

The Purpose of Judgment

Does judgment have a purpose? I believe that judgment sent from God does indeed have a purpose. Below we will look at a number of scriptures to find the reason why God sends judgments in this day and age.

Judgments that come from God are found throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. It is certain that there must be a reason, or a purpose, for such judgments. To determine God's purpose and thinking behind the judgments which He sends let us look first into Ezekiel.

13 When I say to the righteous he will surely live, and he so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die.

14 But when I say to the wicked, "You will surely die," and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness,

15 if a wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he will surely live; he shall not die.

16 None of his sins that he has committed will be remember against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he will surely live. Ezekiel 33:13-16 (NASB)

Here we see that God will turn away from the judgment given to a person if that person repents and turns from his sins. The reverse is also true for a righteous man. If he turns away from the correct path and sins (continuing in that sin), then he shall be judged.

If God, who is perfect and just, will stop judgment He has pronounced on an individual because that individual has repented, then one can come to the conclusion that the judgment has no further purpose in such cases and is therefore ended. It is clear then that the main, and one could also say the only, purpose of judgment is to bring about repentance.

3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Nahum 1:3a (NASB)

From this passage we can see that God will always punish the guilty. However, we also see that He is slow to anger. Why slow to anger? Because God is waiting to see if a person will repent! It is repentance that God desires. He only resorts to judgment when repentance is resisted and refused.

12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord,
"Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping, and mourning;
13 And rend your heart and not your garments."
Now return to the Lord your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness,
And relenting of evil. Joel 2:12-13 (NASB)

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As we turn from our sin and toward the Lord's grace and mercy we are spared the judgments that would have come upon us.

This is true both for individuals as well as nations. If a nation has been prophesied against—that is, God has stated that He will send forth judgments upon it—and then that nation repents, it is spared from God's wrath. For He will be slow to anger, giving both individuals and nations time to repent. But if that repentance does not come about, then one can expect that the judgment will come in the time that the Lord has defined.

11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB)

Here we find the only time that God desire's judgment for the purpose of "making one pay" is at the end of the age when we will all stand before the great white throne to be judged by Jesus. At all other times of judgment we have that opportunity to repent and be spared anything further in terms of God's wrath.

True repentance of either an individual or a nation will always bring about a turning away of the wrath of God. We therefore can conclude that judgment in this day and age has only one purpose, and that is to bring a person or a nation to the place of repentance.

I firmly believe that God will only resort to judgments that cause death when all other "lighter" judgments have failed. Even if the wrath of God has progressed to the place where people are dying, there is still time for the ones that are left to turn from their sins and receive the mercy of God.

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