

Documented Judgment

A DEFINITIVE LOOK AT JUDGMENT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

“for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Isaiah 26:9

*“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;”
2 Timothy 4:1*

*“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”
Hebrews 4:13*

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”
2 Corinthians 5:10*

PREFACE

When dealing with the topic of judgment, it would do us well to approach it cautiously and with great humility. Scripture has made it abundantly clear that the Lord will never change, being the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6). Therefore, man has a judge (a great judge) who not only presides over the far reaches of creation, but also over every action and word spoken upon the earth.

As we approach the topic of judgment in the book of Acts, we see that God is still sitting on His throne and actively involved with all men – both believer and unbeliever. The book of Acts gives six accounts of judgments, of which four of these were capital (life ending) in nature, while the remaining two were temporal (for a season). In this, three of the judgments were against those who were followers of the Lord, two were against non-believers (a king and a sorcerer) and the third judgment, as in the case with Paul, was used as a part of his conversion experience. It is appropriate to note that the three judgments that were against those who were followers of the Lord were life ending. Of course, one of

these was Judas Iscariot whose judgment was written by the Holy Spirit a thousand years before as King David prophesied in the Psalms.

God is a judge and there is nothing in creation that is hidden from His eyes. As we approach this topic it is important that we maintain a healthy understanding of the Father's omniscience. Jesus assured His disciples continually of His Father's ever watchful care for them. Therefore, building into His followers a DNA of trust and love, rather than religious control and fear.

In closing, God is a judge, and the book of Acts gives clear examples of His role as man's judge. There are many bad actors listed in the book of Acts, but only a few received a clear recorded judgment. God is a judge, while some sin is judged on the earth as noted in this study, all other deeds await judgment before His throne. Take each of the following examples slowly and let the Spirit of the Lord sow into your heart a healthy understanding of the fear of the Lord.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Matthew 7:1

References in Acts

Acts Part I: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria

Acts 1:20 Acts 5:5 Acts 5:10 Acts 9:3-8 Acts 12:23

Acts Part II: To the Uttermost Parts of the Earth

Acts 13:11

A CLOSER LOOK

Acts Part I: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria

1) Judas Iscariot, a Man Who Wishes He Had Never Been Born

Acts 1:20

²⁰ *“For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take.”*

Psalms 109:7-8

“When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office.”

Note: Just because you are a minister, in the service of the Lord, doesn't mean you have a ticket to heaven. Judas went to hell. The love of money

was and still is a root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). It is also important to note that in the first chapter of the Book of Acts that God, as a judge, has not changed. Everyone of the Lord's apostles, who knew and ministered with Judas during the Lord's three years of ministry, witnessed this judgment and it shook them to their spiritual core. Judas had been one of them. He proclaimed the kingdom of God, cast devils out of people and healed the sick, yet he went to hell. I believe that this judgment was placed in the first chapter of Acts in order to warn all ministers to come that heaven is not assured us because of ministry position, but rather as a gift of grace, through faith in the merciful blood of Jesus Christ. With this gift of grace we are also admonished to judge ourselves lest we be judged, knowing that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God – to whom we will give an account (Heb. 10:31).

“The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.”

Mark 14:21

2) Ananias a Liar

Acts 5:5

⁵ “And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.”

Note: God gave man the ability to think and to generate thoughts. With this, man also has the ability to receive thoughts – good or bad. In this case, Ananias' heart had been counseled by Satan – the father of all lies. Ananias agreed with this lie and then decided to operate in it - in the midst of the congregation. Who would ever know? There was one problem, as man draws near to God, God draws near to man - searching every inward thought and motive. While standing before the apostles, who were standing in the manifested grace of God's weighty glory, Ananias lied. Perhaps Ananias was vying for a position of leadership and respectability before the congregation. When judgment fell upon Ananias, cleansing came upon the congregation. It is also proper to note that just as the altar Moses built was Holy, so was the altar of blessing in the New Testament Church. The book of Hebrews (chapter 7) reveals that it is Jesus, our high priest, established after the order of Melchisedec, that receives offerings. In this case the New Testament altar is not holy because of the gift, but rather because of the one present, receiving offerings and administrating

the blessing. Ananias walked right into the presence of Jesus that fateful day. God had to show the church that He had never changed and that just as He had manifested Himself in His holiness in the Old Testament, He was and is and always would be, the same holy God to them. I imagine that many of those present that day walked away remembering the sons of Aaron who were consumed with fire before the presence of the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2).

The last point is that everywhere this story was told, the fear of the Lord came upon those listening. That one act of judgment brought forth a revival, a turning to the Lord in the hearts of people across the region. As we pray for revival in our nations, perhaps a notable judgment could be one possible way that it comes.

3) Saphira, Agreement in Sin

Acts 5:10

¹⁰ *“Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.”*

Note: They agreed to lie, and in their agreement, they were buried. The Lord allowed them to enter eternity, united in their cause. It is important to note that Saphira was given the opportunity to change course, thus being spared her place in Ananias’ judgment. She chose unwisely. Do I think that they went to hell? I speculate that most likely they did not. I believe that they had received eternal life through Christ. Their sin, which was judged in this passage, was not a denial of Christ, but rather lying to achieve some form of prestige and promotion in the eyes of men. The love of money is a root of all evil and the Lord, through judgment cleansed the act so that it would not take root in the newly formed church. In the Old Testament, as mentioned above, God judged Aaron’s sons for burning strange fire before the altar. Even so in the New Testament, God was showing the church that He had not changed and that the altar was equally as holy.

4) Saul, a Man Forever Changed

Acts 22:6-7

⁶ *“and it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. ⁷ And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”*

Acts 9:18

¹⁸ *“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”*

Note: Paul was worthy of death. He had persecuted and tortured many Christians, but like us all, he was a candidate of God’s bountiful mercy. Though Paul had never known Jesus in the flesh, like the other apostles, he was granted a one on one visitation from Jesus. It is important to note that this very Jesus who met Paul on the road to Damascus had been restored to the glory He had with the Father before creation.

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

John 17:5

Paul received a small taste of the absolute glory and light coming from the face of Christ Himself. Jesus literally lit up Paul’s world that day. Though blinded, no doubt the image of Christ had been eternally burned into the heart and mind of Paul. Though Paul was physically blind, he finally could see. After several days, the power of God came upon Paul and the season of his judgment was over. The scales that had been burnt over his eyes simply fell off. I often wonder what effect all of this had on Paul’s travel companions – the ones who were traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians. Though there is no record, one thing is for sure, they were never the same.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

2 Corinthians 4:6

5) Herod and Hell’s Worms

Acts 12:23

“And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

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Acts 12:23

Note: The tale of two angels. Herod learned that day that all positions of authority (kings and priests) belong to the Lord. He also was without excuse, for he had knowledge of the story of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's foolish grandson who crossed lines in his day and watched the hand of God write his personal judgment upon the wall – in front of his friends, relatives, and rulers.

The writer of Acts, being Luke, was granted a word of knowledge to reveal that an angel was sent from the throne of God to strike the proud king. Those standing before Herod most likely did not see the angel, but definitely witnessed the king fall from his throne, being opened up in a way that only a sword can produce. These stories are given as a warning to men, especially those in positions of authority.

The final thought includes Peter, who only a few verses before was released from prison by an angel. When Herod killed James and had Peter arrested, the church went into fervent, continual, prayer - most likely praying in the Holy Spirit prayer language. Under such a burden of potential loss, they yielded to the Holy Spirit in prayer, and when they did, He orchestrated Peter's release and Herod's demise. As a result, two angels were sent from the throne of God producing two different outcomes. One being escape for the servant of the Lord, and the other being judgment upon an evil king. What mighty deeds we would see in the earth if only the church would rise-up in prayer - pulling down from heaven the power and authority that has been provided us.

Acts Part II: To the Uttermost Parts of the Earth

6) Elymas – A Temporal Judgment of Darkness for a Season

Acts 13:11

¹¹ “And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.”

Note: This verse settles the fact that God does judge men, even those living outside of the land of Israel. Paul was used by the Lord to deliver this judgment to the sorcerer. Paul was the right man to do this in that he himself had received a similar judgment when the Lord blinded him on the road to Damascus. I believe that Paul had much compassion for this man. This passage gives us revelation into how demonic power seeks to gain influence into the lives of those in authority. The Bible commands us to

not give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). When men, standing in offices of governing authority, grant access to Satan's ministers of iniquity, spiritual darkness and oppression will come upon the land. Satan knows how to usurp authority to gain influence. As authority flows from the throne of God into the nations, Satan and the demonic realm seeks a vehicle, through human will, to usurp that authority - thus gaining a greater influence to oppress and devour mankind.

As Paul began to preach to the governor, a demonic power became unsettled and began to move Elymas against Paul. Satan did not want to lose his place of influence in that region. The Bible gives no detail of how long the spiritual warfare took place. We do know that it must have been intense, in that John Mark quit the mission over it, leaving Paul and Barnabas to continue without him. The point I seek to make is that I don't believe that this was a quick incident between Paul and the sorcerer. The good thing was that Paul didn't back away, but kept binding the strong man until Heaven moved, breaking the power of the witches' influence. Does the church today forfeit such heavenly grace by lack of targeted prayer? If the government is upon the Lord's shoulders, then the church has influence through its ministry of prayer and authority. As the church takes her place before the throne of God, even civil leaders will change or be changed, causing peace and prosperity to come upon the land. Though the affects may not come overnight, they surely will come if the church refuses to grow weary. Though this is the last recorded judgment in the book of Acts, history reveals that the Lord's judgments are still in the earth. The apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos, was shown the end times. The book of Revelation is truly a book that settles this major truth – there is a God in heaven that rules over creation. He is man's judge.