

The Judgement of a God of Love

God gives to all of us, from time to time, a fair warning that one day we must die.

That is the only certain fact we know about our future.

If we have any commonsense at all we need to know more than that about our future.

It is idiotic for us to blindly go through life without knowing where we are going to be after our inevitable death!

Christ tells us that there are **only two ways to conduct our life.**

Matthew 7:13-14 [NIV] *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

From this and many other statements of Christ recorded in the Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, He makes it very clear that there is such a thing as a judgement to come at the end of our physical life.

Hebrews 9:27 [NIV] *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,”*

It is essential that we approach the whole question of judgement with the right attitude of mind.

1 Judgement by God is not a matter for idle speculation

The easy way to approach any subject that threatens to be serious and personal is to laugh at it, talk about it with a *“tongue in cheek”* attitude.

Many do this with God, trying to avoid the personal challenge of Christ’s words.

I expect people laughed and mocked Noah when he preached to them of God’s impending judgement, but the flood did come and they were unprepared and perished in it.

Luke 19:41-44 [NIV] *“As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you.”*

Christ wept over Jerusalem because they were blind to their need of Him and the judgement about to come on them.

I expect those who saw this sneered at Him.

“Rather emotional”, “trying to frighten us into faith”.

They found out that this was **not** an idle speculation, in AD70 Jerusalem was besieged and utterly destroyed.

2 Judgement by God is not an empty threat

Christ repeatedly warns us of the extremely serious consequences of rejecting Him and the message He brought from God the Father.

Matthew 10:32-33 [NIV] *“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”*

This rejection by Jesus Christ is the result of our **not** seeking to have a relationship with Him so that we come to know each other.

Read the following parables.

The foolish and wise virgins – **Matthew 25:1-13** [NIV]

The parable of the talents – **Matthew 25:14-30** [NIV]

The parable of the sheep and goats – **Matthew 25:31-46** [NIV]

3 God’s judgement is not a subject to be ignored

For some reason death and judgement are two forbidden subjects of conversation today.

The fashion is to live life to the full, concentrate on what you can see and touch and take what excitement you can.

Why be morbid and think of death?

Many people dismiss the Christian faith because they say they are rational and realistic about life.

Yet the same people are utterly irrational and unrealistic about the only fact of life we can be sure of, that one day we must die, and what then?

I can never understand why people find the concept of judgement difficult.

The idea of accountability is built into the very framework of life.

We have to give an account of our work, time or money to someone.

Why should it be strange that we have to give account of our life to our Creator God?

Paul in Athens found himself speaking to intelligent and sincere group of people.

He noticed an inscription *“to an unknown god”*.

They did at least believe in the probable existence of some god, even though they did not know him by experience.

Paul spoke to them of Jesus Christ the judge.

Acts 17:22-31 [NIV] *“Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. **‘For in him [God] we live and move and have our being.’** As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ “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. **In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.** 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 all men by raising him from the dead."*

4 Judgement is inescapable

For this judgement of Christ is universal and God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world.

Such a statement will raise some questions:-

(a) What about those who have never heard of Jesus Christ?

The Bible gives two general answers.

Judgement is according to opportunity.

Luke 12:47-48 [NIV] *"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. **From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.**"*

According to the opportunity each person has to hear and understand Jesus Christ and the message He brought from God the Father.

Acts 17:30 [NIV] *"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."*

Ignorance overlooked if due to a lack of opportunity to be taught the truth.

Judgement will be just.

Genesis 18:25 [NIV] *"Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! **Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?**"*

We can confidently leave the matter of judgement in the hands of God.

(b) I don't deserve God's judgement.

This is a common protest.

"I don't go to church but I reckon I live a decent, honest and generous life."

"My life is just as good as many Christians, if not better than some."

The basic difference between a Christian and non-Christian life is that the Christian knows he needs a saviour and trusts Christ to be his Saviour.

The basic sin of both nominal and non-Christians is that they have usurped God's place at the centre of their lives.

Most people by being the centre of reference in their lives are in effect telling Christ to *"depart from me, I don't want you to interfere with my life."*

Would it then be unfair of Christ on the judgement day to say “depart from me” for that was the choice they had been making all their life!

(c) The picture of a judgement day is much too fanciful for modern humans to believe.

You cannot expect such mediaeval ideas of hell to be accepted in modern high-tech society.

Such objections are usually based on grotesque mediaeval pictures of tortured bodies writhing in a furnace.

Such pictures only obscure to convey the true severity of hell.

The fate of unrepentant sinners, those who deliberately and ultimately reject the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, is to perish in the lake of fire.

Matthew 10:28 [NIV] *“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Matthew 3:12 [NIV] *“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and **burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**”*

Matthew 25:41 [NIV] *“Then he will say to those on his left, **‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’**”*

Revelation 20:14-15 [NIV] *“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. **If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**”*

This death is eternal, final, and scriptures refer to it as the second death.

(d) Judgement and hell are incompatible with a God of love.

On the face of it this seems to be a powerful objection.

However, Christ who more than anyone showed us the love of God also spoke of the judgement of God.

John 3:16 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”*

The astonishing measure of God’s love is only seen when we admit that we deserve to perish.

Repeatedly we are told in scripture that God desires all humans to be saved.

But a loving God will **not** compromise His Holiness and perfection by allowing evil in His presence.

Matthew 7:13-14 [NIV] *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

God knows our own inclinations that lead us to choose the broad road that leads to eventual destruction.

Therefore in His great love God puts as many obstacles in our path as possible, to help us to change our path in life.

These obstacles are:-

His Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, Christian friends, Christian outreach to those who do not yet know of Jesus Christ.

Above all the outstretched arms of Jesus Christ on the cross, Whose death is a substitute for our own well-deserved death.

People who rush past all of these obstacles in their path of life are choosing their own fate.

Love can never be forced on a person or it would cease to be love.

God has to take the risk of rejection.

Unless God detests sin and evil with a great loathing He cannot be a God of love.

Proverbs 6:16-19 [NIV] *“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”*

All of these attitudes are non-loving and are detestable to God [“hate” Hebrew meaning “odious”].

1 John 1:5-7 [NIV] *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.** If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

God is light, a light that shows up all that is evil, non-loving.

1 John 2:9-11 [NIV] *“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. **Whoever loves his brother lives in the light,** and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. **But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness** and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.”*

Light and love are opposite to hate and darkness.

With God there are no grey areas, light and darkness don't mix, love and hate don't mix.

5 The alternative to judgement and hell

Of course, if this doctrine of hell is **not** true, the Kingdom [family] of God would be meaningless.

How could life in the Kingdom of God be paradise if it were full of people who did **not** love God?

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 [NIV] *“Do you not know that **the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Part of the spiritual blindness of this age is that we have lost sight of the majesty, holiness and purity of God.

If the doctrines of judgement and hell are **not** true, then sin pays off!

We can be as selfish as we like, do what we like, steal, lie and murder.

There would be little reason to have any standards at all, why bother to consider other people.

6 Judgement of God will be unexpected

Matthew 24:36-45 [NIV] *“No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. **So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.** “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?”*

The suddenness of the final day of judgement at Christ’s return is made understandable by the equal suddenness with which death can overtake us as individuals.

Death is vaguely expected at some future time, but nearly always takes relatives by surprise.

Luke 12:16-21 [NIV] *“And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! **This very night your life will be demanded from you.** Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.”*

This is very good advice given by Jesus Christ.

Matthew 6:19-21 [NIV] *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But **store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Matthew 6:25-33 [NIV] *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But **seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**”*

We need to act on this good advice beginning now, before it is too late.