

Jesus, Final Judge & Friend of Sinners

Acts 10:34-43

INTRODUCTION

Last week we discussed how Jesus is the fulfillment of all things and that all of God's promises are "Yes" in Him!

2 Corinthians 1:19-20

On the contrary, a final "Yes" has come in Him. For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in Him.

Today, I want us to consider how two seemingly extremes concepts are met and united in the single person of the life of Jesus. It is the idea that Jesus is the final Judge of the World and also that Jesus is a sinner's best friend. On the surface, these two concepts may not seem to go together which is why many believers focus more on one than the other. Some may acknowledge that God is love, but they really like talking about God's judgment. They like the idea of God flinging people into hell and to feel justice has been served while all the while forgetting they are as guilty as the next one deserving that hell. On the flip side, others like to talk about God's love, but really don't know what to do much with the idea of a God of love bringing judgment on the world.

John Dickson, *The Life of Jesus*

As unpopular as it is today, the historical Jesus warned of God's judgment for all who reject the path of love. Paradoxically, He gained notoriety for befriending and dining with the 'sinners' of His day, those typically thought of as most in danger of Divine Judgment.

Frederick William Robertson

God's justice and love are one. Infinite justice must be infinite love. Justice is but another sign of love.

Scot McKnight

Many think Jesus came to earth so you and I can have a special kind of spiritual experience and then go merrily along, as long as we pray and read our Bibles and develop intimacy with the unseen God but ignore the others-oriented life of justice and love and peace that Jesus embodied.

Acts 10:34-43

³⁴ Peter took a deep breath and began.

'It's become clear to me', he said, 'that God really does show no favoritism. ³⁵ No: in every race, people who fear him and do what is right are acceptable to him. ³⁶ He sent his word to the children of Israel, announcing peace through Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all! ³⁷ You know all

about this, and how the word spread through all Judaea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John proclaimed.

³⁸ ‘God anointed this man, Jesus of Nazareth, with the holy spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were overpowered by the devil, since God was with him.

³⁹ We are witnesses of everything he did in the land of Judaea and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day, and allowed him to be seen,

⁴¹ not indeed by all the people, but by those of us whom God had appointed beforehand. We ate and drank with him after he had been raised from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to announce to the people, and to bear testimony, that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets give their witness: he is the one! Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his Name.’

I. JESUS, JUDGE OF THE WORLD

A. We must begin today’s thought with the reality that Jesus is God Incarnate.

B. He is the One who knows all and sees all. He demonstrated this, as we discussed last week, with Nathanael under the fig tree before Phillip called him to meet Jesus.

C. In this text, Scripture is teaching us that Jesus is the Final Judge of the World.

D. He will judge both the Living and the Dead.

Revelation 19:11-16

¹¹Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. The one who was sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war justly. ¹²His eyes are like a flaming fire, and there are many coronets on his head. He has a name written there which nobody knows except himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and he is called by the name ‘God’s Word’. ¹⁴The armies of heaven follow him on white horses, all wearing shining, pure linen. ¹⁵A sharp two-edged sword is coming out of his mouth, so that with it he can strike down the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron, and he will tread the winepress of the wine of the anger of the wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶On his robe, and on his thigh, is written a name: King of kings, and Lord of lords.

E. God judges through the perspective of a peer. Have you ever heard the statement don’t judge a person until you walk in their shoes? God in Christ has walked in humanities’ shoes. He understands and His understanding is both from the perspective of His all-knowingness as God and His perspective of being a human that allows Him to be a compassionate Judge.

F. Jesus warns us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:1) to be careful about our judgements. He tells us not to judge because we too shall be judged. The focus in this text is hypocritical judgment. It is ok for us to judge a situation, for judgement is how we gather information, but we must make sure that it is done with an attitude of humility and

with God's perspective in mind for He alone has the authority to be the final and true judgement.

- G. It must also be said that we also have often misunderstood judgment. Anytime we discuss judgement or hear the word "judgment" it conjures up all sorts of different, often negative, images that often are not Biblically true. We have all seen the preacher or the Christian speak of God sending people to hell almost gleefully, and this is anything but with an attitude of Christian love.
- H. God's judgement is making things right again. I believe we all agree there is a need for justice in the world because what would this world look like without justice, but to have justice there must be a judgement of accountability. Judgement is a great thing because it is making right what went wrong. God promises that in the end He will make all things right again.
- I. We should have no fear of the judgment if we are in Christ, if our names are written in the Lambs book of life, and have asked Christ to forgive us of our contribution of bringing the wrongs into His good world which is what we call sin. We should, therefore, long for God's justice to reign again in this world.

Psalm 98

Sing a new song to the LORD, for He has performed wonders;
His right hand and holy arm have won Him victory.

The LORD has made His victory known; He has revealed His righteousness
in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His love and faithfulness to the
house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen our God's victory.

Shout to the LORD, all the earth; be jubilant, shout for joy, and sing.
Sing to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and melodious song.
With trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn shout triumphantly in the
presence of the LORD, our King.

Let the sea and all that fills it, the world and those who live in it, resound.
Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains shout together for joy
before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world righteously and the peoples fairly.

- J. We see in this Psalm that there is exuberance, a joy, a longing of excitement in the idea of God's Judgment because Creation itself is longing for the oppression of evil to be lifted and restored back to what it once was. Longing for the curse to be lifted.
- K. Paul describes the same to his Roman audience.

Romans 8:18-23

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility —not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it —in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. And not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the first fruits —we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

- L. It is also the motivation in which Paul charged his protégé Timothy to preach the word. Paul is saying go tell the world we have a fair judge who came and will come again, who understands, what it means to be human and frail, and He is coming to make things right again for us, to restore Creation again.

2 Timothy 4:1-2

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of His appearing and His kingdom: Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.

II. JESUS, FRIEND OF SINNERS

N.T. Wright

When we learn to read the story of Jesus and see it as the story of the love of God, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves--that insight produces, again and again, a sense of astonished gratitude which is very near the heart of authentic Christian experience.

- A. Jesus, the God of Creation, who also will through Judgment restore Creation to its former glory came as a friend to the ones who were instrumental in bringing its demise.
- B. Jesus sought out sinners to befriend them. This seems to be a concept at odds with the idea of Jesus also being their Judge, but it is only odd because of how we approach both understandings of love and justice.
- C. Jesus, the Judge, befriending sinners should give us new insight that God is not in the business of throwing us away, as some in their hellfire, brimstone antics would say, but rather a God Who will go to extreme lengths to give humanity a chance to renounce their participation in destroying His good creation and to lay down their arms of rebellion through repentance.
- D. The verse right after the most famous verse of Scripture, John 3:16, says it all:

John 3:17

For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

E. In *John chapters 3 and 4* we see wonderful insights in how Jesus befriended sinners:

1. In *John 3*, the religious man named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. This was a man who was curious about Jesus and came in the cover of darkness to hide his inquiry, fearing the backlash of the normal company he kept, the religious leaders. Jesus didn't shame him, but rather received him and gave him the mandate that if he wanted a future with God then no amount of religious practice could save him, he must be born again.
2. In *John 4*, we see Jesus seeking out a woman who lived a life of shame who would probably never seek after Christ herself. He met her unsuspectingly at a well where she was drawing water. Jesus, gave her insight to who He was through doing the same to her as he had done with Nathanael, giving her insight that He knew her long before the conversation at the well had begun in the way of describing her relational status. She had had five husbands and the man she now had was not her husband. Jesus helped her realize who He was so that He could be the hope out of her shame.

F. Jesus let the sick and sinful approach Him with ease and invitation. He let the little children come when His disciples tried to create a barrier, and they dangled from Him. His whole life was love and was motivated in every action, thought, and desire by love itself.

III. JESUS, THE UNITY OF LOVE & JUSTICE

A. The life of Jesus is the embodiment of both love and justice. If these two didn't come together in unity in Him, there would be no understanding of grace and mercy.

B. Mercy is not getting what we do deserve, and grace is receiving that which we don't deserve.

C. If Christ didn't embody both love and justice these concepts, that we often take for granted, would be non-existent.

D. This helps us to begin the discussion in understanding how a loving God could allow a place called Hell to exist.

E. God is just, and therefore, is coming to hold accountable, as both Creator and Judge, all those who have contributed in destroying His good creation. Alone too ourselves we all

stand guilty which is why we need Christ. Also, He is granting the wishes of those who continue to reject His invitation of love in Christ that would result in their pardon. He is allowing them to get what they say they want, their own creation.

F. Hell, therefore, is the eternal place where the benefits of God's goodness are restrained. God allows a place called Hell to exist where justice is fulfilled in that those who contributed to the Fall of Creation get there just due, like someone being held accountable for destroying a piece of property and still are proud of what they've done. Also, God lovingly allows those to be there as the fulfillment of their own desire to be God and to reject the one true God, and therefore, wish an existence without Him.

Stephen Eyre, *C.S. Lewis on Heaven and Hell*

What if someone just won't repent no matter how great the pain? "Some will not be redeemed."⁶

To our modern ears, belief in hell feels harsh, even mean. However, not only do the Scriptures give abundant witness to the existence of hell; the very concept of justice—that at some point, in some way, everyone gets what they deserve—requires the existence of hell. Hell is necessary to make the world work and for values to have any meaning.

The doctrine of hell displays not merely the justice of God, but His grace as well. In hell, God makes room for those who are not interested in God. Lewis wrote, "I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the *inside*."¹

C.S. Lewis

To place someone in Heaven who wants nothing to do with God, Heaven would become Hell for them.

G. God is also Love itself. So preceding His final judgment God visited the guilty in the person of Jesus Christ, making a plea for pardon. If the guilty would only plea out, be honest about their guilt, their punishment would be placed on another, a substitute, actually the Judge Himself, and they would gain entrance into God's New World.

H. God's New World of New Creation where Heaven and Earth are together again will be the complete fruition of all of God's goodness unrestrained with no longer any sinful distractions.

C.S. Lewis

To every soul, God will look like its first love because He IS its first love. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it - made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.

¹ http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/CS_Lewis_on_Heaven_and_Hell_FullArticle

CONCLUSION

We as followers of Christ must embody love and justice and take heed to the warning of Christ to the religious long ago when He said...

Luke 19:42

Woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb, and you bypass justice and love for God.

May we never be so busy with the work of the Lord that we forget what is important and essential to the Lord of that work.

James Stewart, Scottish Theologian

The Contrast of Christ

He was the meekest and lowliest of all the sons of men. Yet he spoke of coming on the clouds of heaven with the glory of God. He was so austere that evil spirits and demons cried out in terror at his coming, yet he was so genial and winsome and approachable, that the children loved to play with him and the little ones nestled in his arms.

His presence at the innocent joy of a village wedding, was like the presence of sunshine. No one was half so kind or compassionate to sinners, yet no one ever spoke such red-hot scorching words about sin. A bruised reed he would not break. His whole life was love. Yet on one occasion he demanded of the Pharisees, how they were expected to escape the damnation of hell.

He was a dreamer of dreams and a seer of visions, yet for sheer stark realism, he has all of us self-styled realists soundly beaten. He was the servant of all, washing the disciples' feet, yet masterfully he strode into the temple, and the hucksters and moneychangers fell over one another to get away in their mad rush from the fire they saw blazing in his eyes. He saved others, yet at the last, he himself did not save.

There is nothing in history like the union of contrasts which confronts us in the gospels; the mystery of Jesus is the mystery of divine personality.