

## Overcoming Potential Bias in Our Doctrine and Practice

When God saves people, He miraculously makes them a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). His work of remaking people, however, is not complete at the initial point of salvation; He renews us on a continuing basis (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Because He has ordained that there be such continual renewing, we must be mindful of potential lingering wrong thinking that biases our doctrine and practice. Biased doctrine and practice is sourced in wisdom that is not from God, but is "earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15; cf. 1 John 2:16). Correcting such bias requires wholehearted acceptance of all that God in His wisdom has given us in His word.

Because the primeval account in Scripture of human failure to think properly (Gen. 3:1-13) highlights our first parents' rejection of divine revelation about the doctrine of judgment (2:17; 3:3), we should not be surprised to find lingering manifestations of such bias in our doctrine and practice. In order to overcome any lingering inherited Edenic bias in our doctrine and practice, we must scrutinize our perspectives concerning the doctrine of judgment.

Beginning with the account of the Fall of man, Scripture provides us with key passages that suggest areas about which we need to examine our thinking concerning many potential manifestations of lingering Edenic bias against the full biblical teaching about the doctrine of judgment:

### **1. Is God's punitive judgment to be viewed as a "negative" teaching of Scripture?**

"And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it" (Deut. 28:63).

"Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies" (Ps. 119:119).

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. 18:20).

Should we then have a "negative" perspective about God's condemnation of unrepentant sinners?

## **2. Is judgment mainly condemnation that lost people will experience in the future?**

"And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee" (Gen. 16:5).

"But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Ps. 75:6).

"Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations" (Ezek. 22:2).

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31).

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:9-10).

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? (James 4:12).

Scripture teaches that God/the Lord is the Judge who judges between believers. He is the Judge who presently abases people and exalts others, especially in the realm of civil authority. He sends people to judge others by declaring their sinfulness to them. At the Cross, the world was judged, and the prince of this world was cast out.

Jesus died and rose again that He might be the Lord, the Judge of the living and the dead, who will judge all believers one day. God will shortly bruise Satan under the feet of believers. The Lord judges believers when He chastens them, and He does so that they will not be condemned.

Is the doctrine of judgment, therefore, concerned mainly just with the future condemnation of lost people?

### **3. Why did Jesus come into the world?**

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39).

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

Both testaments speak of the woman's Seed who would come to render judgment, especially on the evil one. Is it right, therefore, to focus mainly only on His coming as the One who would save people?

### **4. Who saves people?**

"For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us" (Isa. 33:22).

"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:12).

Both testaments explicitly teach that God/Jesus as the Judge is the One who saves people. Is it right, therefore, to say dichotomously that God/Jesus as the Judge is "the bad news," while Jesus as the Savior is "the good news"?

### **5. What are we to preach to the world?**

"Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously" (Ps. 96:10).

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:42-43).

Both testaments explicitly teach that God has commanded us to proclaim who the Judge is. Is it right, therefore, to say that what we really have to preach is that God/Jesus is the Savior, but we do not necessarily have to preach that Jesus is the Judge?

These five points are representative of many major aspects of the biblical teaching concerning the doctrine of judgment about which we must allow all the Scripture to renew our minds if we desire to overcome any potential lingering manifestation of our inherited Edenic bias in our doctrine and practice.