

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B1115 – April 17- 2011

Doctrine Of Judgment/ Salvation: Countdown Initiated

We've gone through the Ascension and Session of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ascension was physically observed by the apostles on the Mt of Olives as He went up, up, up and then disappeared in a cloud never to appear again in the way that He did in His resurrection appearances. We're told He passed through the heavens and He sat down at the right hand of the Father; the Lord Jesus Christ is physically located somewhere right now. In His deity He's omnipresent, but in His humanity He is localized at the Father's right hand, that's His session. He sits high above all rulers and authorities. It's from that location that He sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. We've seen the images from the OT of His session, Ps 110, Dan 7, that He is in a position of kingly authority, in the sense that the crown is His, as it were. He is the crowned King, not yet seated on David's throne here on earth, but He has all rights to that throne and is crowned King in His humanity and now His humanity sits at the Father's right hand and we have a new situation.

This new situation is the setting for the Holy Spirit, Pentecost and the Church. It doesn't start with Pentecost, the Church does, yes, but what I'm saying is that the rationale behind the Church beginning is Christ's ascension and session on the throne. And that's why we're spending so much time on it. We're going into quite a bit of detail because I don't believe this truth is taught enough, it is not repeated enough, so that we get into subjectivism and mysticism and everything else later on when we start talking about the Holy Spirit.

Today we want to look at the doctrinal ramifications of the Ascension and Session. Our standard operating procedure in this class is to study the historical event and then connect doctrines to the event. And the doctrine

we're connecting to this event is a doctrine we've seen before, the doctrine of judgment/salvation. With the resurrection and subsequent ascension and session the final countdown to the end of history has begun. From that point we are living in the last days and the clock has been ticking ever so surely as Jesus Christ prepares to reign. So we pick up a truth we've seen earlier - judgment/salvation. Think back in the framework. When did this truth really get going? With the Flood. Then when did we see it rear its head again? At the Exodus. Now we will see it expanded again in the age we are living in, the Church. We said that when God judges He always saves, and when He saves He always judges. That's why we call it judgment/salvation. Those are twin truths in the Scripture, always connect them. At the Flood God used the same watery element to judge the earth outside of the ark that he used to save those inside the ark. At the Exodus God used the same Angel of the Lord to judge those in homes without the blood as He used to save those in homes with the blood. Watch that - that's a pattern of how God works. He judges and He saves in the same act. And there are simple images from OT history, a child can learn them, but you keep going back to them because they keep you orthodox. It's very easy to slide into heresy without these pictures. They protect you, so always go back; go back to the Flood story, a profound picture of judgment/salvation; go back to the Exodus story, another clear image that gives the pattern of judgment/salvation.

Now we're going to take that OT picture, because those OT pictures were given for our edification; they were revelations of the pattern of how God works, and we're going to take the five points of that doctrine, judgment/salvation, and we're going to go one, two, three, four, five through what Christ is doing in his session. What does the session mean as far as judgment/salvation goes? The bottom line is the final countdown has begun. Time is running out and the day of salvation could end at any moment and judgment could fall. We don't know when it's all going to end. That's the urgency of the NT gospel message. The clock started counting down with the ascension and session of Christ and He now has the rank and the credentials to initiate the end.

The first aspect of judgment/salvation is grace before judgment. God doesn't judge without warning. He always warns before He judges; that's grace. It's a truth you pick up from the Flood. How long did God give Noah to preach before the Flood? 120 years. That's a period of grace before judgment.

Whether or not people believed it, obviously not too many people believed it, they laughed at it, well, too bad, the gospel was preached. One of the things to notice about this pattern is that if you look carefully at the fact that God has to be gracious before He judges, if you look at that pattern you realize that that defines grace. It protects you from trivializing grace because the tendency is always to drift over into this kind of mode of thinking about God's grace as the idea that God relaxes His standards, His holiness kind of flexes and we can get away with things. Its okay to sin, God is gracious. Oops, when that soaks in it becomes a cheap way of looking at grace. But if you'll keep those two words linked together, that grace comes before judgment it will protect you from cheapening grace.

Grace doesn't go on forever. Grace comes up to a point and then bang, that's it, no more grace. It's just like evil is bracketed, grace is bracketed. It's bracketed on the right side on the time line by the judgment that happens, and the gracious period in Gen 6 is 120 years. If we went through the Exodus story we could go through Exodus 5, 6, 7. You know the story when Moses and Aaron came repeatedly to the Pharaoh and offered Pharaoh an out, let My people go, if he let them go at any point what would happen to the judgment? It would have stopped. So every time they visit the palace or the riverside with this command, Let My people go, it was grace. God always gives grace, but when the grace is spurned then its time for judgment. So we have grace before judgment with the Exodus just like we have grace before judgment with the Flood. When grace runs its course in both periods then the judgment happens.

What we're going to see is that if you turn to Acts 17 Paul used language when he was evangelizing the Greeks that's a little different than what we're generally used to hearing in evangelistic messages; it's almost like giving a threat. In Acts 17:30, God says "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent." There's the gospel invitation in a street confrontation sort of context. And he's saying that there's an urgency here you didn't have before the cross, and there's an implied threat in the gospel and the threat is you'd better believe in Jesus Christ while you've got a chance. Yeah, you have a choice now but it's not going on forever. That is the way to put force into the gospel message.

So now when we come to the Church how do we see grace before judgment? We have the opportunity right now for men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, it's all grace, grace, grace right now. It appears that the Gentile kingdoms of Daniel, since 586BC, are just continuing to run their course and that man is going to be successful in building the final kingdom of man. Appearances can be deceiving. This appearance is not reality. Reality is that the Lord Jesus Christ is graciously delaying getting up off the Father's throne and coming down to judge. So we have grace now but suddenly this grace is going to be terminated and judgment is going to ensue. That's the picture we're getting from the NT authors and that's why the whole thing is looked upon with such urgency. Repent because at any-moment judgment could fall.

Now we come to the second aspect of judgment/salvation, and that is perfect discrimination. God, when He judges, perfectly discriminates between the saved and the unsaved. Have we seen this before? The Flood displays it perfectly. There was a perfect severing line between those on the ark and those off the ark. If you're inside the wooden planks you were saved, but if you're outside you were destroyed. There was no spillover, no percentage of error. On the ark 100% salvation, off the ark 0% salvation. When God judges and saves there are no fuzzy edges to the zones where He judges and saves. Then we saw it again where? At the Exodus. Remember where the Israelites lived? In the zone called Goshen. Did the judgments fall there? No, they fell upon Egypt but the text says, they did not fall upon Goshen. That's the perfect discrimination we're talking about. That perfect demarcation.

We're going to look at some of the ways in which God discriminates so turn to Matt 3; you see this right off the bat when Jesus begins His ministry. We also are using the word deliberately, the word "discrimination," because everybody misuses it today. The Bible is built upon discrimination. The Bible is built upon violence. When you talk this way people... huh, what did you say? I said the Bible is built upon discrimination and violence. What do you mean by that? I mean that man is a rebel. So discrimination comes into play automatically. And right here people are going to be discriminated in how they respond to Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus said "Who do you say I am?" How you answer that question discriminates between two kinds of people.

In Matt 3 when John the Baptist is preaching to the people of his time, and he says in verse 11, “As for me, I baptize you in water for repentance; but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not even fit to remove His sandals; He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” See the judgment there? It’s always there, judgment/salvation, you can’t get one without the other. But there’s the discrimination. Jesus Christ is a divider and God discriminates against evil.

Today we’re afraid to say..., and it’s true, there’s false discrimination but it’s not true that there should be no discrimination. If you’re saying no one should discriminate that’s a discrimination, you’re discriminating against the discriminators. Just what do mean when you say no discrimination? Are you saying we should do away with all laws, because what are laws? Can you name one law that has ever been made that doesn’t discriminate? Think about it. If a law says don’t do this, doesn’t the law discriminate? It discriminates against those who disobey the law and those who obey the law. So here you are, yak yakking at discrimination as bad and the law you’re passing discriminates. Pointing that out cuts the argument down to size. Now we’re not talking about all discrimination is bad. If you believed that you’d never pass a law. So now it’s not an issue of discrimination, it’s the criterion of discrimination. Ah, okay, now we can get away from all the sloppy vocabulary and get down to what the real issue is, it’s the criterion on which you discriminate.

And here the criterion of discrimination is the act of belief or unbelief in Jesus Christ. If you come forward to John 3 you’ll see the theme of discrimination, John 3:18, right after the verse that everybody knows it says “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” In other words, a person incriminates themselves by rejecting Jesus Christ. They come up with all kinds of excuses why; well it wasn’t clear and I don’t know whether I can believe the NT and all the other stuff - but it comes down to the fact that everybody does know God, and here is His Son being offered for salvation and they thumb their nose at Him, and God’s

supposed to open the door because they came up with some lame excuse. Like the God of the universe is really going to buy it!

So one of the things we want to see is that in this age, starting with Pentecost when the Church is actually formed on earth, all the way down to the rapture when the Church is taken away from the earth, you've got discrimination going on, a progression of discrimination where God calls out a certain subset of people based on their response to Jesus Christ.

One way this is most clearly seen is in the area of imputation. We introduced this word way back when we were dealing with the Call of Abraham and the doctrine of justification, but here's a good time to bring it back up. Imputation is a word that is used primarily in economics. To see how it's used, turn to the book of Philemon and we'll start from the elementary idea of the base meaning of this word and then we'll go to the theological spiritual meaning. Philemon: in this case, here's a flavor for this word "impute," and it gets away from the theology so you can just see it in normal, every day business. In verse 18, for those of you who don't know the argument of Philemon, it's a plea by Paul who deals with a slave and the slave owner. In verse 18, "if he" the slave "has wronged you" the slave owner "in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account," impute it to me. There's the basic root stem of the word "impute." It has an economic street usage, and it simply means to credit to somebody's account, charge it to my account. Paul uses this term, this street term; by the way, this is another good example of the fact that the NT is not some religious text. To the first century Christians to whom these letters were written it was written in the language of the ordinary person on the street. Christians have brought all kinds of spooky, religious content to this book, and it's not totally wrong because the Holy Spirit has taken this vocabulary and extended the meaning of it, but originally these words had street meanings, and here's the street meaning: to charge something to an account.

That's the word that Paul picks up, and in Romans he takes that accounting term and brings it over here and says the Christian has Christ's righteousness charged to his account. And we say that's justification, he is now justified. Why? Because the act of justifying is crediting Christ's righteousness to someone's account. That's the picture of justification. The thing to remember about it is that it's an objective thing that's happening; it's

not a subjective thing. A person may have great emotion or he may have no emotion, it doesn't make a particle of difference when it comes to imputation. Imputation is not given on the basis of feelings, personality or hair color. It's simply an economic transaction that occurs beyond the bounds of our perception. The only way we know is because the word of God tells us. It's a cold, emotionless transaction; it's no more emotional than crediting to your account or debiting to your account. It's an account transaction, that's very unromantic and it sounds unspiritual but it has tremendous and powerful applications if you understand that we come to God with a negative account balance because we are sinners and He is righteous and holy, and He comes over and puts a positive value in our account. That's God crediting the righteousness of Christ over to our account.

It doesn't have a feeling. We can appreciate it and we can respond to the Lord, but the act of imputing itself doesn't have a feeling. We can respond with emotion but the emotion isn't in the imputation. They follow the imputation, the work of God first, emotional response second. You can't respond with proper emotion to any work of God if you don't first understand the work of God that has happened. That's why it gets back to the word of God. So what we want to show is that in perfect discrimination there are those who are sinners but their bank accounts over here have had Christ's righteousness credited to them, they're justified and there are those who rebel and are not justified, they have a big minus in their bank account. Is God going to judge between these two groups perfectly? Yes, He is. Right now the grace is still going on. It's gone on from the day of Pentecost to today, 19 plus centuries, that's how long the period of grace is. But one day it's going to come to an end, just like these other grace periods came to an end, it will come in judgment; the Lord Jesus Christ is doling out the grace and the Lord Jesus Christ is going to dole out the judgment.

Then we come to the third aspect, one way of salvation. We say that the Lord Jesus Christ is central to this. His work is the basis of grace, all grace. There is only one way of salvation. Not three, not five, there is only one. John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me." Acts 4:12, "There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." It doesn't say you can believe in Mary Magdalene, Judas Priest, Allah, Buddha or anybody else. It's just one way of salvation. And this is very offensive to people, especially in our culture

where everyone gets a vote, it's a democracy and everybody gets a say, all opinions are equal.

If you encounter this a good way of discussing it is to say wait a minute, don't blame Jesus for the one way of salvation doctrine. Don't blame Paul for that. Where does it go back to? Remember the framework; go back to the OT, the Call of Abraham. What happened with the call of Abraham in 2000 BC? God stopped ministering directly to all the people groups. Up to that time you had God dealing openly with all people groups. How did that go over? Nobody listened. They all tuned out. So He already tried the I'm going to work with everybody approach. It didn't work. So God picked Abraham exclusively, *exclusively*, and the Jew in the line of Isaac and Jacob. So this exclusivity isn't new with the NT. There was only one way. Remember the Exodus? What was the only one way that you could be saved, that your firstborn child could be saved? There was only one way, shed blood on your door. No other way was acceptable. Remember the ark, how many arks were there? One. There weren't three and you could take your pick; there was one and you either get on or you don't.

This is very difficult for us as Christians and it will become increasingly difficult; we will be pressured, maneuvered and castigated for exclusivism. That is not acceptable in today's society. We live in a (quote) "pluralistic" society and we, as a Christian group, are going to bear the brunt of this sort of thing. We have to think about it, we have to prepare, "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks a reason for the hope that is in you." It behooves you to think through what you are going to do when people start going after you for being a religious bigot who believes your way is the only way. The first thing you can do is just say it's not that you believe your way is the only way, it's that Jesus Christ said that, so go argue with Him, not with me. I didn't create this truth, it's been around for twenty centuries, and you'd know better if you would read the Bible. The point is that people have to understand that you aren't generating this, so don't accept that. When somebody comes up and says well, you're a bigot, you believe your way is for everybody. It's not my way. I had nothing to do with it. Argue with Jesus. Just side step it, blame it on Jesus.

A second thing you can do is think through this. Why is there only one way? If we think maturely about it, what did we say when we went through the life

of Christ? We said there were four things in the life of Jesus Christ, so let's go back and look at those. We said His birth, His life, His death and resurrection. Let's look at the death a minute. What did we say was the underlying issue when we talked about the death of Christ and the substitutionary blood atonement? What's the idea under that? Justice. The person who rejects the substitutionary blood atonement of Jesus Christ, whether they're in a cult or whether they're in a religion like Islam, whatever, but anybody... anybody that rejects the substitutionary blood atonement of Jesus Christ has got a skewed view of justice because biblically, at the heart of justice is restitution. It's God's holy standard and He says the only price for a life is a life. Therefore the substitution, the word "substitution," it's not just blood atonement, it's a substitutionary blood atonement, somebody took my place, somebody took your place. That's why we remember that, because there's no other meeting ground before the justice of God. It's His standard, He defines the meeting ground, and he says there's only one place. It always has been that way. Eden was the one place where He communed with Adam and Eve. There wasn't any other place, He walked in the garden. This is My meeting ground, not somewhere else; if you want to meet Me, you meet Me here. So it's always been that way, it shouldn't strike us as foreign. It's inherent in the Lord Jesus Christ that He provided one way of salvation, He provided the one way because of the holiness of God.

A third thing you can say is, hey, you ought to be glad that there is a way. Of all the things to get upset about it would be if there was no way. I never met anyone that got upset because there was a way to get from point A to point B. What's to get upset about is if you can't get there at all, there's no way; then I can see people upset, there really wouldn't be an argument but I can see why. But there is a way and if there are road signs and roads pointing the way and you get upset you ought to be grateful there is a way at all. So try that and see what kind of response you get. You're complaining God should have made twenty ways. Hey buddy, there is a way and He gave you a map, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. What's your problem?

Fourth we come to a thing that we're going to expand on, we're going to spend quite a bit of time on this fourth point, probably two or three weeks before we're done. We've seen grace before judgment; perfect discrimination and one way of salvation. Now we're going to think about the fact that all creation is involved in judgment/salvation, both man and nature. Think about it, in the

Flood event what was judged? Man and nature. It wasn't just man, it was animals and birds and fish and rocks; it was even the whole cosmos according to Peter. And now with telescopes where we can look out into the vast reaches of the solar system, galaxy and universe beyond there are things there that provoke an interpretation and the Flood is the chief event. Once you consider that you begin to think your understanding of the far-reaching, cosmic implications of the Flood is far too naïve. So man and nature were judged. Man and nature were also saved. It's part and parcel of judgment; when you have judgment you have salvation. Again, they're twin truths, they always go together.

Let's move to the second time we see this: the Exodus. What was involved in the judgments of the Exodus? You can say the first-born sons were involved, man, but what else was mentioned? Cattle. What was involved in the other plagues? The Nile River. Nature. Frogs. Nature, Hail. Nature. So nature and man were involved in God's judgment. Nature is always involved. Now in the NT a door is opened and we've got to walk through this door and if we do, and we have enough patience and stick-to-itiveness, here's where we going to come to probably some areas of teaching that you may not have heard before. I hesitate to do this in a framework series, but I think it's necessary so that we understand why the dispensational approach to Scripture and why the unique character of the Church Age is the way it is. So we're going to step through the door and we're going to start looking at this thing called nature.

We're going to ask how is nature involved in the judgment/salvation that Jesus Christ is doing? Surely in the Book of Revelation you know it's involved because in the Book of Revelation what happens to the sun and the moon? What happens to the earth? What happens to the sea? Jesus Christ is judging those parts of nature. But what we want to look at right now is is He judging a component of nature? That's what we want to look at, and that introduces the angelic realm. Angels are a part of nature.

We're going to start with the angels in Israel and we're going to move backwards in time to the angels in the pre-Flood civilization, and then we're going to move back all the way to the angels in creation and their role in the Fall. So all of a sudden we're bringing up angelology, the doctrine of angels and we have to do that because of the wide ramifications of when Jesus Christ took the high ground, when He went forward and God gave Him a

name above every name, above EVERY name, that He sits above all the principalities and powers. You can't appreciate the session of Christ if we don't deal with the angels because it's the angels who He now outranks. The session is the first time a human being has ever outranked an angel in the hierarchy of God's plan. So to appreciate the session of Christ we have to pause and work our way through angels.

Turn to Deut 32. We covered this when we did the Law; remember that in Deut 32 we have the national anthem of Israel, and Moses taught the nation, it's a song. And the song is not like our national anthem that harks back to the battle at Fort McHenry, this national anthem not only looks back, it looks forward, centuries down the corridors of time. It looks all the way down to the end of Israel's history, and as the nation was taught to sing this, their national anthem, they were reminded that they had a special history.

In Deut 32, in this great national anthem of Israel, at the very beginning you notice that there's an invocation. Moses writes this, and if you read this too fast you zip right by this and never notice it. In verse 1 he calls heaven and earth as witnesses. "Give ear, oh heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the droplets on fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. 3 For I proclaim the name of the LORD," Now if we had time, and I did this when we went through the OT, we could go to passages in Micah and Isaiah. I've mentioned them before, Isaiah 1:2; Micah 6:1-2, and you would see that centuries later down through into the period of the decline of the kingdom. Just prior to the exile, during this period what are the OT prophets doing? They use the same language, they use the same invocation and they say, Listen O heavens and hear O earth, Israel has violated the Law of God and the prophet brings a case against them.

What are these invocations all about? Is this just poetry or is there something serious going on here that maybe we'd better just hold it a minute and think, do the heavens have eyes, does the earth have ears? What's going on here, are we talking about spirits of the earth and spirits of the sky? In a way, yes we are; these are angelic witnesses and over the corridors of time, down through the centuries, angels have been watching. Angels are watching this drama, they were present when this treaty was originally made at Mt Sinai and both sides had obligations. So what are they watching? They're watching

the performance of God and they're watching the performance of Israel. They are, in the final analysis, called up as the jury, so to speak, to give testimony to the performance of God and Israel. Did God fulfill His word in the contract; did man? You want to get this concept that you've got more than God and man working here. There is a third party involved in this whole thing. It sounds like nature is involved, heaven and earth, but it's the angels and we know that the angels ministered at Mt Sinai. If you check out Acts 7:53, for example, you would see that Stephen as he's dying, as he's giving his final speech, just before he's stoned to death he mentions that the Law was given through angels. They were fiery messengers of God. And if you read what happened at Mt Sinai there's smoke and fire, lightning and thunder and Moses goes up to the top of Mount; you don't read anything about angels. But the Jews, down through history have said that the Law was given, not by just THE Lord, but it was given through angels, plural. The only phenomena we have that we're looking at here is what? Fire and smoke. So what we're saying... watch it now because we're working with nature. Angels, while they can personify themselves, show up as people and walk around and eat steak, like they did when they visited Abraham's house. They can also turn themselves into physical phenomena and act in and through physical phenomena. They have this strange quality of metamorphosis. They can transform themselves from person to fire to something else. They have this ability. They have a strange ability to interact with the physical world and metamorphosize.

In the book of Revelation when God breaks the seals, what does He say when the sun increases its intensity? Does He turn up the physics? What does He say? He doesn't say let the radiation of the solar hydrogen engine increase. Rather, be careful to the text, He speaks to the angel of the sun. Now what is going on here? This is totally, completely foreign to the way we're all brought up and educated about nature around us. We fear because pagan people have spiritism and it's on the rise. Spiritism is believing everything has a spirit behind it, there's a spirit of the tree, a spirit of the rock, a spirit of the orca. These people that have elevated nature above man because it's all one great spiritual organism and so we worship nature, we worship the spirit of the trees, the spirit of the rocks, all that. That's spiritism. That's not what the Bible is saying. But the Bible is saying that there are spirit beings associated with nature. The way we were taught about nature is that we investigate nature with science because science operates off of laws of nature and it's

those laws of nature which enable us to predict things. The Bible says no, it's not spiritism which leads to mysticism and it's not scientism which leads to rationalism but it's God's word. God rules nature by His word. We don't know all the details of how He does it. It just says His word rules nature. That's what gives nature a uniformity that enables us to investigate it. It's not a natural law that does that, it's God's Word, it's the *Logos*, and somehow spirit beings are brought into how God's word does this. They are around and in nature.

If you want to see an example of this, turn to Psalm 104:4, it's talking about creation. He says, "He makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers." If you have a study Bible you should see a note somewhere on verse 4 and you should see a reference to Heb 1:7, because the author of Hebrews interprets verse 4 as referring to angels. And if the author of Hebrews is correct, and we believe he is, then what he is saying in verse 4 is that winds and fire are intimately related to or perhaps are actual metamorphisms of angelic beings, not that all wind and all fire is. But there's something peculiar going on in material physical nature that we do not understand. The challenge is for us to go into this area and explore the angels in some depth and we'll relate it to the session of Christ and what He is doing today, what the big argument is. I think when we get through this it will give renewed appreciation for what is going on right now as far as judgment/salvation.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2011