



Three Angels, One Message

Presentation Three: Is God's Judgment Good News?

1. The Fact of God's Judgment. The angel proclaims that "the hour of His judgment has come." Throughout the Scriptures the Bible has taught accountability, responsibility and judgment. When the wise man King Solomon said, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man," he followed that immediately by stating, "For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14. Jesus taught the certainty of the judgment. Matthew 5:22. Paul spoke about the coming judgment. Acts 17:30, 31; 24:25. Notice though, that when Solomon wrote, as well as other Bible authors, he spoke of the judgment as being in the future. In contrast, the first angel of Revelation 14 clearly speaks of the hour of His judgment as having come and taking place, at least part of it, before Christ's return. This is crucial!

2. Phases of God's Judgment. Earthly trials are divided into phases involving investigation, decision making and implementation of the sentence. In a similar way, the Holy Bible reveals that God's judgment likewise is composed of an investigative phase as well as a time when decisions are finalized and put into effect. The Prophet Daniel saw in vision the convening of Heaven's court. "I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated... Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9, 10. This is describing the investigative phase of God's judgment, when "the books" are opened. This is the "finding" phase, which must conclude before Jesus comes back "with His reward." Revelation 22:11, 12. By that time, all decisions will have been finalized, and God's people will be delivered, all those "found written in the book." Daniel 12:1.

3. The Necessity of God's Judgment. Because He is omniscient, God doesn't "need" books; He knows already those who will be saved or lost. But because sin is a matter of the heart, and angels can't read hearts, before He brings those who were sinners into heaven, He "opens the books" and allows angels to see what He already knows. He "goes the second mile," and does what technically He is not required to do. His is the ultimate "transparent" administration.

4. Bible Stories that Illustrate God's system of Justice. What happened immediately after sin is an illustration of God conducts judgment. He came in search of Adam and Eve and inquired if they had disobeyed by eating the forbidden fruit. Obviously He knew, but He "stooped" to make inquiry before pronouncing judgment. Genesis 3:8-19. If this is the way the story of Planet Earth began, would we expect it to be any different at the grand conclusion of all things? God's dealings with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrate His system of judgment. He said, "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." Genesis 18:21. The story of the fall of ancient Babylon illustrates God's final judgment. The handwriting on the wall said, "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting." Daniel 5:27. Again, inquire preceded action; investigation took place before the sentence was implemented.

The Bible teaching on the Judgment is good news! It reveals a God Who is not arbitrary, but seeks the salvation of all who will surrender to Him. Jesus is our Attorney, Judge (I John 2:1, 2; John 5:22, 23) and stands in our place ready to place His perfect robe of righteousness on us! Because of His great agape love for us which has reached out to save us, we can have confidence in the judgment because we trust in His righteousness and not our works. I John 4:17-19. The teaching of the Judgment is good news also because we can learn when this crucial phase began, thus knowing that an important marker on God's timeline has been placed, leading us to believe that His coming is very soon!

We recognize that we have a high and holy privilege to allow His Spirit to change us from the inside, so that we can bring honor to His name by the way we live. In a sense, it is the hour of "His" judgment. God has allowed His name to be put on trial by the charges brought by Satan, claiming that God is selfish and His law is incapable of being kept. Although we are unable to obey in our own strength, by the power of His Spirit and by the faith of Jesus, there will be people to whom He can point and say, "Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. In this way we have a (small) part in answering the accusations brought against God by the devil. May we be among those who allow His Spirit access to our hearts so that we can bring honor to Him!