

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of March 15, 2009
"Judgment of God"**

[Today, we're going to take a look at some of the misconceptions about God's judgment and more importantly what it truly means that we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.]

[Topics: Judgment; Salvation; Redemption; Condemnation; Grace]

Excerpt: Here's a quote that is often heard in evangelical circles: "If God does not bring judgment upon America, He will owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology!" It's a quote often attributed to Billy Graham, which doesn't seem to be valid. Nevertheless, some evangelical probably said it, because that's how many people look at life – that God is going to bring judgment. And so we need to walk very carefully and be nervous.

In **2 Corinthians 5:10**, Paul says this: **"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."**

This verse gets used a lot as a salvation issue. Preachers say that we are going to stand before Jesus some day and he's going to give us what for. Now the sermons these past few months have been dealing with our life in Christ and how he has reconciled us to the Father. So this verse and others like it make it hard on us because it seems to counter the positive scriptures. And so we have this black cloud hanging over us and we say, "Yes, but, but what about God's judgment? What am I going to face?"

So we need to take a look at the subject of judgment, who is judging us, and how he's judging us. This will help us to have a healthier relationship with the Father. We shouldn't be thinking that some day something bad is going to happen to us.

So when you hear the phrase, "the judgment of God," what does that mean to you, what does that sound like in your heart? Do you see the analogy of Judge Judy, where God can't wait to yell at you, like she does, and bam – down comes down the gavel and tells us, "You're out of here"? Is that what we envision God might do to us on judgment day?

Do you have fear that God won't accept you? Do you have a lot of, "what ifs" in your thoughts concerning judgment day? Well, we need to take a look at the whole picture. Yes, there is judgment on how we act. Did you notice that if you step off a building, there's a judgment when you hit the ground. God doesn't purposely do anything. It just happens as a result of laws set in motion.

There are certain judgments built into our actions. For example, if we get a divorce, there are results or judgments that happen to our family, isn't there. God doesn't make us go through pain; we've created the pain through our own actions. We'll cover some of this later. Now let's turn to **John 5** beginning with verse **19**.

"Jesus gave them this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.'

Every healing that Jesus did, it was because he saw the Father in that person's life. Every action Jesus took was because he saw what the Father was doing. That's because Jesus and the Father are one.

20) 'For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.'

Jesus constantly showed what the Father was doing. The big part of last week's church conference was saying – how do we figure out what Jesus is doing outside of the walls of the church? How is God working in our community, and how might we connect into that? Since Jesus is doing what the Father is doing, we want to do what Jesus is doing.

21) 'For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.' Jesus came to give us life. Jesus came to give the very life of God to mankind.

22) 'Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,'

So, God the Father doesn't judge us. He's delegated that over to Jesus. So the Father is not judging mankind from Heaven. He sent someone to do that for him. And his name is Jesus.

23) 'that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.'" God has given the judgment to Jesus so that men will honor Jesus. Jesus has become one of us. Jesus knows what it's like to be a human being and to experience this life and to go through pain and suffering. Jesus is tuned into us.

Now, let's look at **Acts 17:29-31**. **"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill."** This should tell us about the God we worship and have a connection with.

30) "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." So God is now bringing us to a relationship with him through Jesus. When we repent, we realize that it's not about us or about our "stuff."

31) "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed." Again, we're told that God judges us through Jesus. **"He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."** The resurrected Jesus will be our judge. So if the Father has handed the judgment over to Jesus, how is he going to judge us? Is his attitude – they are bad and I'm going to straighten them out, once and for all? Let's look at **John 5:45**, where Jesus is telling the religious Jews,

"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set."

Jesus didn't have to accuse the Jewish people. Because of the Law of Moses, they knew they were wrong. By taking up a sacrifice to the Temple from time to time shows that they were sinning – not living by the laws given to Moses. So Jesus was saying to them that the Law was judging them.

Likewise, as parents, in order to get after your kids, you need to have rules in the house. Now it's wise to have your kids know the rules before you get after them. So we have to teach them the rules before you judge them. God made very certain Israel knew the rules before he got after them.

In John 12:47, "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." Jesus didn't come to punish people.

Now wait a minute. We just read here that Jesus did not come to judge the world but to save it. Yet most think it's the other way around. Preachers often tell us that if we don't do what Jesus says to do, we're going to fry. We're in deep trouble. They tell us that he's going to punish us.

What Jesus is saying is that he came to help people get out of their messes. Jesus also said, **"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).**

Jesus knows that we don't keep his words perfectly. Jesus knows we're human. He knows that we have weaknesses and old bad habits that he can help us overcome. He's not here to judge us. He's here to save us. He's here to help us be right with God.

He's here to show us where we are not right – not in a punishing way, but in a way that says, let me save you. When we hear the word judge, we tend to think of the black robed person sitting on the bench and not Gideon, not Sampson and Deborah and all the other judges of the Old Testament.

What did God do when Israel was off the track? Sometimes he sent in an army to beat them up for a while and then he sent in a judge, who brought them out of their problems. The judge brought them out of their sinfulness and the fact that they were in trouble. The judges delivered Israel from their problems and restore them to God.

So it is with Christ. He's not coming to judge us but to save us. He wants you and me to make it. He wants those outside to make it. Jesus is not just waiting for an opportunity to zap America. Yes, America has her problems, because we are really making some stupid decisions – for example, we're greedy. And so we're paying the price for our stupidity. It's not God having to bring judgment on us. We're bringing judgment upon ourselves because of our actions.

48) "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." Jesus is saying that when we realize that we didn't do what Jesus told us to do is what convicts us.

We've seen that in our children. They come in the house and they've got the "look." And you immediately say, "What have you been up to?" And they respond, "Nothing."

And you tell them that you know they have been up to something because of the look they have. Judgment was on them, because they knew they had done something they weren't supposed to do. Mom and dad don't have to condemn them, but just ask, "What did you do?" Your children feel guilty because of what they did.

It's the same with Christ. When we don't do what Christ has asked us to do, judgment comes on us and we feel guilty. We feel that we're not living up to God's standard. When we acknowledge our problems, Jesus wants to help us overcome and grow and get past that particular sin. He doesn't want us to be caught in those things. God is willing that none should perish. Jesus is doing everything he can to help so that everybody can make it.

John 8:15, "You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one." God is not making it a habit of judging us all the time. In Bible study this morning we covered **Romans 1** where it talks about all the sinfulness that happens because of Adam's sin. And people get caught up in all the sins and we usually pick out one or two like homosexuality. But what about the gossip, envy and all the other things it lists there?

And then in **chapter 2**, Paul says for those of you who think you are some body, quit judging those who have these problems. It's human to judge. It's human to make decisions about how some body else is doing spiritually. One of the greatest problems in the church for the last 2000 years has been people judging each other.

Paul wrestled with the problem of judgment in Corinth, wrote about it in his letter to the Romans, and to the Philippians. And so many issues in the church today are the result of us judging each other about how we are doing things.

Jesus didn't come to judge any one. He came to show the Father. Now when people saw the Father all thought out the Bible, what did they do? They fall on their face. Isaiah said that he was man of unclean lips. God didn't have to tell Isaiah that. God just showed up and Isaiah saw, for himself, that he was a man of unclean lips.

The judgment comes when we compare ourselves to God. We respond to God's perfection. We need to come to God and have him make us like he is. The Greek word for judgment is *krisis*. It means judgment or to make a decision. We get our word "crisis" from it.

It means that when we come before God we have a crisis. That's because we discover what God is like and see that we aren't like him. God doesn't have to say anything. He just shows up in his holiness and purity and majesty. And we then face a crisis.

Now back in **John 3:17, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."** Do we understand this? God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn us but to save us. And by the way, as much as we get on Sodom and Gomorrah's case, Jesus told the Jewish people of his day who were so self-righteous, that Sodom and Gomorrah will go into the kingdom before they do. God will apparently bring transformation to them and invite them into his kingdom.

18) "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

So we stand condemned because we aren't responding to Jesus. We're either with him or against him. Jesus invites us to come in and be with him and respond to what he has done for us.

19) "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

God just comes with his light and shines it on us. And it shows if there's darkness in us. You know how it is when we are in a dark room for a while and someone turns on a bright light and we are temporarily shocked by the light.

That's how judgment works. Jesus comes and shines his light on us and we realize we still have some darkness in us. We compare ourselves with him and realize that we're not there yet. And Jesus says, "You're right. You're not like me. I didn't come to condemn you. Let me help make you become like I am." And so Jesus invites us to come into a relationship with him and to get to know him in a greater way. And Jesus does everything he can to help us succeed in becoming Christ-like.

If you are living in spiritual darkness and the light comes on, suddenly you are exposed for who you are. And that's how Christ comes. He just comes and shines his light. That's the verdict. That's the crisis. When we see we have a lot of darkness in us because of his light, Jesus offers to draw us into himself to change us. Jesus shows us the Father's love for us, not his anger against us, to help us get rid of our darkness. Far too many people think that God has got his thumb on us and can't wait to get us. But, that's not Biblical.

Now in **John 12:30**, "**Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine.'** God had spoken in public acknowledgment of sonship and authority of Jesus. He explained that the voice was intended to encourage and benefit the disciples and not himself.

31) 'Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.' Jesus is saying that he has overcome Satan. **32) 'But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.'**

Jesus is referring to two situations. One is that when Jesus was lifted onto the cross, he drew people to himself. And then when he was lifted out of the tomb and sat at the right hand of the Father, he took people with him and drew them to the Father. God is not out to get us. If God were to judge us for our sins, we would already be toast.

Now here's a quote from the theologian Bert Gary, from his blog.

Life's judgment comes not from the Father or the Son, but from our No to Life. (In other words, judgment comes when we don't respond to the life of God and we go the other direction.)

To put it personally, it's as if Jesus is saying, I'm giving you Life, and you keep saying No. If this is the way it is, truly it's not the Father or the Son that judges you directly. The judgment is in your response to the presence of Life—merciful, honest, revealing, exposing, forgiving Life – given to you up front without strings. Religion is always a deal. Life is always a gift.

Now some people say no thank you to God's offer of salvation. And God allows that. It's also important to understand that religion is always a deal. Religion says if you do this, I'll do that. That's Old Covenant. That was God's relationship with Israel. But that's not God's relationship with mankind now. Under the New Covenant God is offering us life. It's not a deal. It's a gift, period.

This is a quote from theologian Dr. Gary Deddo in answer a question about judgment. *God says all things are "yes" in Christ. God is reconciled to all. He holds nothing against us. We respond to His "yes" and He says "yes" to our "yes."*

Judgment is when God says "no" to our "no" to Him (when we reject Him.) God refuses to accept our "no" and reinforces His "yes." He denies our denial.

(In other words, God is saying that he's going to keep on pursuing us, keep on inviting us. God isn't going to let us say no. Now God allows some bad things to happen to us, so that we will change our "no" to God into a "yes." Yet, there's probably a time when God will ultimately say, "OK, I'll accept your no." But God's desire is for all to be saved.)

*Sin is the rejection of **grace** not **law**!* (While sin was originally tied to law breaking, ultimately sin is the rejection of God's grace and forgiveness.)

God is eternally opposed to us rejecting the reality of what He has already done and He is opposed to our rejecting His grace. Judgment is God saying your "no" is wrong. We can't change the reality – we can't get God to hate us! He loves us no matter what.

We need to catch the vision that God is doing everything to help us experience what he has planned for us! God won't take no for an answer. He won't ever say that we are so broken that he can't fix us so we can experience life with him.

[Next a video was played that shows a father's love who will do everything to help his son experience life even though he's totally paralyzed with cerebral palsy and can only talk through a specialized computer device to convey his thoughts and feelings. Dick Hoyt, now 66 with his son Rick, 44, have run 950 races, 60 marathons, including their 25th Boston Marathon this year.

They've even started doing triathlons and competing in 6 iron-mans – the ultimate test of strength and endurance. All the way Dick pulls, pushes and carries Rick's 110-pound frame over the course of the 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and 26.2 mile run.

Not only has Rick graduated from high school but also from college earning his degree from Boston University. The Hoyt's motto is simply "You Can."]

This true story reflects Jesus' judgment. Jesus will do what it takes. If you can't swim, he will haul you in a boat. If you can't run, he will haul you on his bike. Whatever it

takes. That's God's judgment toward mankind. That's what he's doing, not to make us lose, but to help us win.

When you really stop and think about it, that's what Jesus is saying to us today. Jesus is saying, "I'm going to be there to help you do it. I'm going to help you accomplish that. And if you're broken, and if you can't do it on your own, I'll do it for you. I'm going to get you there. I'm going to help you succeed."

What a glorious God that is. He's not a God who is just waiting for us to slip up a bit so we can be in trouble. That's not Biblical. Jesus is working very hard in our lives to help us succeed. Hopefully this helps all of us to have a healthy view of the Father and how much he loves us.

Closing Prayer: God we bow at your throne today. We know that before creation, you determined that you were going to adopt us. And it was your good pleasure to adopt all of mankind. And you've invited us into that relationship and been working to have that relationship happen by sending Jesus to accomplish that relationship.

He came, and he lived, and he died and was resurrected. And he now sits as glorified flesh at your right hand right to help us make it. He's making sure we succeed. And God we are so grateful for that. Lord help us to put away the old ideas of judgment that make us fearful, that make us nervous, that make us think that you're harsh. You are the God of love, and help us respond to your "yes" with our "yes."

Lord, let us say, "We are available." Let us respond to you; let us walk with you. Let us never say "no" to you and reject you by our actions or by our words or by our hearts.

One day it's going to be like Rick and Dick crossing that finish line with big smiles on their faces, because we will cross the line with you. And you will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" not because of what we did, because of what you did with us. We thank you for that. And we just bless you now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:10, "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."

General Group Question: What does it mean to you when Jesus said, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save it"?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. Who is the judge of humanity – God the Father or Jesus Christ?
2. If it's Jesus, why did the Father entrust all judgment to him?

3. What was the role of the judges in the Old Testament?
4. How is Jesus going to judge us?
5. What did Jesus mean when he said that a person "**stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son**"?
6. What events in Jesus' life allowed him to draw all men to himself?
7. Does God desire to save or condemn as many as possible? Briefly explain your answer.
8. What is meant by the statement, "Religion is always a deal. Life is always a gift"?
9. What role does Jesus play in our lives in being accepted by the Father?

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