Are people judged according to their deeds? According to their motives? (Proverbs 21:2)
2. We have already suggested based on Revelation 14:6-7 that the Gospel and judgment are inextricably linked. Could you describe this relationship in your own words? Is the good news that God is finally going to get rid of sin and sinners? Is the good news that God is going to save me?
3. How would you define the Gospel? "It's the good news that Jesus died as our Substitute (1 Peter 2:24); that at the cross He paid the penalty for our sins (Isaiah 53:6); that through faith in Him we stand perfect in God now because we are covered with perfect righteousness (Romans 3:22); and that because of what He has done for us, we have the promise of eternal life (1 John 5:11-12)." (*Adult SS Bible Study Guide: Sunday, July 2, 2006*)
4. Is the good news all about how God saves you and me? Or is the good news that God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be—instead he is just like his Son showed him to be by coming, living and dying to answer the accusations that Satan had leveled against them? How would you decide which version of the "gospel" is most valid?
5. If this is the good news what happens to those who do not accept it? Is there a corresponding bad news?
6. Scripture suggests that those who do not accept the Gospel will suffer "everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46); "everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2); "the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever" (Revelation 14:11); "condemned" (John 3:18); "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9); "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12); and "there will be nothing left of them." (Malachi 4:1) How do you put all of these pictures together?
7. Are these descriptions of the consequences of judgment? Who is responsible for the judgment? **Is it God who condemns sinners to these outcomes? Does the Devil do it or do people choose for themselves? Would a loving God do such a thing?** Even our secret thoughts and actions will be brought into this judgment. (Rom. 2:16; Eccl. 12:13-14).
8. There are many verses especially in the New Testament that describe judgment. Do we understand clearly how the judgment will take place? Will we be present in any physical sense? (John 3:17-21; John 12: 47-49; Matthew 25:31-33) **When will we discover whether or not we are to be saved?**
9. Whose names are written in the "Lamb's book of life"? If your name is once written there can it be removed again? (Psalms 69:28; Revelation 3:5; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8; Rev. 20:12-

- 15; Rev. 21:27) Will this judgment involved both the dead and the living?
10. Read Matthew 25:31-33. When does this parable take place? Is this a part of the pre-advent judgment? Or does this judgment take place perhaps at the third coming? Read John 5:29. When are the events of this verse to take place?
 11. Do our words reveal whether we have “accepted” Jesus Christ or not? What if you say you accept Jesus, but the rest of your words and life deny him?
 12. Will the wicked and the righteous all be judged at the same time? If not, why not? Are there only two choices as far as consequences to the judgment are concerned: life or death?
 13. **Many Christians have suggested that the only question that really matters is whether we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord. Does this seem to you like a valid basis on which to divide people between eternal life and eternal death? Shouldn't our actions, our words, and our life have some impact on our judgment?**
 14. Are sinners destroyed in the end because God's wrath is poured out on them? Are they destroyed by the fires of hell? Or do they die because they choose to try to live their lives separated from God?
 15. There is considerable evidence from Scripture and the spirit of prophecy that Christ died the death of sinners. What can we learn from the death of Christ about how sinners will die? Did Christ die the sinner's death? Did he burn in the fires of hell? Will sinners be crucified?
 16. Does God need to do something to sin to make it more dangerous or deadly? Or is sin self-destructive all by itself? Does sin kill people only because it brings down God's wrath?
 17. Read Matthew 12:36-37: ³⁶ “You can be sure that on Judgement Day everyone will have to give account of every useless word he has ever spoken. ³⁷Your words will be used to judge you—to declare you either innocent or guilty.” (GNB) How does this actually work? How does it fit with John 3 and 12 which seem to suggest that we are judged by the truth?
 18. Is it good news that sin and sinners and Satan will be ultimately destroyed? Does this vindicate God's character? How does this actually work?
 19. “As Christians, we understand that Jesus was judged and condemned at the cross in our stead. He faced the condemnation for sin that we, otherwise, would have to face ourselves (see Isaiah 53:4-6; Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:10). As Ellen White expressed it: **‘Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.’**” *The Desire of Ages* 753.
 20. When Christians are judged, is the process one of discovering or revealing the truth about how they have lived their lives, or discovering whether they have “confessed Jesus Christ”

despite how they have lived their lives?

21. Read Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 14:10; Hebrews 10:30; 1 Peter 4:17. These verses should make it quite clear that God's people are judged. In fact the name Laodicea means "people judged." Does 1 Peter 4:17 suggest that God's people will be judged at a different time than the wicked?
22. If Jesus understands clearly about the two categories into which we all will be placed, why did he treat us all so kindly, even sinners? How does God feel about sinners? (Hosea 11:7-8)
23. **"One of the great ironies of the Gospel is that we are saved by faith but judged by works."** (*Adult Teacher's SS Bible Study Guide*: p. 23) **Do you agree with this statement? What does it mean to you?**
24. Read Revelations 22:11-12. Do these verses suggest that some kind of judgment must take place before the end?
25. **What does your understanding of the judgment process say to you about God? Is God trying to include as many people as possible among the saved or is he trying to keep people out of heaven?**
26. Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. What does it mean to say that "God is going to judge everything we do, whether good or bad, even things done in secret?" Compare Matthew 12:36-37; 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12; Compare Matthew 25:31-46.
27. **In the judgment do you think it would be more fair for God to judge us by our works or by our motives? Should both be considered? Should God judge us by our words and ignore our actions?**
28. **If the onlooking universe is somehow involved in this judgment how do they have opportunity to see our words, our works, and possibly even our thoughts and motives? How does God make these things apparent to them? See #26)**
29. **"Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. 'I counsel thee,' He says, 'to buy of Me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.' Rev. 3:18.**

"This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. 'All our righteousness are as filthy rags.' Isa. 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God 'was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.' Sin is defined to be 'the transgression of the law.' 1 John 3:5,4. But [312] Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.' Ps. 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, 'I have kept My Father's commandments.' John 15:10. **By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His**

own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.”
{*Christ’s Object Lessons* 311.4}

30. Read Matthew 22:1-13. What does this parable—which is really two separate parables—teach us about the judgment?
31. If this is the criteria on which we are judged, how do we go about putting on this robe? “To wear the robe of Christ’s righteousness or not to wear it marks the difference between the judgment of acceptance and the judgment of condemnation.” (*Adult Teacher’s SS Bible Study Guide*, p. 25)
32. How do you respond to the following statement “the Bible says that there is a record of our sins, God keeps it, and judgment is upon us. The good news—the great news, in fact—is that Jesus is both Judge and Chief Defense Counsel. If we only put our trust in Him, He will plead His sacrifice as payment for our sins. Sure, though we all face judgment, because of Jesus we have assurance and surety in that judgment.” (*Adult Teacher’s SS Bible Study Guide*, p. 25)
33. **In your own mind what is your greatest assurance as you face the judgment?**
34. We must recognize that it is only logical that whatever kind of judgment is to take place it must take place before the rewards are handed out. This would suggest that the judgment must take place before either the righteous receive their reward or the wicked are condemned. Would you think it was fair to be judged and given your reward either bad or good before your case is carefully considered? Would a reward given by God which had to be later reviewed and confirmed strengthen your faith in God?
35. **Would you continue to live a Christian life if you knew for sure there was no judgment? If you knew for sure there was no hell? If you knew for sure there was no heaven?**
36. “This week we’ve seen that Scripture teaches the following points about judgment:
 - a. Judgment and the gospel are linked, even inseparable;
 - b. There is some sort of final judgment near the end of time;
 - c. Among those judged are the professed followers of Christ;
 - d. Works are clearly part of this judgment;
 - e. Only two final outcomes are presented, eternal life or eternal destruction; and
 - f. Some sort of judgment takes place prior to the execution of the sentence.”
(*Adult Teacher’s SS Bible Study Guide*: Friday, July 7, 2006)

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