

# LOVE AND JUDGMENT

By

Curtis Dickinson

The thought that God's love will somehow cancel out His wrath in Judgment is shallow thinking which fails to plumb the depths of His love and understand its purpose.

Sheldon Vanauken said that, "We have so happily absorbed the truth that God is love that we interpret it to mean that He wants us to have any little thing that will make us happy, including apples." The modern concept of love has been interpreted to us through Hollywood, and means that love grants you all your wishes and fantasies. God's love is interpreted through the same colored glasses: God love you and want to grant all your desires.

Such misinformation about God's love grossly distorts the overall revelation of God and undermines moral judgment. "If God loves me, He'll let me have this, and do this and that..." Moral values are generally measured by the depth of the emotion which they satisfy. Gross sins are committed by people who live under this conviction of a false definition of God's love.

Love, as interpreted by Jesus, was not sentimentality. It was not a feeling that blinded His eyes to sin or that led Him to keep silent about it and thus condone it. It was for love that he humbled Himself in coming to earth to confront man with sin and ultimately to suffer death and judgment for that sin. For judgment is the product of love.

In the beginning God lavished His love on Adam and Eve by creating them in His own image, placing them in a Paradise with every possible joy. His judgment was that they should live fully within the bounds of this ideal setting, enjoying to the limit that which God decreed in perfect order. Everything outside of this perfection was denied. To be less than God's image was forbidden.

After the pair had rejected the perfect and thus scorned God's love, they were cast out of the garden, lest they "take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever" (Gen. 3:22). To live by one's own desires apart from God (secular humanism) is the sure way to a life of misery.

Thus judgment lies heavily on the world because it is no longer a reflection of the love of God. Jesus explained: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, and comes not to the light lest his works should be reprov'd. But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been brought of God" (John 3:19-21).

Christ is that light, coming into the world to reveal God's purpose and desire in His own life. He also revealed judgment by assuming our guilt and paying its penalty by death on the cross, "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). In the end the judgment will be literally executed upon all who reject His purpose to have man in His own image in a perfect and everlasting environment.

The crisis that underlies all the other problems in the world is this sentence of judgment upon all who reject the love of God and the perfect purpose for which man is created. Paul writes that their hearts are darkened, and God has given them up to sinful

passions (Rom. 1:21, 26). God actually gives man what he wants. If he lives the darkness of sin and its consequences he can have them.

Unbelievers can hardly be expected to understand this. But why can't Christians understand it? Why do so many present a sentimental and feminine image of Jesus in the name of love while at the same time decrying the decline of morals throughout the nation?

For one thing, secular humanism has had a lot more influence on Christians than we like to admit. One tenet of humanism is that all men are basically good, and we only need to convince them of their goodness in order to bring out their finer qualities. Evangelists and churches across the land have picked this up and seek to win people by raising their self-esteem and increasing their self-love. Somehow the idea of judgment doesn't fit into this scenario. You can't tell a person that he's "O.K." but that he is under sentence of judgment and death.

When a vile crime is committed you will hear people say, "He must have been insane. No one could be that evil." They have been persuaded that man is basically good, in contrast to what the Bible teaches, that "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).

Another reason is the "success syndrome." Christian faith is presented as faith that one may reach his goal, whether it is winning a boxing match, a motion picture Oscar or winning a higher position in the company over the head of competitors. The church generally measures Christian success by secular values. Anyone who sacrifices all (including a few unnoticed virtues) in order to make a name for himself and rise above his peers is hailed as a great success. This is in sharp contrast to statements of Jesus, such as: "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it" and "that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

When Jesus came into the world He was immediately attacked by King Herod, who slew all the male children of two years and under in the attempt to get at the One Who was to reign. To reign means to hold the power of life and death — judgment — over all. Herod was a great success in the world, but he knew exactly where he stood in regard to righteousness and judgment.

As soon as Jesus began His ministry, the religious leaders started a plot to take His life. They knew enough about God to know that in His holiness and righteousness He cannot love nor tolerate sin.

Truth is unwelcome to evil. Jesus is love, as well as truth, and love in its purity is also unwelcome to the evil.

God is absolutely good. He is total goodness. Those who love good love God. They draw as close to Him as possible, not out of fear, but out of love. They come to the light to see if they are doing the works of God.

It is sheer joy for one who loves God to know His goodness. It is sheer terror for the wicked to think of the absolute purity and goodness of God, because even they recognize that if God is good and if He is all-powerful, as God must be, that He must ultimately abolish all evil.

This is exactly what He says He will do in the judgment. "He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor; and he will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12).

The Old Testament gives at least four graphic illustrations of this judgment. In the great flood only eight people were saved out of an estimated billion. In the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah only three were saved out of thousands. Judgment was pronounced upon Pharaoh and his armies when they were all drowned in the Red Sea, and the extremely wicked city of Jericho was completely wiped out with the exception of only one family, the family of Rahab. In each case God demonstrated His love for His creation by eliminating that which would pollute and spoil it. He also demonstrated His love for those who loved Him enough to seek Him and trust their lives to Him.

By contrast He writes, "All that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). The devastating wars, cruel murders, and vicious crimes of communism are a strong indication of how men hate God and love death. It is as though they cannot wait for judgment. A hatred of God is hatred for life, for Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life." Paul addressed the Jews as those who "Judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life" (Acts 13:46). Today this is true of people throughout the world, who prefer death to life in the image of God. This is the crisis that underlies the problem of sexual immorality, abortion, drugs and all the host of crimes in our day.

It will not be solved merely by telling people that God loves them. It is only as God's love is placed in perspective with relation to its ultimate consequence: Judgment, that the message of the Christ becomes good news. If we have Godly love for men we will express our concern for his ultimate destiny.

Contrary to the common idea of judgment, which derives from medieval concepts and not from the Bible, there is no record of God ever inflicting torture upon those judged. The punishment was not torture but death. Involved in the final destruction at judgment will be billions of people, the majority of which never reached maturity. They never came under the covenant of Christ and therefore have no hope of life. Many refuse to think of judgment because they believe it will mean that these billions of pitiful people are to be consigned to live eternally under torturous conditions. But this is not what scripture teaches. The punishment is not designed to perpetuate sinners in endless agony! The end result of the judgment will be to have a "new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). There will be no more suffering nor pain nor death. As the fire destroyed the citizens of Sodom, so the final fire will destroy all who are not found written in the Lamb's book of life.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish (for this is the ultimate end of the unredeemed), but might have everlasting life (only the true believers will live eternally)."

God's love brought man forth in creation. It was His love that drove the first pair out of Paradise, for He wants no eternal sinners, but only those who can be recreated in His image. God's wrath against sin is predicated upon His love for the good. It is His love that will bring about the judgment, that His perfect and glorious purpose might be accomplished, to have a race of people who love Him and live in harmony with Him in a world where all thought of evil has been abolished.

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.  
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute  
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article  
for permission to be valid. Vol. XXIII, Number 1.  
.....