

## Glimpses of Our God Lesson 4 1Q 2012

### The God of Grace and Judgment

This week we talk about Judgment – God’s judgment –

With what lens shall we seek to understand this Biblical concept?

If we look through the lens of Imperial Rome, with a powerful ruler imposing law upon his subjects – how do we understand judgment?

If we look through the lens of God’s eternal law of love, the design template upon which He created life to operate, how do we understand judgment?

This is the critical question – is judgment a judicial process like human governments, for the purpose of determining guilt or innocence and then determining and executing just punishments, or is God’s judgment something else entirely?

- **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.** Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between **the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.** {GC88 582.2}

And what impact does it have upon how we see God if we view the judgment through the lens of Imperial Rome or view the judgment through the lens of Jesus Christ?

Does it make a difference?

As we go through this week’s lesson I will bring us back again and again to the two lenses and ask what you see through both and which is more consistent with the totality of the inspired record and God’s law in nature.

Further, the word judgment can have different connotations. It can mean:

- a judicial finding
- an accurate diagnosis
- a mental ability of discernment
- a decision between various alternatives
- an event in time

Additionally, when we consider “judgment” we must consider who is being judged, and for what purpose?

What are the possibilities?

- God is judging sinners, both angels and humans
- Created beings are judging other created beings
- Created beings are judging God
- All three

For what purpose is the judgment? What are the possibilities?

- To determine guilt or innocence? For what purpose?
  - If God is judging us so that He can reward or punish. Then what lens is being used?
  - If we are judging God so that trust can be restored and we can be healed.
- To diagnose the actual condition? For what purpose? To provide the proper treatment, which means what lens is being used? God’s law of love.

## SABBATH

Read the entire lesson – “A Soldier...” thoughts?

What lens do they see God’s judgment through? Is it not an imposed law, with an overseeing ruler, who will impose penalties?

Consider – what happens to the mind, heart, character of the person who perpetrates evil on another? Can one inflict wrong on another without being damaged in the process?

Here is how one of the founders of our church described the process:

**We are not to regard God** as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. **The sinner brings the punishment upon himself.** His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. **Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner**, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God**, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

Do you agree with this description? What kind of law is being described here? If this is in fact the way sin works, reacts upon the sinner damaging the sinner, then does there need to be an investigation to determine what wrongs were done for the purpose of imposing punishment?

When one accepts the truth that God is love, but accepts the false imperial Rome imposed law concept, then one finds constant contradictions in the positions put forth. For instance:

SUNDAY

Second paragraph, “Judgment and salvation...” then read THURSDAY, two paragraphs beginning, “Thus, if God...”

Do you hear grace and justice being pitted against each other here?

This is what always happens, when one believes God is the source of pain, suffering and death, that He must inflict

torture upon His creatures in order to be just. Thus there are these long convoluted explanations trying to justify that which is unjust.

We will see more of this as we go through, contrasting the two ways to view God's law.

What if we look at love and justice through the lens of God's natural law of love, the law upon which life is built. Then is there is never a contradiction, only constant harmony!

What is the real problem with breaking God's law, that God will get mad or that our souls, characters, minds will decay?

But, if we accept the imposed law concept, we believe that the problem is God's wrath, anger and He must investigate and determine who has broken His law and then inflict punishment.

Thus, if one accepts the imposed law idea, then one misconstrues God's actions as punishment for crime.

Let's look at MONDAY and we will see this.

Read first paragraph, "Think about this..." thoughts?

What does this sentence reveal, "Before sin, there was nothing to judge, nothing to condemn, nothing to be punished."?

This sentence is evidence of having accepted Imperial Rome's change of God's law as an imposed law. Notice, sin has to be punished. Where did this idea originate?

Historic Adventism saw this idea as originating with Satan:

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be

pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. {DA 761.4}

Satan alleged God is the imposer of law and God must impose punishment.

If we look at this through the lens of God's natural law of love, the template He designed life to operate upon, and sin as being outside that design template, then we would say, "Before sin, there was nothing to diagnose, no terminal condition that condemns, and nothing to heal."

Huge difference – **imposed law requires punishment, natural law requires healing.**

Because the imposed law has been accepted, and thus the idea that justice requires punishment, then the Old Testament gets misunderstood, read fourth paragraph, "Verse 15 is..."

Thoughts? How do you hear this idea of judgment against the serpent and judgment against the woman and the man? Do you hear it as judicial finding of guilt and need to be punished?

This is how one sees it when one comes to the text already accepting God's law as an imposed law.

But what if we read the text through the lens of God's natural law of love, which is now broken, and mankind is now in a terminal condition. Then how do we read and understand God's actions?

Does God make a “diagnosis” and after making the proper diagnosis, does God make a “judgment” as to what is the best treatment course to result in healing and salvation? So, do we see His actions as “punishment” for “sin” or do we see His actions as therapeutic interventions for redemption and salvation?

- Was the serpent capable of moral decision making?
- Was the serpent made in God’s image and given dominion over the land?
- Was the serpent instructed by God not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?
- Was the serpent warned by God that it would die if it did eat, or crawl on the ground?
- Then, how can one suggest that the curse upon the serpent to crawl on its belly and be despised is a punishment for sin? Such an idea puts God in a terrible light, one of arbitrary imposer of punishment, without warning.
- Rather, it seems to me this is a therapeutic intervention for the need of fallen humanity to warn and protect.
- The serpent doesn’t have a soul, it doesn’t have moral decision-making capacities, and thus God’s actions are not designed to punish the serpent, but to teach humanity something. What?
  - The message is clear – cooperate with Satan and you will find yourself degraded, crawling in the dirt and despised of others – any evidence for this?
  - The demoniacs in Christ day
  - Were the demoniacs, whose minds were controlled by Satan degraded? Crawling in the dirt? Despised by the rest of humanity? Outcast? And was their condition a punishment by God? NO! Neither was the serpent’s a punishment, it was a loving intervention to help us avoid becoming demoniacs!

What about increased pain in childbearing? What does scripture say is the reason for increased pain in childbearing?

- But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. 1Tim 2:15
- What does this mean? Was the increased pain punishment, or somehow part of a therapeutic intervention to lead to salvation?
- Childbirth metaphor for salvation (Nicodemus), and is this a painful process to die to self and be reborn, but followed by joy?
  - Childbirth a reminder of the coming incarnate Savior? Would this be a painful process, but followed by delivery from sin and joy?
  - Would painful labor and childbirth be a reminder of the pain of sin, yet the grace of God in overcoming that pain with a new life?
  - Would such a reminder be designed to punish, or instill humility, conviction of one's need and hope of eternal deliverance?
  - So, was God's "judgment" a judicial judgment with infliction of punishment, or a loving judgment of our need with therapeutic intervention?

What about subordination of Eve to Adam, punishment or therapeutic intervention?

Eve was told of the sorrow and pain that must henceforth be her portion. . . . In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God--**in harmony with His great law of love**--they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but **sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other.** Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation

that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. . . . {CC 18.2}

What do you understand this to mean? After sin the heart and mind of humanity no longer naturally operated upon other centered love, but instead upon fear and selfishness. In such a state marriages could not exist. God, intervened, therapeutically, in love, to cause women to have a greater desire for relationships than men, thus causing women to be more likely to give in to maintain the relationship, so that marriages could sustain long enough for God's plan of salvation to be experienced. But when husband and wife experience God's love, true equality in partnership is re-experienced here and now.

What was the reason for increased work in getting food from the earth?

When God made man, He made him ruler over the earth and all living creatures. So long as Adam remained loyal to Heaven, all nature was in subjection to him. **But when he rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures were in rebellion against his rule.** Thus the Lord, in **His great mercy, would show men the sacredness of His law**, and lead them, by their own experience, to see the danger of setting it aside, even in the slightest degree. {CC 18.4}

And the life of toil and care which was henceforth to be man's lot **was appointed in love. It was a discipline rendered needful by his sin, to place a check upon the indulgence of appetite and passion**, to develop habits of self-control. **It was a part of God's great plan for man's recovery from the ruin and degradation of sin.** {CC 18.5}

Was it punishment for sin or therapeutic intervention to heal? When we accept the Imperial Rome Imposed law concept, we misinterpret Scripture and misrepresent God as judging and

punishing sin, rather than lovingly intervening to heal and restore mankind from sin.

Read last paragraph, "At the beginning..."

Must God judge sin? Why? What makes sin, sin? Is it because God said don't do it? Or does God say don't do it because it is sin?

Is sin inherently wrong and destructive, and thus God in love says don't do it? Or is sin inherently not destructive and only becomes wrong because God says don't do it, and the destruction comes out from God as punishment?

If someone ties a plastic bag over their head and breaks the law of respiration, do we have to have a judgment to determine if they broke the law of respiration? Or, if a person breaks that law, does the break of that law inherently destroy and is self-evident?

What about God's law of love? Is such a break, ultimately self-evident?

How will such a break reveal itself?

What happens to a sinner, unhealed, in the presence of God's unveiled glory?

THURSDAY

Rev. 14:7 "Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come."

What does this mean?

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

Over what did the war in heaven, initiated by Lucifer, start? 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 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).

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.

Thus we are in awe of God and give Him glory by revealing His character!

- The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. **The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people.** {DA 671.3}
- We are examined to demonstrate the healing power of God and the effectiveness of Christ's accomplishments –
- Jesus continued: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." **By nature the heart is evil**, and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. **No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul.** "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Romans 8:7; Matthew 15:19. **The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure.** He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. **There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion**, a form of godliness. **The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature.** There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. **This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.** {DA 172.1}
- The Saviour was deeply anxious for **His disciples to understand for what purpose His divinity was united**

**to humanity. He came to the world to display the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. God was manifested in Him that He might be manifested in them.** Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. **His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.** {DA 664.4}

God and His methods are being judged – and we stand as witnesses for God as we cooperate and allow His Spirit to transform us from selfishness to loving others more than self. In that state we are in awe of God and give Him glory!

#### WEDNESDAY

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> 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.** <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and **each person was judged according to what he had done.** <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Rev 20:11-15.

Thoughts?

What is recorded in the records? This is how one of the founders of our church understood it, do you agree?

**In the case of each individual** there is a process going forward which is far more wonderful than that which transfers the features to the polished plate of the

artist. The art of the photographer merely imprints the likeness on perishable substance; **but in the life-record the character is faithfully delineated**, and this record, however dark, can never be effaced except by the blood of the atoning Sacrifice. {Mar 340.2} [and where is the blood of the atoning sacrifice applied? To record books or to people? Therefore how is the record changed? By actual transformation of character of the individual in partaking of Christ!]

**Angels of God are taking a daguerreotype [photograph] of the character** just as accurately as the artist takes the likeness of the human features; and . . . **it is from this that we are to be judged!** {Mar 340.3}

**When the Judgment shall sit**, and the books shall be opened, there will be many astonishing disclosures. Men will not then appear as they appear to the human eyes and finite judgments. Secret sins will then be laid open to the view of all. Motives and intentions which have been hidden in the dark chambers of the heart will be revealed. {Mar 340.4}

**All will appear as a real life-picture.** {Mar 340.5}

In that solemn and awful hour the unfaithfulness of the husband will be opened to the wife, and the unfaithfulness of the wife, to the husband. Parents will then learn, for the first time, what was the real character of their children, and children will see the errors and mistakes that marked the lives of their parents. The man who robbed his neighbor through false representations, is not to escape with his ill-gotten gains. **God has an exact record in His books, of every unjust account and every unfair dealing.** {Mar 340.6}

**Memory will be true and vivid in condemnation of the guilty one**, who in that day is found wanting. **The mind will recall all the thoughts and acts of the past; the whole life will come in review like the scenes in a panorama.** {Mar 340.7}

What do you understand is being described? Any Bible texts to support this idea that it is by our characters we are judged?

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

Or as Jesus Said,

“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.

Why is this recorded in the record? What purpose do the records serve? If the records are an accurate recording of the character for what purpose? I can think of two:

1) To resurrect the individual! Here again is what one of the founders of our church thought:

**Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection**, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. **The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character.** God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. **It lives again bearing the same individuality of features**, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him.  
{6BC 1093.2}

We might say our software is the same but we get new hardware!

We have our characters preserved and returned to us and where are our characters recorded? In the heavenly record books!

What about the wicked, those lost in the end:

In that vast throng are multitudes of the long-lived race that existed before the Flood; men of lofty stature and giant intellect, who, yielding to the control of fallen angels, devoted all their skill and knowledge to the exaltation of themselves; men whose wonderful works of art led the world to idolize their genius, but whose cruelty and evil inventions, defiling the earth and defacing the image of God, caused Him to blot them from the face of His creation. There are kings and generals who conquered nations, valiant men who never lost a battle, proud, ambitious warriors whose approach made kingdoms tremble. In death these experienced no change. **As they come up from the grave, they resume the current of their thoughts just where it ceased.** They are actuated by the same desire to conquer that ruled them when they fell. {GC 664.1}

Why do they come with the same current of thoughts?  
Because their characters are perfectly recorded in the heavenly record books!

2) second reason for the record books - To vindicate and bring honor to God!

- When I was in medical school there was a helicopter crash....

So how do we understand such texts as:

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

Which lens do you read these texts through?

- Those who view them through an imposed law read them to mean that God's judgment *determines* our destiny, either saved or lost in the form of an arbitrary decision on His part.
- Those who read them through the lens of God's natural law of love understand 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.

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!

## TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs, "Critics of the Bible..." thoughts?

How about if God said, "Thou shall not make noise at night." If God had said that, then would He be required to bring the flood?

Or, what about God is cranky because the people were violent and selfish and didn't do things the way He wanted them so He became angry and wrathful and destroyed the world with a flood? Is that any better than the pagan view?

Read next paragraph, "The idea..."

What do you think about the idea that humans are so evil that they deserve death and destruction? Do they mean people deserve God to kill them, or do they mean that a person deserves to reap what they sew, and "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction;" Gal 6:8?