

## CANADIAN CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE 2015

### “JUDGMENT”

Pastor Brad Powers, Sudbury, Ontario

#### *Introduction: The Stunning, Severe, Strange but Saving Act of Judgment*

-few truths are more calculated to do more good to more people than this one: it is a key component of the Gospel, full of encouragement for believers, and centres attention on the glory of God:

- \$ if you truly hate sin, here is the certainty of being done with it in a new creation
- \$ if the senseless brutality of our race oppresses you, here is assurance that God will deal with it
- \$ if you are weary of being ridiculed for loving Jesus, know there is an answer to “how long?”
- \$ if you find the notion that history is just an endless cycle with no beginning, no end – and no point – take heart that the God who made us brings things to the right conclusion
- \$ if you carelessly scoff at Christ and the Gospel, here is a theme designed to wake you
- \$ if you do fear death and judgment and hell, take heart that the warnings move you to repent and believe
- \$ if you long for the glory of the Lord to fill the earth, the Day of the Lord comes when this will be true
- \$ if you love the Lord Jesus, and want Him to be acknowledged Lord, know that He comes to be vindicated

-no wonder, then, that Peter could write in 2 Peter 3 that we are looking for that day!

-these encouragements are only so because of the damage done by sin in our world; judgment instead of blessing is God’s “strange work, his alien act” (Isaiah 28:21); aim to have biblical attitudes as well as facts

-compare Peter Toon: he confesses to have “a confident belief in heaven and a reluctant belief in hell”<sup>1</sup>

-Carson rightly points out that “Christian faith and thought are not helped by angry preachers whose tone almost suggests that they take a kind of vicious glee from the tragic end of others. For a start, we Christians will be the first to acknowledge....that we are all by nature children of wrath”<sup>2</sup>

-Grudem adds that “if our hearts are never moved with deep sorrow when we contemplate this doctrine, then there is a serious deficiency in our spiritual and emotional sensibilities” when compared to Paul’s concern for Israel, God’s plea to His people, and the tears of Jesus over Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>

#### *Essentials of Biblical Judgment*

##### *Matthew 25:31-46*

- \$ Christ-centred: Jesus is not only the Judge, but the very standard of judgment (vv.31-32, 35)
- \$ decisive: a separation of sheep and goats established: categories in that day are not blurry!
- \$ final: there are no provisional categories, no negotiations, no mistakes to be corrected
- \$ compare 25:41 to Revelation 20:7
- \$ 25:46 is a most significant text for underlining the eternal nature of punishment<sup>4</sup>

##### *John 5:22-30*

- \$ Christ-centred, to the point of being a demonstration of the deity of Christ

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Toon, *Heaven and Hell: A Biblical and Theological Overview*, p.vii

<sup>2</sup>Carson, *The God Who is There*, p.210

<sup>3</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (1994 edition), p.1151-1152, referring to Romans 9:2; Ezekiel 33:11 and Matthew 23:37-38.

<sup>4</sup>Carson, *Gagging of God*, pp.523-528.

\$ parallel use of “resurrection” for both salvation and judgment indicates the equally eternal nature of both<sup>5</sup>  
\$ judgment is just  
\$ calls us to faith in Christ: to hear Him, and believe, is to pass from death to life  
\$ compare Acts 17:30-31 on these points

*Romans 2:1-16*

\$ ‘according to truth’ – hence we should not fear the mistakes a human judge might make  
\$ there are present manifestations of wrath (1:18), but there is also the coming Day  
\$ Christ-centred and universal: *all* appear before Him, and answer for what they have done with Him

*1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*

\$ links the Old Testament “Day of the Lord” with the coming of Christ  
\$ underlines the suddenness of the Day

*2 Thessalonians 1-2*

\$ especially underlines the justice of God in vindicating the faith of those who trust in Jesus  
\$ Christ-centred, as He comes to be glorified  
\$ the role of judgment as encouragement especially seen here; will come back to this

*2 Peter 3:8-14*

\$ also underlines the “thief in the night” imagery  
\$ for the protection and motivation of believers, and the warning of scoffers  
\$ judgment is severe and final – but also a step to the real point: the new creation

*Revelation 14*

\$ some of the most graphic pictures of judgment and wrath poured out (see Carson<sup>6</sup>)

*Revelation 20:7-12*

\$ the link with the judgment of Satan in the lake of fire from Matthew 25 noted above is consistent with the notion of on-going punishment  
\$ universal, as “all the dead” are called to account  
\$ but again, preparation for the real point – the new heaven and earth

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.535

<sup>6</sup>See Carson, *The God Who Is There*, chapter 13, “The God Who Is Very Angry” for an extensive treatment of Revelation 14.

*Objections to the Essentials of Judgment:*

- some have argued for a “conditional immortality” that results in annihilation: that is, that human beings are not inherently immortal: it must be granted (that is, to those in Christ)<sup>7</sup>
- \$ linguistic arguments: meaning of “destruction” or “age/eternal”: but understand that such terms are usually quite broad: cannot prove the point
- \$ arguments concerning justice: can a temporal crime merit eternal punishment? But must remember the honour of the one sinned against; this is something we would not be able to determine<sup>8</sup>
- \$ some arguments are more emotional: what can I stomach? But this is a bad test of truth!

***Encouragement and Instruction from Contemplating Judgment***

*Matthew 25:31-46: Judgment and the Culmination of Salvation*

- Paul Helm wrote: *the teaching of Christ on judgment is there not an appendix to the good news of the gospel, an afterthought, but (strangely perhaps) it is part of the very texture of the good news*<sup>9</sup>
- \$ compare Psalms 9-10: what happens when humans confuse themselves with God!
- \$ Matthew 26-27 is a case in point, as Jesus is on trial: one day, the tables will be turned
- \$ Matthew 25 prepares for this; note 25:34 for the key point: inheriting the kingdom
- consider that the first doctrine to be explicitly denied in Scripture is that of judgment (Genesis 3:4)<sup>10</sup>
- salvation comes *because* the enemies are crushed and righteousness reigns
- this is the promise of Isaiah, to take one example:
  - \$ 1:24-26: *I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes...I will restore your judges as at the first...you shall be called the city of righteousness*
  - \$ ch.19 is an astonishing display of judgment for the purpose of turning *Egypt* to the Lord!
  - \$ 26:9: link of God coming to judge *and* save: the judgment brings about the salvation
  - \$ 32-33: the rule of the righteous King brings about peace and justice
- the Lord will be vindicated and glorified in triumphal procession (2 Corinthians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14-15)

*Romans 2:1-16: Judgment and the Character of God*

- when the people of Jeremiah’s day had such trouble believing that God would judge, he explained that the character of God made it inevitable: the glory due unto His Name will be paid
- it is also the demonstration of the astonishing love of God for His people: He will vindicate His own; He will

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<sup>7</sup>Carson, *Gagging of God*, ch.13, “On Banishing the Lake of Fire” and Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* both address the theme at length with similar responses; Carson interacts with Stott and Clark Pinnock particularly.

<sup>8</sup>Carson, *Gagging of God*, p.532, fn.52 quotes Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, p.127 to this effect

<sup>9</sup>Helm, *The Last Things*, Banner of Truth 1989, p.59.

<sup>10</sup>Carson, *The God Who Is There*, p.32

not allow faith in His Son to be endlessly ridiculed without response  
-but this magnifies the mercy of God! An act of compassion to warn us in advance

John 5:22-30: Judgment and the Cross of Christ

-Romans frames the Gospel in terms of God's wrath and justice:

- \$ 1:18-32: a present reality that we cannot escape – and deep down, we know it!
  - \$ 2:1-16: the present reality just a taste of the Day to come
  - \$ 2:17-3:20: every alternative source of hope is torn down, exposed as useless
  - \$ 3:21-26: but Christ bears the wrath of God according to His justice – in the place of sinners
- Carson: *At the end of the day, what hell measures is how much Christ paid for those who escape hell*<sup>11</sup>

Paul, Peter and John: Judgment and the Confidence of Believers

*1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11*

- \$ the assurance that we can have even in the face of death is well-founded
- \$ the surprise element of the coming of Christ does not apply to the believer
- \$ one of the reasons for this: we are already practicing life as “children of the Day”

*2 Thessalonians 1-2*

- \$ God is on their side, ready to repay those who afflict them in kind
- \$ God will grant them relief in due course – when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven
- \$ this revelation of Christ is truly a revelation: along lines of Mt.25
- \$ the basis of judgment is the Gospel: did we obey the truth?
- \$ the nature of judgment is separation from God when He comes to be glorified in His saints
- \$ the application is to be worthy of this calling: see 2:14

*2 Peter 3:8-14*

- \$ answer the scoffers! Do not be taken in
- \$ live holy lives
- \$ since the reason for delay is to bring sinners to repentance, apply this to evangelism<sup>12</sup>

*Revelation 14; 20*

-graphic descriptions of the judgment to come demonstrate the sinfulness of sin as well as the folly suddenly revealed of opposing God

*Conclusion*

-Christopher Ash underlines the value of thinking about judgment for us and for others<sup>13</sup>: these things are written for our encouragement, upon whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor.10:11)!

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<sup>11</sup>Carson, *ibid.*, p.210

<sup>12</sup>Jeremy Walker, *Brokenhearted Evangelist*, pages 34-37

<sup>13</sup>Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross*, Crossway 2014: see chapters 14 and 16