

THE JUDGE

“And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is ordained of God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead.”

Acts 10:42

Have you heard of Judge Judy? Have you watched her on TV? She is this strong, feisty, and tough-talking woman who arbitrates real-life small claim disputes on TV. It is actually a reality show that she presides over where everything takes place in a simulated courtroom set. Watching the show is amusing and entertaining and educational too. But I don't want to be in the shoes of those involved in the dispute. You have to be thick-skinned to be under the scrutiny of Judge Judy in front of millions of people watching on TV. You could be embarrassed and humiliated. But once I turn off the TV, then I'm back to facing reality, not on TV, but at home. Judge Anabel comes and I'm under scrutiny.

We don't want to face scrutiny, don't we? One of the things we fear is being judged by a judge especially if we're guilty. In fact, one guy tried to do that. Ben Rogozensky is his name. He was already in big trouble. He was waiting with his lawyer for a court hearing in an empty room at the DeKalb County Courthouse near Atlanta. He was facing charges of obstructing officers and giving false information. While meeting with his attorney, Rogozensky excused himself to go to the bathroom and used a stool to climb into the ceiling in order to make an escape. He was on his way till the ceiling gave way and he fell 10 feet right into the middle of a judge's chambers. You can guess what happened from there.

How many people are trying to escape from the great judge, Jesus Christ, yet are eventually going to end up right in His celestial chambers? Most people don't like to think of Jesus as being the Judge – but as we continue in our series on the titles of Jesus, this is one that deserves our time and attention.

Peter says in Acts, “*And he (referring to God) ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is ordained of God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead.*” – Acts 10:42 (NLT)

So since God ordained it, that’s what we’re going to do this morning. I want us to look at this title of Jesus as Judge by asking three basic questions with three answers for each one.

WHAT DOES JESUS JUDGE?

This question is important because the title “Judge” could mean any number of different things. We could talk about someone who judges a beauty contest, or a dancing or singing competition, and any number of different things that I doubt Jesus is concerned with.

What Jesus judges are some very specific and important things. First of all, he judges

1. My Thoughts

“The day will surely come when God, by Jesus Christ, will judge everyone's secret life.” Romans 2:16

Do you have a secret life? I do. Don’t tell my wife. But actually, every one of us has a secret life. It’s the kind that only we individually has access to. I’m talking about our thought life. What resides in our minds. No one else knows what’s going on in our minds except God.

Like, Jesus judges the thought I had this morning on my way here when that guy cut me off on the road. Guys, Jesus knows what was on your mind when you saw that lady in the revealing clothes. Folks, Jesus knows what you were *really* thinking which wasn’t quite the same as what was coming out of your mouth.

Jesus says, “*I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” – Matthew 5:28

He also says, *"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!"* – Matthew 5:21-22a

Jesus is talking about standing in judgment of our hearts and minds. That secret life that no one knows about that goes on inside our heads? Jesus knows everything about it, and He says He sits in judgment of those things.

Jesus also judges

2. My Actions

Thoughts eventually end up becoming actions, and those actions that we take that are contrary to the will of God are subject to judgment.

James says, *"Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death."* – James 1:14-15

It is the process that all of us take on the road to sin – an evil thought becomes a desire, and the desire, when acted upon, leads us further and further away from our desire to be in fellowship with God. Jesus addressed this when He was talking to Nicodemus: *"Their judgment is based on this fact: The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil."* – John 3:19

What Jesus is referring to is something that is the root cause of our behavior. You see, the evil action itself, while against God's will, is not the main problem. The main problem is our desire for the darkness, more than God's light. And that desire is demonstrated from the actions we take that are contrary to God's desire for our lives.

Thirdly, Jesus judges

3. My Destiny

Jesus is the Judge of where you and I spend our eternity.

He is the one that has been given the authority to determine whether we will be with Him in heaven forever, or if we will be in hell. The good news for us is that while Jesus is the Judge, He has given us the opportunity to make the decision where we will spend our destiny in this life.

It isn't some type of crapshoot, where anything could happen. Jesus has placed our destiny in our own hands, and where we will spend eternity is based upon what we do with Jesus while we're on this side of death.

The Bible says "*All who believe in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them.*" – John 3:36

This is what it all comes down to – those who have placed their faith in Christ will be judged righteous, and those who have not will be judged unrighteous. Because those who have trusted Christ, even though they have had bad thoughts and committed evil actions, have had every one of those things forgiven by the blood of Christ shed upon the Cross of Calvary. But for those who have not trusted Christ – every thought and every action taken outside of God's standard will be what will convict them of a life lived in separation from God.

For those who have trusted Jesus, He says, "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" – Matthew 25:34b

For those who have rejected Jesus, He says, "*Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons!*" – Matthew 25:41

This is a hard truth to deal with, isn't it? It is unpleasant, it is not spoken of much, and it is difficult to preach on – but it is the role Jesus fulfills as Judge of the world.

We come now to the next questions:

WHY DOES JESUS JUDGE?

Do you know the favorite verse of just about every non-Christian I've ever met? *"Stop judging others, and you will not be judged."* – Matthew 7:1

If you say, "Same-sex marriage is wrong" they say, "You shouldn't judge people." And we hear the same refrain any time any type of behavior is spoken against, using God's Word as our standard. Unfortunately these folks haven't read that entire passage. Let me read the verses following it:

"Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged." Then, we read on:

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." –Matthew 7:3-5

We see then that Jesus is actually saying, "Be careful when you judge because you yourself may be guilty of the same thing". If you say to someone or even think about someone that they are a gossip and you yourself spread gossip, then you don't have the right to judge that person. If you say that adultery is wrong, you better be sure that you're not engaged in such a thing yourself even just in your mind. So, Jesus here is dealing with a hypocritical attitude. It is not a blanket statement to overlook wrong behavior of others but a call to be discerning. Paul himself in 1 Cor. 5:1-2 talks about disciplining someone due to sexual immorality, which is a form of judgment on that person's immoral behavior.

So, while Jesus is definitely making a point about us being unnecessarily judgmental, he also sets the standard by which judgment should be made.

In other words, when we judge others we must be willing to be judged by the same criteria we are using on those around us.

And that is exactly what Jesus does – his criteria for judgment is the same criteria he expected. He was judged worthy of being the Savior based upon His ability to live a completely sinless life so that He might be the substitute for those of us who failed to make the mark. And based on His own worthiness, He now sits as Judge over us all.

There are three specific reasons why Jesus judges. First, because of

1. Justice

“The LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness.” – Psalms 9:7-8

Justice is when we get what we deserve – but what do we deserve? According to God, all who reject His Son are deserving of eternal separation from Him, never again to have an opportunity to enter into His presence. The bad news is, that all of us have proven we deserve justice based on the choices we have made outside of God’s will. The good news is, that there is another side to this judgment.

Which bring us to the second reason why Jesus judges. Because of

2. Grace

God’s desire is not to execute justice upon us – that is why He sent Jesus to die in our place...so that we wouldn’t have to experience this separation from Him.

This is what the Bible says in Romans 3:23-26. Please listen to this:

“For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former

times. And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus.” – Romans 3:23-26

At the time of Judgment those who have accepted Jesus’ sacrifice for their sins are declared not guilty, not because of their perfect lives, but because they have placed their trust in the one who died in their place.

Thirdly, Jesus judges because of

3. Division

While Jesus came to earth to bring all who would accept Him into His grace and into an experience of eternal life with Him, at the judgment the lines are drawn, and there is a division made between those who are in Christ and those who aren’t.

John the Baptist says in Luke, *“He is ready to separate the chaff from the grain with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, storing the grain in his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” – Luke 3:17*

God created us as free moral agents, and God respects the choices we make. Those who choose Jesus in this life will spend eternity with Him in the next. Those who choose to reject Jesus in this life will spend eternity without Him. God doesn’t send anyone to hell or to heaven – we choose our destiny and which side of the division we will be on when we are still in this life.

The third question is

HOW WILL I BE JUDGED?

A drunken man got on the bus late one night, staggered up the aisle, and sat next to a woman who was clutching a Bible. She looked the drunk man up and down and said, "I've got news for you, mister. You're going straight to hell!"

The man jumped up out of his seat and shouted, "Oh, man, I'm on the wrong bus *again!*"

How many of you wonder if you've gotten on the wrong bus when it comes to eternal judgment?

There are three truths about how we will be judged that should help clarify.

1. Justly

"I do nothing without consulting the Father. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely just, because it is according to the will of God who sent me; it is not merely my own." – John 5:30

Jesus, who knows everything about what we have thought, what we have done in life, and whether we have trusted in Him or not will always do what is right. It also means that He will fulfill His promises – for those who have placed their faith in him, justice demands that they receive mercy, and to experience the eternal life that has been promised to them.

Many times people ask me about those who have never heard about Jesus – I can give you this answer – God will always do the right and just thing – He knows the situation each one of us is in, and He will act accordingly. They will be judged according to their response to the light that was given to them. The creation of God, like the stars and the sun and the moon, the living things, the design of the human body should have made every person who ever lived on earth aware that there is a God and prompted them to seek him. Cornelius was a pagan Roman soldier who sought the true God. He was hungry to know the real God. He tried to live a religious life—praying and giving alms to the poor. Those wouldn't save him, of course. But God saw the intentions of his heart and so gave him a vision of an angel who told him that Peter was coming to tell him the good news of Jesus Christ. Amazingly, Peter himself received a vision about preaching to the gentiles who the Jews consider to be unclean and subsequently went to preach to Cornelius and his household. All this is recorded in Acts 10.

But does this still happen today? Yes, it does. There's the case of a man in an Ethiopian tribe who saw a vision of two men coming to his village to tell them about God. Years later, missionaries came to his tribe, the Ethiopian man listened, believed, and is now one of thousands of Christians from his tribe.

Then, there's this woman and her husband, followers of the Sikh religion in India, who used to read their scriptures and prayed every day. One night while she was praying, she had a vision of Jesus. This led to her conversion, and after some study and questioning, her husband also.

And in the Philippines, it was reported that a number of Muslims saw visions of Jesus after prayer and fasting during Ramadan.

Jesus is alive and active. He will judge justly and fairly. No one can say on the last day, "But I never heard of Jesus".

Jesus will judge justly. He will also judge

2. Decisively

During an edition of the news program *60 Minutes*, Dan Rather interviewed Jack Welch, the outspoken former CEO of General Electric. At the end of the interview, Rather asked Welch, "What's the toughest question you have ever been asked?"

Welch replied, "Do you think you'll go to heaven?"

When asked how he had answered that question, Welch continued, "It's a long answer, but I said that if caring about people, if giving it your all, if being a great friend counts—despite the fact that I've been divorced a couple of times, and no one's proud of that. I haven't done everything right all the time. I think I got a shot. I'm in no hurry to get there and to find out any time soon."

Jack Welch is one smart guy, but not when it comes to judgment.

What he fails to realize is that Jesus will judge decisively, not on whether we've been divorced or not, and not on whether we've been a good friend or not...but rather, based upon what we have done with His offer of eternal salvation.

Thirdly, Jesus will judge

3. Eternally

We are either with Him forever or away from Him forever – no matter how much we would like for there to be, the Bible doesn't promise us any middle ground. Jesus said concerning those who reject Him: *"They will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."* – Matthew 25:46

How long is eternity? It is forever. I find that a concept that is impossible for me to grasp with my finite mind. But I know that for those in Christ, it speaks to a joy unimaginable. For those who are not in Christ, it speaks to a future that is utterly and completely without hope.

Depending on where you are at personally today, this sermon either gives you great hope, or causes you distress. It all comes down to what you have done with this Great Judge, Jesus Christ.