

Escaping the Coming Judgment

By Jane Titrud

The Bible speaks of a “day of judgment,” which will come upon the earth for the destruction of ungodly men. At this time, God will literally destroy the physical heavens and earth by fire and intense heat: *“The present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:7, NASB). *“The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up”* (2 Peter 3:10).

Rebellious unbelievers will likewise stand before God on the “last day” and be judged for their evil deeds (Revelation 20:11-15). This is the will of the Father. Jesus said, *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak”* (John 12:48-49).

Of course, Jesus also said that *“God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him”* (John 3:17; see also John 12:47). Yet, this does not contradict the reality of coming judgment. The two messages go together.

We know that the Apostle Paul understood the fundamental connection between the Gospel and the message of coming judgment. This was an important part of what he preached to the Gentiles on Mars’ Hill in Athens: *“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead”* (Acts 17:30-31).

Realizing that God will eventually and certainly judge this world explains the need for the Gospel in the first place. Man has to have a remedy for the penalty and power of sin. Otherwise, he would be hopelessly and eternally lost. God is a holy God Who simply cannot tolerate sin. In His mercy, He provided a way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. And, this is the only way to avoid judgment.

Some 2,000 years after the Gospel was originally preached, however, most people now seem to scoff at the idea of coming judgment as well as any need for a message of salvation by grace through faith. Even in the Church, people are falling more and more for the lie that God is a God of love and mercy—not judgment.

Much of the current situation no doubt has to do with the workings of satan. He is the *“father of lies”* (John 8:44), and the more numerous and varied his lies are, the more effective they tend to be. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a variety of false teachings undermining the message of coming judgment are not only aimed at the world but also at the Church.

Consider, for example, secular theories about the origin of the universe. Darwin’s theory of evolution has been widely accepted, even by many in the Church. That is even though Darwinian evolution requires an interpretation of the fossil record in terms of slow and gradual change over millions of years. Since neither the Biblical record of special creation nor the worldwide flood at the time of Noah supports this theory, the Book of Genesis ends up being rejected as unscientific. In practice, secular, naturalistic science thus becomes the measure of truth rather than the Word of God. And, with that change goes the biblical documentation of God’s power and ability to both create and destroy the universe—in other words, the concept of His right and ability to judge His creation.

It is interesting to note, however, that the Bible predicted this turn of events hundreds of years before the advent of Darwin and his theory of evolution. It even characterized the present situation beforehand as being part of the last days: *“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded*

with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:3-7). The point here is that everything actually has *not* continued on the way it was from the beginning, and it will not. God judged the world before by causing a massive worldwide flood, and He will judge it again by fire.

On an entirely different note, consider those who promote stories about people dying and returning to this life after being in Heaven as a supposedly valid way of supporting the Bible’s teaching on eternal life. Such stories mention nothing about the issue of sin and coming judgment. It is as if Heaven is the destination of everyone regardless of one’s relationship to Jesus Christ. This is not the Gospel. Neither does it lead to the kind of faith necessary to avoid God’s coming judgment. At best, this is a distraction from the truth. If a person cannot believe the testimony of Jesus Christ Who died and rose again, Who was with the Father and went back to the Father in perfect obedience to His will, how can one feel justified in putting his or her faith in a mere sinner (we are all sinners) who claims to have gone to Heaven and returned to this life apart from any reference to sin?

Redefining what the Bible labels as sinful practices in terms of human rights, alternate life styles, or as addictions and diseases are other modern affronts to the Biblical message of coming judgment. In 1 Corinthians, for example, Paul lists a number of people who will not inherit the kingdom of God: *“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The issue here is clearly unrighteousness or sin, and what the Bible says about this is not open to discussion. The practice of such things will lead to judgment. Yet, this message does not stand alone. The very next verse says: *“Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Notice that this is written in the past tense. In other words, some of those who first received this letter actually had experienced deliverance from such things just by accepting the truth of the Gospel—and so can anyone today who believes the same truth. Ultimately, therefore, this is not a message of condemnation but one of hope for deliverance and salvation.

Additional examples of deceptive teachings could be mentioned as well. But, the important thing to bear in mind remains the same. That is, there is only one way to overcome the penalty and power of sin and to avoid the coming judgment of God, and that is by believing the truth of the Biblical Gospel. Every temptation to accept any message to the contrary must therefore be avoided if one is to keep from falling for the lies of satan.