

Final Judge of All

Acts 17:30-31

If you were to ask the average church attender to name the 'roles' or 'offices' of Jesus Christ, it would be very unlikely that *Judge* would be mentioned among the list. It seems that many Christians would not even be aware that Jesus Christ is the final judge of all humanity, and some would even be offended at the idea. The only 'Jesus' many know is one who is passive, indiscriminate, and naïvely loving. This, however, is not the Jesus of the Bible – it is only the product of unchecked and biblically illiterate imaginations. Jesus is now King, and He will be the final judge of all. This is both incredibly terrifying to the sinner and wonderful beyond compare for the saint.

30a The times of ignorance God overlooked...

▪ For a time, God did not seem to regard the helpless estate of the Gentiles.

- Does this mean that God did not count their sin against them? NO!

Context, both the immediate and the broader truths of Scripture, will keep a person from falling off of the theological cliff.

- Clear passages should help us understand and interpret the unclear.
- Every mouth is stopped and the whole world is held accountable by God (Rom. 3:19).
- All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 2:23).
- God did not spare sinful angels, or the ancient people of Noah's day. God made an example of Sodom and Gomorrah to show what judgment is to come. God keeps "the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment..." especially those who participate in lustful "passion and despise authority" (2 Pet. 2:4-10).
- Apart from faith in Christ, sinners remain under the condemnation of God (John 3:18).
- God even goes as far as to send a "strong delusion" to those who refuse to "love the truth" of the Gospel in order that they will remain under condemnation (2 Thess. 2:9-12).
- Therefore, we are precluded from thinking that Paul is telling sinners that God has 'overlooked' sin. All sin is without excuse (Rom. 1:20), and sinners may not claim 'ignorance' as a defense on the day of judgment.

- It seems that a better and more faithful understanding of this phrase is to notice that God was nearly silent with respect to the Gentiles until that time when Christ was proclaimed as the Savior of all men.
 - Gill: “[It is not] that [God] approved of, or encouraged such blindness and folly, as appeared among the Gentiles... but rather the sense is, [God] despised this, and them for [their willful ignorance], and was displeased and angry with them... As an evidence of such contempt and indignation, [God] overlooked [the Gentiles], and took no notice of them... [He] gave them no revelation to direct them, nor prophets to instruct them, and left them to their stupidity and ignorance...”¹

30b but now he - [God] - commands all people everywhere to repent...

- **BUT NOW! God has provided revelation and escape!**
 - Paul’s evangelistic message included contextualization, unapologetic explanation, and sincere warning.
 - Contextualization –
 - Paul addressed the Greeks on their own ground
 - (*in the midst of the Areopagus* [Acts 17:22]),
 - with their own vocabulary
 - (*In him we live and move and have our being* [17:28]),
 - and in a way that was familiar to them
 - (the Athenians would *spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new* [17:21]).
 - Unapologetic Explanation – Paul said, “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man... he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:23-25).
 - Sincere Warning – Paul concludes with the ultimatum, “[God] commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world” (Acts 17:30-31).

¹ See *Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible* at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/17-30.htm> ; See also *Bengel’s Gnomon of the New Testament* (especially look for commentary on Acts:17:30) at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/bengel/acts/17.htm>

31a because he – [God] – has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man – [Jesus] – whom he has appointed...

- **Christ is the appointed man who will judge with the authority of God.**
 - **John 5:21-27** – Jesus said, “21 as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also **the Son gives life to whom he will**. 22 The Father judges no one, but has **given all judgment to the Son**, 23 that **all may honor the Son**, just as they honor the Father.... 25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God**, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted **the Son also to have life in himself**. 27 And he has **given him authority to execute judgment**, because he is the Son of Man.”
 - Jesus Christ commanded His followers to “preach” and “testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:39-42).
 - Jesus Christ is the judge of the “living and the dead” (2 Tim. 4:1)
 - Sinners are “storing up wrath” that will be delivered on the day of judgment (Rom. 2:5), and the One through or by whom God judges men is Jesus Christ (Rom. 2:16).
 - **Matthew 25:31-34, 41** – Jesus said, “31 When the **Son of Man comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, then **he will sit on his glorious throne**. 32 **Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another** as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 **Then the King will say** to those on his right, ‘**Come, you who are blessed by my Father**, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...’ 41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘**Depart from me, you cursed**, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’”

31b and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

- **We may be assured of whom Jesus is, because He has been ultimately vindicated and glorified by God the Father.**
 - Jesus, then, will be the judge against all those who have rejected Him – the message of His salvation.
 - **Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:3** – “1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the

glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.... 2:3 [H]ow shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard..."

- Jesus will also be the judge of all those who have trusted Him to save them.
 - Matthew 25:34 - "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....'"
 - The very same One who bore your sins upon the cross will finally sit as your judge at the end of time... There can be no greater comfort than to know that He who loves you beyond compare will certainly judge you according to His overwhelming grace. Has He not already declared, "It is finished" and "You are Mine"?

Takeaway

"Paul came to that outcropping of rock fifty yards from the Parthenon and stood on the Areopagus and announced the greatest crisis that any human being will ever face. What do you do with Jesus?"

That is the greatest question you and I will never deal with. It is the question that determines ultimately where we live, where we move, and where we will have our being. It is not an optional matter. God simply will not tolerate our rejection of His only begotten Son.

The truth is on a collision course with what we hear every day in secular America, which tells us there are many ways to God: it does not matter to God which one you choose, so long as you are religious. If that is true, then what the Bible teaches is false. If all religions are equally good, then one stands out as terribly bad, and that is Christianity, because Christianity has no time for pluralism. It sees one way only. Now, that is downright un-American...

[Y]ou have to make a decision where your allegiance is going to be - with the secular culture or with the One whom God sent into the world as your Redeemer."²

² Sproul, R. C. *Acts*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.