

THE END #1: HOW TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S JUDGMENT

- **Why are we doing this series?** (1) Interest to many. (2) Clarifying the end of this earth is a good way to understand God better – and love him more. (3) An accurate picture of the future will influence how we live in the present since life has consequences. (4) An accurate picture of the end will be useful in helping seekers be open to God and his love.
- **Why were we created in the first place?** *Romans 11:36* “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” God made us to be in a love-relationship with him.
- **Who is God?** View #1: God’s love and holiness are in tension; God wants to show us love but he’s restricted by his higher law. View #2: Every attribute (wisdom, holiness, justice, compassion) flows from love.
 - > Begin by looking at Jesus – our best picture of what God looks like.
 - > Matthew 22 - all the Law and Prophets hang on loving God and loving others. So his holiness – his law – actually comes from love!
 - > 1 John 4:16 - “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”
 - > Love within the Trinity existed from eternity – “before the creation of the world (John 17:24)” - whereas holiness only is meaningful after creation. **God can’t do anything that doesn’t flow from his love.**
- **Justice** is defined as “God’s desire to make things right.” *Isaiah 30:18* “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you, he rises to show compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice.” (*Zech 7:9, Isa 1:17, Jer 21:12*)
 - > This is loving to the oppressed (relief) - but it can be either good or bad to the oppressor – depending on how they respond to God’s justice.
- **Judgment** is “God finally setting things right with everyone.” Judgment is justice in its final form. And it’s something that we all will face.
 - > *Romans 14:12* “So then, we will all give an account of ourselves to God.” *Acts: 17:31* “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”
- **By what criteria will he judge?**
 - > 1 Timothy 2:4 - God “wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (Also 2 Peter 3:9). *Ezekiel 18:23* [God] “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?... Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”
 - > There will come a final judgment: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father” (Mat. 25:34) or “Depart from me, I never knew you” (Mat. 7:23).
 - > John 3:18 – The criteria of “believing in Jesus” = to lovingly trust Jesus for all who he claims to be – Prophet, Savior and Lord.
 - > John 5:29 – The criteria of our deeds. (Also Romans 2:6)
 - > *Summary Criteria: How we relate to Jesus and how we live.*
 - > What about people who never had an opportunity to hear about Jesus – or maybe the message or their hearing was distorted?

(1) God loves them and wants them to know him. (2) Jesus is the unique Son of God who lived, died and rose again to save them from their sins. Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Jesus is the only way to salvation. But what does this mean? (3) God received Abraham’s faith as pleasing to him; Melchizedek (Gen. 14) and Job didn’t know about Yahweh (or Jesus) but are praised. Also Cornelius in Acts 10:34-35. (4) Romans 1 & 2 affirm “fear God” and “do what is right” – we are accountable through “creation” and our “consciences”. (5) Luke 12 – We will be judged according to the light we have. (6) God is loving justice.

- **Judgment** is seeing our true selves; our deeds will be exposed. 1 Cor. 4:5 “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of people’s hearts.” (Also Rom. 2:16; *Mat 12:36; 2 Cor 5:9-11*)
 - > “**Wrath** is the full weight of God’s being brought against that which destroys the object of his affection.” (Wayne Jacobsen) = Sin.
 - > Romans 1: 18 “*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*”
 - > Sin enslaves and invades us, becoming part of us. Like divine chemotherapy against cancer, killing it to preserve the life.
- **Punishment** is of two types. (1) **Retribution** is like a judge enforcing a penalty on someone for breaking the law; payback. (God in the flood.) (2) **Restoration** corrects and redeems the wrong doer. Punishment is a relational issue, not a legal one. (God seeking to bring back Israel.)
- **“Is God a Judge or a Father?”** Both.
- Some reasons why God’s final judgment – his making things right – might also include redemptive judgment and not just payback:
 - (1) Biblical judges were not impersonal law enforcers but good and honest people who entered the situation and tried to make things right.
 - (2) The emphasis of the Biblical story is about relationship and not law. (Gal. 5:14) Sin is not horrible simply because we’re guilty in light of God’s perfect law, but rather it’s horrible because it destroys our ability to love and know God as well as others.
 - (3) Jesus overturned “eye for eye” justice and called us to forgive and bless. Romans 12:19 “*Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written; ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.*” (a) We should not do payback – because we can’t do it perfectly and in love like God can. (b) God will judge through payback someday, but when it comes, it will flow from love.
- Will people have a chance after judgment and punishment to be restored to God? We don’t know. But *nothing brings God more pleasure than when someone repents and turns to Him!* He’s in the restoration/love business.
- We are called to live lives here on earth for the glory of God that will continue on into eternity. And we can also have confidence that when God must say “Depart from me”, it will be a judgment of love.