

The
JUDGMENT
of God

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DENNIS FARRELL

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Dedication

To Christian, my firstborn grandson
and a great pianist.

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Preface

MANY AMERICAN EVANGELICALS believe God is judging America today, and many popular books have been published concerning this idea. I myself believed this to be true, also. However, it occurred to me that a plain reading of Scripture indicates this is not the case. The New Testament shows no justification for that interpretation. On the contrary, it reveals a time of repentance.

Those advocating contemporary judgment quote the Old Testament and apply it to today. Some claim the United States is mentioned in the Old Testament and that some of its prophecies apply to the U.S, which is impossible to prove biblically. While it is true the Old Testament contains many examples of judgment, there are also Old Testament Scriptures that reveal God's desire to refrain from judgment, rather dispensing mercy and repentance instead.

In addition, my research shows that judgment in the New Testament, with exceptions, is really a future concept. Even much of the Old Testament contains numerous examples of judgment pertaining to the future. This book is the result of that research.

I have included the references in footnotes in the text to avoid the reader having to look them up in the back. Some references can be easily accessed online, including the Jamieson Commentary, by

simply looking up the appropriate Scripture. Although there are three authors in the original commentary, I used the latter's name only in the text to save space. Many of the Spurgeon references are commentaries of others he cites in his two-volume commentary on the Psalms. I thought it expedient to simply reference his name with the appropriate psalm, which the reader can look up to get the original. I have attempted to reference my own interpretations with those of respected scholars, hoping to adhere to reasonable hermeneutics. There are also Greek and Hebrew terms to help explain the interpretations of Scriptures. The chapters are short, except for chapter five, to facilitate the reading of the book. My hope is that the reader will at least consider the premise and my points before making a judgment.

CHAPTER ONE

The Definition of Judgment

THE REAL QUESTION for American evangelicals is: Is God judging America and the world, namely, nations and individuals? Most Christians are quick to answer yes to this question. The only problem is that the Bible does not necessarily agree. The appropriate question should be: *Will* God judge America and the world? The answer is an obvious yes. The real question is one of timing. When will all of this occur? The goal of this book is to answer that and other questions concerning judgment.

What exactly does the word *judge* mean? Before discussing the Hebrew and Greek words, let me quote the KJV dictionary. There are several biblical meanings mentioned: 1) “the right or power of passing sentence”; 2) “a remarkable punishment, an extraordinary calamity inflicted by God on sinners”; 3) “spiritual government of the world”; 4) “the righteous statutes and commandments of God”; 5) “justice and equity”; 6) “the decrees and purposes of God concerning nations”; 7) “the final trial of the human race when God will decide the fate of every individual and award sentence according to justice.”¹

It is apparent that there are multiple meanings for the term *judge*. To reduce it to a simple concept of punishment or vengeance

¹ KJV Dictionary at www.av1611.com.

would be misleading. Justice, equity, and the purposes of God, among others, need to be considered.

In the Old Testament, judgment was God's "perfect justice" most often administered by men such as Moses.² The Hebrew word *shaphat*, for example, means "judge and rule," as Solomon ruled. The best example of this is probably the book of Judges.³ The judges not only ruled, but they also administered justice and law.⁴

Another Old Testament word is *mishpat* meaning "decision," but it is often translated as "custom or manner." It is more of a "theological concept" rather than the "status quo."⁵ Action is judgment and where *shaphat* has a more "dynamic character" having an "activity of discrimination and vindication" or punishment, *mishpat* is "right doing."⁶ Thus, *shaphat* represents the idea we often associate with the strict and punishing judgments of God. The plural *shaphatim*, for example, is sometimes used as punishments on Israel for sin.⁷

Judgment also has a "salvation aspect." Its purpose is to keep the "covenant" while "maintaining law and justice" and should be "exercised in this context."⁸ This is most important because to think of justice as vindictive or punishing only is to miss the whole concept of judgment, including Old Testament judgment. For example, *mishpat* is based on love (*chesed*) and righteousness (*tsadique*). It is true that a righteous God must punish sin in His "wrath," but his desire is for "mercy." Joshua 2:18 is a testimony to this.

Judgment is necessary because it can mean "deliverance," for which His people often cry out, rather than "hopelessness." So when God does inflict punishment, usually by others, it is intended to lead to a "righteous remnant."⁹

² Morris, Leon, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*, 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

However, the primary usage of *shaphat* is “directly or indirectly” referring to future judgment, i.e., an “eschatological judgment” toward men of the Old Testament. Evil may “flourish” along with “injustice” and “iniquity,” but it is still allowed by God, only to be judged at the “end time.” He will judge, and evil will be eradicated by fire, and then judgment will be complete and “harmony”¹⁰ restored. Thus, although judgment could be a contemporary reality in the Old Testament, even then judgment looked forward to the future.

Another Old Testament term for judge is *dyn* that conveys the idea of deliverance.¹¹ Psalm 54:1 says, “Judge me, O God . . . ,” but can be translated as “save” or “deliver.” However, it has also been related to punishment as in Job 36:17, a judgment on the wicked. Other examples are judgment via the weather, as in Job 36:31-33, and in a legal sense, as in Isaiah 3:13.¹²

The term *palal* also means judge, but can also mean to entreat or pray, depending on the different roots. Its basic meaning is intervene or interpose by which one would mediate or settle disputes.¹³ Leon Morris believes God will not always leave men to judge themselves. When this term is applied to the wicked, it means to punish.¹⁴

There are other Hebrew terms that are not translated *judge* but can have various meanings, such as decide, prove, reprove, chastise, punish, correct, strive, contend, etc. All of these terms obviously convey action on the part of God to instruct, guide, and even punish men, especially His people.

Clearly, most of these terms and their meanings do not just mean punishment. While punishment for sin is a major theme in judgment, equally important are such meanings as vindication, deliverance, mercy, discrimination, entreaty, mediation, chastisement, and correction, to name several. God’s intention is not to

¹⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

¹¹ Ibid., 26.

¹² Ibid., 28.

¹³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴ Ibid., 31

destroy His people, although there were exceptions in the Old Testament, but to correct and guide them.

Mercy and salvation are significant features of God's attitude toward men. Although He punished Israel's enemies, He sometimes spared them as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Naaman, the Syrian. He also spared Nineveh by sending them Jonah. Sodom and Gomorrah and the Promised Land were exceptions where the wickedness of man was too horrendous in God's eyes at that time.

Remember though, this is the Old Testament. "God treats men somewhat differently than He does now that Christ has come."¹⁵ In the Old Testament God dealt with men according to the law rather than grace now that Christ has come. This is the point and a major theme of this book: Christ has changed things.

The primary Greek word for judge is *krino*, which can also mean avenge, condemn, damn, decree, determine, go to the law, ordain, sentence to, etc., which refers to people. An even harsher term is *katakrino*, which always means condemn or damn. It can also carry the idea of judging against, according to Strong. However, all of the uses of judge in the New Testament are from the word *krino* and, therefore, will be the term we refer to in this book. Despite the fact that the Greek seems to be stronger in its meaning of judge than the Hebrew, the New Testament points in a different direction when dealing with human beings today, as I will discuss.

It is paradoxical that in the Old Testament age of law God appears to be more vengeful and punishing in His judgment, however, the Hebrew contains meanings of deliverance, correction, and salvation. On the other hand, in the New Testament, the age of grace, the Greek seems to imply a more condemning and vengeful meaning, depending on whom it is being applied to, although there is an element of correction. The reason may be eschatological, but this is open to interpretation.

Lastly, there are different types of judgment. First, there is the judgment of believers' sins based on John 5:24: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,

¹⁵ Pastor Tim Cappucci.

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and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Second, there is the believer’s judgment of the self based on 1 Corinthians 11:31: “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”

Third, there is the judgment of the believer’s works based on 2 Corinthians 5:10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Fourth, there is the judgment of the nations based the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31–46.

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25:32)

Fifth, the judgment of the wicked based on Revelation 20:11–15.

And I say a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. (Rev. 20:11)