

# Afraid of Judgment?

OR

## The Judge is Your Friend!

Harvey Tweegles was a good man. “Honest Harv,” his friends called him. Religion was a large part of Harv’s life. He never missed church, he sang in the choir, gave generous offerings, and tried to participate in all the outreach activities. “Yes,” thought Harv as he prepared for bed one night after attending prayer meeting, “I have covered all the bases!”

“It had been an interesting meeting,” Harv thought as he was dozing off to sleep, “all about the end of time and judgment...”

Suddenly, he was aware of a great throng of people standing around him. “Where am I?” he whispered to a woman standing nearby.

“Judgment,” she answered quietly, pointing to the scene which was unfolding.

A huge crowd of people from every nation and race was gathered together in a mammoth amphitheater. Far below, seated on a throne, was the most awesome and commanding figure Harv had ever seen. His voice thundered as He spoke, and Harv clearly heard Him say, “What is *your* plea?”

One by one, the people in the crowd stepped before the throne, spoke with the One who sat upon it, then joined one of the groups forming on either side of the throne. It was passed among the onlookers that those on the right side were to receive a glorious reward. Those on the left side were uneasy. Despair seemed to hang like a gloomy cloud above their heads.

Suddenly, Harv realized that he was being ushered before the throne. As he stood in awe before the powerful Being seated there, he became aware that he was to *make his own plea*. “I ... I would like to join those on your right,” he stammered.

“And what claim do you have on that inheritance?” came the reply.

Harv found himself saying something vaguely familiar, “Oh, I am acquainted with you. I have eaten and drunk in your presence and you have taught in our streets. Besides that I have prophesied in your name ... in your name I have cast out devils, and I have done many wonderful works. Lord, isn’t that enough?”

Harv trembled as he heard the reply, “Depart from me, you evil-doer. Hear what you have said, ‘I have done many wonderful works. I am all right. Therefore I am entitled to eternal life.’ You see, Harvey, *I* does not count here. The problem is that I do not *know* you and *you do not know Me*.”

As Harv was being escorted toward the group on the left, he heard his neighbor’s name called. Turning, he paused to hear Fred’s reply.

“Oh, I have not done anything at all to deserve the company of those on your right,” Fred answered, “I am a sinner dependent only on the grace of the Lord. I was wretched and completely a captive and in such bondage that nobody but the Lord Himself could deliver me. I was so blind that no one but Jesus could cause me to see. All the claim that I have is what *He has done for me*. When in my wretchedness I cried, He delivered me. When in my misery I needed comfort, He comforted me. When in my poverty I begged, He gave me riches. When in my helplessness I asked Him to show me the way, He led me all the way. When I was so naked that no one could clothe me, He gave me this garment I have on. All that I have to present as any claim that would cause me to enter is just what He has done for me.”

Then a voice like sweetest music came from the throne as the Heavenly Being answered, “We are perfectly satisfied with you. The deliverance that you obtained from your wretchedness is that which My Son has accomplished. He *did* give you that garment you are wearing. He has woven it and it is all divine. Yes! You may enter into eternal life.”

Harv woke with a start. “What a dream,” he thought, “it seemed real enough to have actually happened.” All at once the awful significance of the dream struck him. It was true. “I do not know Jesus as my personal Friend and Savior.” Slipping from his bed, Harv knelt and breathed a prayer of thankfulness that there was still time to really get to know Him.

*“I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the person whose ears are open to My words [who listens to My message] and believes and trusts in and clings to and relies on Him Who sent Me has (possess now) eternal life. And he does not come into judgment [does not incur sentence of judgment, will not come under condemnation], but he has already passed over out of death into life.” John 5:24 (The Amplified Bible)*

# Afraid of Judgment?

*A student was startled to hear voices as he walked past a cemetery late one night. On the other side of a hedge two bums, whom he could not see, were dividing a number of walnuts they had gathered. "One for you and one for me," they kept saying, "One for you and one for me." Listening from behind the hedge, his imagination got the best of him and he wondered if the Devil and God were dividing the souls of the dead. Suddenly his heart skipped a beat and he took off like a frightened bird as one of the voices said, "Don't forget about that one over by the bushes."*

*In this lesson we will take a look at the judgment and how Jesus plans to take care of His friends when that time comes.*

1. What does the Bible teach about the reality of a final judgment?

Psalms 9:7-8

Psalms 96:13

Ecclesiastes 12:14

Matthew 25:31-33

Revelation 20:11-12

2. Who is the Judge? Look for the answer in the following texts:

John 5:22

John 5:26-27

Romans 2:16

Romans 14:10-12

3. Who is the prosecuting attorney, the one who accuses?

Revelation 12:10

If your Bible has a marginal reference, you will find that it refers you to Zechariah 3:1-2 and Job 1:9-10. Check those verses out to come up with the accuser's name.

The book of Job makes it clear that Satan has accused God of being unfair. He claims that Christians only serve and obey God for the blessings they hope to receive. God's claim is that His government is based on love and that His followers serve and obey Him as a natural response to His love.

4. What does the judgment appear to be based on?

Matthew 25:34-46

Revelation 22:12

- 2 Corinthians 5:10

5. What do our actions say about God?

Isaiah 60:21

Matthew 5:16

John 15:1-8 (esp. v. 8)

*Good fruit is a reflection on the Gardener. The reason this is so, is that the Gardener (not the vines or branches) is the one responsible for the health of the garden. Those who visit beautiful Butchart Gardens in British Columbia, marvel and comment on the botanical and artistic touch of those responsible for the beautiful combinations of living color and design. They don't praise the flowers for arranging themselves in such an attractive manner. Someone cares for the garden and it shows!*

6. What sort of care and responsibility does Jesus take for his friends?

Philippians 1:6

Philippians 1:11

In earlier lessons, we discovered that we can't produce obedience, but God promises to take care of that for those who continue to maintain a friendship relationship with Him. Since that is true, our actions reveal whether or not we know Jesus.

7. According to Romans 8:1, If you are in a relationship with Jesus, what is your standing with God?
8. Lessons 1 & 8 referred to three "judgment stories" Jesus told (see Matthew 7:21-23; 25:1-12 and Luke 13:24-30). In each case, what do those who were "let in" have in common?
9. At the judgment, what actually happens to those who have a relationship with Jesus? Consider John 5:24.

The good news about the judgment is that if you know Jesus:

He promises to take care of the changes needed in our lives (fruit)!

He assures you that you are not condemned!

He sees to it that you don't even face the judgment!

# Daily Bites

In Romans 8:31 it says: “If God is for us, who can be against us!” The passages you will be examining in John this week illustrate the truth of this text. They focus on what Jesus did in order to make your eternity secure. Jesus risked hell (eternal separation from God) rather than live without you! You can face the judgment with confidence because of what your Friend, Jesus, did. Remember, you are spending time with Jesus to get to know Him as a friend, not just to put in time!

*Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: “Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together...”

*Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.

*Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.

*Summarize the passage* - in your own words.

*Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?

*Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

## Passages for This Week

**John 18:1-11**

**John 19:16-27**

**John 19:28-37**

**John 19:38-42**

**John 20:1-9**

**John 20:10-18**

**John 20:19-23**

# Good News

Tom was not an ordinary criminal, he was as bad as they come. But he had been caught. Now he sat in prison thinking desperately of escape or suicide. Neither was possible. He was too closely guarded. The future looked black. He was at the end of his rope.

Then one day a prison official came to Tom's cell and said, "Tom, a lawyer has been assigned to your case and he is the best lawyer in the whole world." Tom knew there must be a catch somewhere. The official continued, "The prosecuting attorney has also been assigned and he's the best prosecuting attorney in the world."

The next day a quiet sort of gentleman came to Tom's cell and knocked. Tom looked up startled, "You've got the key, man," he said. "Why knock?"

"I only go where I'm invited," replied the visitor.

"Well come in," Tom said. "I wasn't going anywhere."

The man entered the cell. "I'm a lawyer," he said. "I understand you're looking for a lawyer to take your case."

"Yes," said Tom. "It's about time they finally sent me someone. Tell me about yourself. I hear you're supposed to be good."

"Well," said the lawyer, "I have some good news for you and bad news. The good news is that I've never lost a case. If you place yourself in my hands, I can guarantee the outcome."

"The bad news is the price, right?" said Tom. "OK, lay it on me. How much will it cost?"

"It's free," said the lawyer.

"Hey, I don't need your charity," said Tom stiffly. "Get me out of here and I *will* pay for it!"

The lawyer smiled kindly, "If you want my help, you must accept it as a gift. It is totally and completely free."

Tom was silent for a few minutes and then asked, "Are there any other conditions?"

"I have some more good news and bad news," the lawyer said. "The good news is that all you have to do, if you want me to take your case, is just ask me. I'll take it immediately. The bad news is you'll have to plead guilty."

"Guilty!" interrupted Tom, "But how can you help me if I plead guilty?"

"I have some bad news for you and some good news," said the lawyer. "The bad news is that if you plead guilty, you'll be convicted. And, if you don't plead guilty, there is enough evidence to convict you anyway. Either way you'll get the death sentence."

"Then why even have a trial?" said Tom.

"You've forgotten that I have some good news," said the lawyer. "I'm willing to take your sentence and let you go free."

"I can't let *you* pay for *my* crimes!" cried Tom.

"But I already have paid," replied the lawyer. "If you'll accept my substitution in your behalf, it's yours."

A turmoil of thoughts whirled in Tom's brain. At last he spoke, "I'm interested, but are there any other conditions?"

"Yes," said the lawyer with a smile. "You and I must become friends and spend time together. As our friendship grows, you'll become more like me and less like a criminal."

"Wow!" exclaimed Tom. "Who wouldn't want a friend like you? That sounds wonderful! I accept! Is there anything else I

# Good News

should know?"

"One final thing," said the lawyer. "I have one last bit of good news and bad news for you."

Tom smiled. "Give me the bad news first and get it over with, although all of a sudden it doesn't seem as though any of your bad news has been that bad!"

The lawyer smiled too. "All right. The bad news is that we have set the date for your trial."

"Why, that's not bad news at all," exclaimed Tom. "With a lawyer like you, do you think I would want to stay here in this place forever and never even have my case come to court?!? Your good news will have to be pretty good to out do that."

The lawyer looked into Tom's eyes for a moment before he said gently, "The good news is this: When you come to trial, I will not only be your lawyer. I will be your judge as well."

Do you know your *friend*, Jesus? ... the Judge!

.

# Good News

**Psalms 9:7-8** “He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.”

**Psalms 96:13** “He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.”

**Ecclesiastes 12:14** “For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”

**Matthew 25:31-33\*** “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

**Revelation 20:11-12\*** “I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

**John 5:22** “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.”

**John 5:26-27** “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”

**Romans 2:16** “...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

**Romans 14:10-12** “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

**Revelation 12:10\*** “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.’”

**Zechariah 3:1-2** “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?””

**Job 1:9-10\*** “‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’ Satan replied. ‘Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.’”

**Matthew 25:34-46** “Lack of space prevents including this text. Please read it from your Bible.”

**Revelation 22:12** “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

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

**Isaiah 60:21** “Also your people shall all be righteous; They shall inherit the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified.”

**Matthew 5:16** “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

**John 15:8** “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

**Philippians 1:6\*** “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

**Philippians 1:11** “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

**Romans 8:1** “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

**Matthew 7:21-23; 25:1-12 and Luke 13:24-30** - Because of space, these texts have not been included.

**John 5:24^** “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

*(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)*

*\* New International Version*

*^ New Revised Standard Version*

# Good News