

The Bible and Judgment

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When you hear a preacher speak about judgment, what images come to mind? Do you envision a heavenly tribunal with God or Christ sitting on a throne, with record books opened, with accusations made, with Jesus checking the books to see who has a record of His "blood" applied to their account? Do you envision God meting out rulings, findings of guilt and innocence, and then imposing "just" penalties upon the unrepentant?

If you have such concept pop into your mind, you are not alone. Ideas such as these are rife within Christianity, but are they true? If such an idea were true how would you react? What impact does such a belief have on your love and trust in God?

I have discovered several recurrent mistakes people (including theologians) make when studying the Scripture. One is that they use the Old Testament Scriptures to understand Jesus and His ministry, rather than allowing Jesus, God in human flesh, to be the lens through which all Scripture is understood. Secondly, too many make the mistake of basing their theology on the declaration passages of Scripture without harmonizing the evidence passages of Scripture.

[Rev. 14:7 "Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come."](#) How do we understand such straightforward language and also the judgment prophecies of Daniel?"

Fear, in this context, is referring to those who will bring God glory, so it is the experience of the saved not the lost, and therefore means awe, admiration, reverence, amazement, wonderment with God's being. Glory refers to God's character (Exodus 33,34), and in this context refers to those who bring God glory by revealing God's character in their lives.

So does the Revelation passage refer to God sitting in judgment of us, or is it the time when submits Himself to our judgment?

What did the war in heaven, initiated by Lucifer, start over? Lucifer alleged God could not be trusted. How did Satan spread his rebellion to earth? He deceived our first parents in regard to God's trustworthiness.

We are fighting a war thought war and are to demolish everything that sets itself up against "the knowledge of God!" (2Cor 10:5). Jesus said that life eternal is "knowing God" (John 17:3). Paul in Romans chapter one tells us that when we reject the truth about God our minds become darkened, depraved and foolish. Hebrews tells us that the new covenant experience is when God writes His law on our hearts and minds, and when that happens no one will need to say to his brother "know the

Lord for all will know me." (8:10-12). And in Romans 3:4 Paul tells us that God is the One on trial, the One accused and the One who will be proved innocent:

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when **thou art judged.** KJV

May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That You may be justified in Your words, And **prevail when You are judged.**" NASB

Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, "You must be shown to be right when you speak; **you must win your case when you are being tried.**" GNT

No! God will continue to be true even when every person is false. As the Scriptures say: "So you will be shown to be right when you speak, **and you will win your case.**" NCV

Satan lied about God and humanity believed those lies severing our connection with God. Christ came to restore that connection and reverse the damage sin caused humanity. At the end of time God is calling for a people who know Him, who have rejected the lies Satan has told about Him, who have judged God to be trustworthy and thus opened their hearts to Him and experience His healing power. Such people will be transformed to live lives of love revealing God's character in their lives thus bringing glory to God! As such they are powerful witnesses to the world and universe of God's character of love, His methods and principles.

God foretold this reality through his prophet Daniel. There are several texts that refer to this same event – [Daniel 8:14](#), [Daniel 7:9-14,21,22](#), [Malachi 3:1-4](#), and the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25. Each of these passages gives insight into this judgment that each of us must personally investigate.

[Daniel 8:14](#) predicts the time this event will begin, no other significant details are given in the 8:14 text. In Daniel 7 we are given more insight, but what is being described? Because of a preconceived idea that sin and its solution is a legal problem, some commentators have suggested this text is describing a judicial proceeding in heaven in which God is the great Judge who sits down to pronounce judgment upon all mankind. But the Scripture does not actually say that, instead we have to read into the Scripture to come to that conclusion. If we take a more straightforward approach and ask what is being described in the context of the passage another idea emerges.

“As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened....“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like **a son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. **He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.** His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:9,10,13,14

Traditionally, because the assumption that we are in legal trouble with God, most commentators read a legal meaning into the above passage because they read the “court” as a judicial court. But what is being described is not a judicial proceeding. Instead what is described is a Royal Court! This is the Royal Court of the universe which is holding the Coronation of Christ! Some are uncomfortable with this conclusion and rest their entire position on the Hebrew word “*diyn*” which is translated “court” claiming this Hebrew word refers to a judicial proceeding. I refer them to ***The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*** published in 1980 by Moody Press which supports “*diyn*” as I have rendered it above.

Once we recognize that the court seated is the Royal Court of the universe convening for the coronation of Christ we can more clearly understand what occurs during the investigative judgment. Daniel 7:21,22 gives insight:

As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

The above rendering is from the NIV which many, who assume the legal model, prefer. But does the meaning of the passage change when we read from the King James Version?

Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints** of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:22

Which translation is more accurate? The Hebrew word translated “pronounced” actually means “to give” or “to impart” and thus the KJV would be more accurate in this context. Why do the saints of God need judgment or discernment imparted to them? The Daniel text tells us the horn warred against the saints and was defeating them. What kind of warfare was going on?

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.** 2 Cor 10:3-5

What kind of war? Where is it being fought? This is a war between truth and lies, fought in our minds and centering on God’s character! Amazingly, Paul makes the connection to the cleansing of the Temple even closer and shows how the Temple is connected to this war going on in our minds:

Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 2Thes 2:2-4

Paul is describing the exact same events as Daniel 7 in which evil powers war against the saints and oppose God. In the aftermath of Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, did this man of lawlessness ride into heaven overthrow God, set himself up in God’s temple in heaven and proclaim himself to be God? No, where did this happen? In the Spirit Temple! In our minds! Therefore, the cleansing of the temple as described in the Bible is the cleansing of our minds from the lies about God, which wins us to trust and results in our cleansing from sin.

Daniel is told in vision that an evil power would arise that would lie, distort, misrepresent God and defile the Spirit Temple by getting humans to accept, worship and teach a false picture of God. That it would be 2300 years before enough truth would be recovered for Christ to empower His people on earth with judgment to break free from the lies and be cleansed in their minds and characters. All of this is confirmed for us by the other text describing the same event as Daniel 8:14, Malachi 3:1-3:

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will **purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver.

What is getting cleansed during this judgment period? The Levites and who are the Levites? The Priesthood of believers (1Pet 2:5,9). God is cleansing His people from what? Two things – first God cleanses us from the lies about Him which keep us from trusting Him and then, when we are won back to

trust, He cleanses us from sin. God writes His law of love into our hearts. He restores His character of righteousness in us. This is what is happening during the investigative judgment. How does this happen? By our investigating the truth about God as revealed in Christ, rejecting the lies, and clinging to the truth and trusting God! Many have a very difficult time with this truth because of certain Bible passages that are misunderstood, such as:

As I judged your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. Ezekiel 20:36

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. Romans 14:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 1Peter 1:17

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. Revelation 20:12

These texts are read, by those who prefer a legal model, to mean that God's judgment *determines* our destiny, either saved or lost in the form of an arbitrary decision on His part. But this is not the case. God's judgment is merely the accurate diagnosis of our condition either healed and restored to Christlikeness or incurable. An example of God's judgment is found in Hosea 4:17:

Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone! Hosea 4:17

What is God's judgment in this case? Ephraim cannot be separated from his idols leave him the way he is. What determines our eternal destiny is not God's judgment upon us, but our judgment of God, which in turn makes us either fit or unfit for living in God's system of other-centered love. If we judge God trustworthy then we open the heart and His Spirit heals us from sin. If, instead, we accept Satan's lies and judge God as untrustworthy we keep the heart closed and are eventually beyond healing. One day all will stand in God's presence and their true condition will be revealed – this is God's judgment.

Those who sew to the carnal nature from that nature will reap destruction. Galatians 6:8.

Or as Jesus Said,

“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. John 12:47,48

“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Mathew 12:33-37.

It is our very condition that determines our eternal destiny. We cannot make ourselves good. We can only be made good by the power of God working in us. And what determines whether God's power is experienced within a mind/heart? Whether that person trusts God and opens their heart to Him or not.

This reality is stated beautifully in the book *The Great Controversy*:

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare **God's verdict that the wicked are incurable.** They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction, too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love. {GC 543.1}

Does God's verdict make the wicked incurable or does God's verdict merely pronounce the reality that already exists in the hearts and minds of the lost – that they are incurable? We do not need to fear God who is trying to save and heal us; we need to fear sin, which if unremedied will destroy us!

What an incredible privilege is ours to become beacons of God's character in a world dark with lies about Him! Be in awe of God for the hour of His judgment has come!