

Jesus the Judge



Facing God's Judgment (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

As I travel around and I move in quite a number of different circles I hear very, very little said anywhere today about the judgment of God. But when I read the New Testament I find a great deal said about the judgment of God. And the person probably who said the most about it was Jesus Himself. Missing out the theme of judgment makes our whole view of God and our message unbalanced and incomplete.

Why did Jesus die on the cross? To save us from the judgment of God. To save us from hell. Again, I hear very little said today about hell. But hell is still just as real today as it was a century ago. And I know for one, if it hadn't been for the mercy of God, I don't doubt that I would already be in hell, confined to everlasting torment which I richly deserve for all the sins that I have committed.

I'd like to turn now to Revelation 1:12–18. Remember that the revelation is a revelation of Jesus Christ, never forget that. It's not a revelation of the antichrist. It's a revelation of Jesus. It's the most complete revelation of Jesus. There are at least twenty-one different titles of Jesus contained in this book — far more than in any other book in the Bible. And here is one of the revelations, beginning at verse 12 of chapter 1:

> "Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the seven lampstands one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine bronze, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice has the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last, I am He who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death.'"

Now I've pondered on that many times recently. Of all the apostles, John was probably as close to Jesus as any. He

was the one who had leaned on Jesus' bosom at the Last Supper, and even after the resurrection he was one to whom Jesus had revealed Himself by the shore of Galilee and actually served a breakfast to His apostles. He'd been really intimate with Jesus and yet in this encounter when he met Jesus he fell at His feet like one dead. What was different? What had happened?

Now I'll give you my understanding. And let me say, you can disagree with me and still go to heaven — provided you love me. I believe that here we have Jesus revealed as judge. It's not a new revelation but it's perhaps the most powerful impact of that revelation that ever came to anybody. You really don't understand the plan of salvation, you don't understand the New Testament, you don't understand the Christian life, if you don't recognize that Jesus is not only the Savior but He's also the Judge. God the Father has committed all judgment to Him, that all should honor the Son as they honor the Father.

I find that this is a theme that is almost totally lacking from the contemporary, quote, Charismatic movement. Somehow we have forgotten that Jesus is the judge and all of us must face Him either as Savior or as judge. There is no third possibility. In fact, even if we are believers and know Him as Savior, we shall also face Him as judge. There's a place called the judgment seat of Christ before which every one of us is going to appear if we are faithful to the Lord.

I'd like to read what Paul says about that in 2 Corinthians 5. Second Corinthians 5 and verse 10:

> "For we [and Paul is speaking as a Christian]... we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Now that word that's translated "appear" is much more powerful. It means we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ. There'll be no secrets. Nothing will be hidden. Everything will be fully brought out into the open. We will be totally made manifest.

I tell people sometimes, "If you have a problem about confessing your sins now, just think how much better it is to confess them now than to have them made public before the whole universe at the judgment seat of Christ." We're not going to be judged for condemnation if we are truly in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." But, our judgment will be an assessment of the life that we've led and the service that we've offered to Jesus in this body, "that everyone [or each one] may receive the things done in the body." Whatever you do in the body you're going to have to answer to Jesus for, "according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

And please notice, there's no third category. You remember I said that earlier. You cannot sit on the fence forever, you've got to come off on one side or the other. There are only two categories of our actions, they're good or they're bad. There's nothing in between. And everything that is not good is bad. And we're going to answer to Jesus for what we have done.

It says, of course, that we will not be condemned but our life will be assessed and our rewards and our position in eternity will be determined at this judgment seat. There are various different scenes of judgment, I'm sure you're probably aware. This word "the judgment seat" in Greek is bema and it's used for the seat on which a Roman magistrate sat when he gave judgment. When Pilate was judging Jesus, he sat on his bema.

Then there is the great white throne, which is the final judgment of all who are remaining at the end of this long age.

And then there is the judgment that we looked at, I think yesterday, when Jesus sits on the throne of His glory and all the nations are brought before Him.

The different seat of judgment indicates the different type of judgment. But we're looking at the judgment of all those who are in Christ. I don't say all Christians but I say all who are in Christ. There's one very important fact which is brought out for us by the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 4:17–18:

> "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

So where does judgment begin? At the house of God. In case there should be any mistake, Peter says "if it begins with us." Bear that in mind. We will be the first to be judged. Why? Because we have the greatest responsibility. We're the people with the answer. We're the people who've tasted the grace of God. We're the people to whom God looks to represent Him in the earth. That's a very, very great responsibility and with it goes accountability.

I want to take two examples from the Old Testament of this principle that judgment begins at the house of God. They're very serious and solemn examples. The first is found in Ezekiel 9. I'll read the whole chapter, it's only eleven verses.

You understand, this is acted out, but the principles are eternal.

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Transcript: TS-R165-101-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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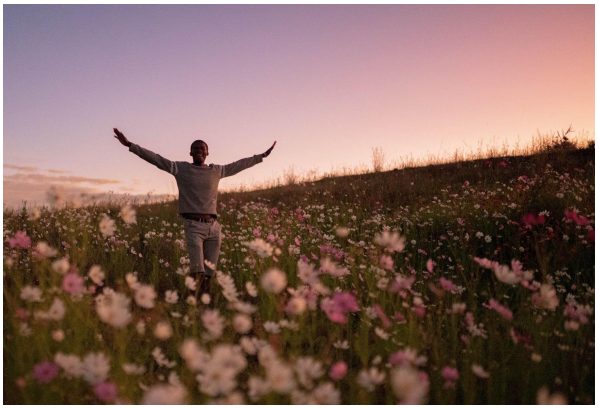

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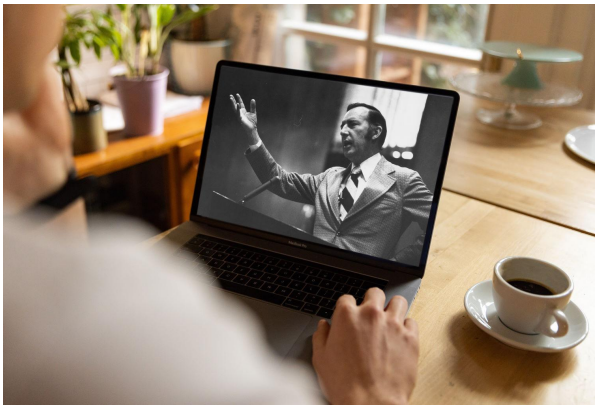

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