

49. The Savior or the Judge

September 11, 2011

Last time I was in a court was a couple of years ago. I was selected as a reserve member of the federal grand jury. It means that I was a stand by for a year in case one of the grand jury members was no longer available to perform his or her civic duty.

The federal judge who was sitting at his bench which was raised at least three feet above the floor was very meticulous about what he wanted and the whole process was very impressive. I sure didn't want to cross that judge.

I was glad that I was not tried in that federal court room as a defendant for any reason, rather I was a member of the grand jury that determines whether there is enough evidence for a trial.

Spiritually, I also am glad that I don't have to face the Ultimate Judge of the universe at the Great White Throne Judgment, because the same Judge who would have judged my eternal life in future, had become my Savior and Lord in 1987. I no longer call Him as my Judge, rather my Savior and my God. Because He paid for my sin with His atoning sacrifice that I don't have to face Him as a guilty one, but a sinner who was forgiven by Him.

This morning we are eavesdropping on Jesus' last public teaching. Again, He extends His invitation to the unbelievers once more before it became a command from Him.

A. TIME LIMIT

John 12:35-36 Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

I am sure that you have as well, I have encountered many unbelievers who told me that he was not ready to become a Christian yet, because in his opinion, that decision just have to wait until he has all the fun or he is about to kick the bucket, then, only then, he would make that decision, rather reluctantly.

Their idea of "I-will-do-it-later" is totally unreasonable and impossible. How do they know when they are going to die? Ask the 2977 people who got killed during the 9/11 disaster ten years ago. Did they not think that they had a full life ahead? I am sure that they did. No one can be absolutely sure how long he or she is going to live. The majority of us assume and hope that we are going to live until our really, really old age even though we have no guarantee from the Lord.

If you are one of those who think that you will live forever, think again. What Jesus is telling us is that while you have a chance to make the most important choice in your life – where to spend your eternal life by receiving Jesus into your hearts or rejecting Him, you need to make the right choice today, not later.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

In other words, once an unbeliever passes that day of grace of God on earth, he or she is done, literally. There is no turning back, no purgatory, no reincarnation much to New Age guru Shirley MacLaine's surprise.

By a simple step of faith, unbelievers can pass from spiritual darkness into the light of salvation in Christ Jesus.

B. EXTREME DANGER IN UNBELIEF

John 12:37-41 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, 38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 39 Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." 41 These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

By reading this portion of the Scriptures out of context, a person can come up with a twisted conclusion: God doesn't want people to be saved, because He blinds their spiritual eyes from seeing the truth and hardens their hearts from knowing the truth." I can just imagine how liberal media would love to use these verses to distort what Christ said.

Please allow me to explain, it is not like you guys have a whole lot of choices at this point: Let me start with a question that someone might ask – "Why would the loving and gracious God harden people's heart and blind their spiritual eyes for no reason? Is He some sort of sick psychopathic big guy upstairs?" First of all, never, ever call God "The big guy upstairs," because it is disrespectful. Secondly, He definitely does not and He is not.

From v35-49 of chapter 12, we find the key word 'believe' nine times. In spite of all the clear evidence that was presented to them by Jesus Himself, the nation Israel would not believe. They had heard message after message from the lips of Jesus and seen the miracles that occurred at the commands of Him, and yet they would not believe in Him.

In case you didn't know, the four Gospels record that Jesus performed 34 miracles, ranging from turning regular water to the finest wine, to raising dead Lazarus out of his grave.

Listen, when a person starts to resist the Light of the world, Jesus, something begins to change within him; and he comes to the place where he cannot believe because he no longer cares about God and His truth. There is a fancy theological term for this – "Judicial Blindness." God permits blindness to come over the spiritual eyes of the people who do not take the truth of God seriously.

You may remember several verses that mentioned this phrase "He has hardened their hearts" from the Book of Exodus as well.

Exodus 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

The Pharaoh had seen enough miracles of God of Israel, ranging from frogs everywhere in Egypt to all the first born in Egypt getting killed.

Like the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the people of Israel rejected the Lord and His truth so many times, they no longer cared about Him. For the lack of the translation of the full meaning, you can say that He CONFIRMED their decisions because in God's infinite wisdom He knew that they would not change their minds to their last breath.

The Greek word for 'hardened' is "poroo" with the definition of "to harden by covering with a callus; to make the heart dull."

C. GOD'S SECRET AGENTS?

John 12:42-43 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The teacher of Scripture of Israel, Nicodemus whom we met in chapter 3 and Joseph of Arimathea belonged to this group initially, but eventually came out openly in their confession of Christ in John 19. In the early church, there were numbers of Pharisees and even priests who became believers of Christ according to the Book of Acts.

It was the old struggle between the glory of God and the praise of men. It was a costly thing to be excommunicated during that time, and these "secret believers" wanted the best of both worlds.

Today these two verses cover many believers in Christ. There are some Christians who think that they are God's secret agents. They don't want anyone, especially unbelievers, around them to know about their new-found faith in Christ because they don't want to be rejected and isolated by those people.

Is it possible to be a secret follower of Jesus? Only temporarily; either the secrecy will cancel out the belief, or the belief will cancel out the secrecy.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.

You might be one of these God's secret agents now. You became a Christian, you love Him and you want to follow Him, yet you don't want to lose your friends, because you know that they are going to ridicule your faith in Jesus Christ and call you names.

Listen to me carefully. If they are your true friends, they would be happy for your faith in God. If they make fun of you and look down on you because of your faith, they are not your true friends. You don't need them. Turn your heart and look at the true eternal friend, His name is Jesus. He loves you so much that He took your sins upon Himself and died for you; in result, you will never experience the eternal death in hell.

Do you want friends with skin, too? Look around, we are your friends. My wife Karen and I are your friends. We are going to spend eternity with you, you might as well get used to being with us.

Better to fear God and go to heaven than to fear men and go to hell!

D. THE SAVIOR AND THE JUDGE

John 12:44-50 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

When you walk into your dark home at night, what is the first thing you do? Of course, you turn the light on, because you really cannot do much in darkness. Human beings can never become what God wants him or her to become until they step into the Light of the World, Jesus. Modern medical science might be able to add a few more years to your life, but only Jesus Christ can add life into your years. Without Him, we are nothing.

I want all of you to pay attention to v47. This speaks about the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry two thousand years ago. He came to this world as the Savior to save the wretches like us. But He is going to come back as the Judge in the future to judge the ones who reject Him according to Revelation chapter 19. To receive Jesus Christ is to avoid His judgment; to avoid Jesus Christ is to receive His judgment.

When our elder Jerry Hamby over there was a kid during the time when the earth was crusting, his mama would call him from her kitchen, "Jerry!" If he didn't reply and continued on whatever he was doing, her second calling would be a little bit louder and in higher pitch. Again if he didn't pay attention to her, the third time of her call would be something like this, "Jerry Russell Hamby" in staccato. Now, he'd better answer his mama, otherwise he was gonna have a face to face time with his daddy.

Our God started with His gracious invitations for mankind, but they became stern commands to people to repent from their sins and to turn to Him. By obeying His invitation and command, we get to accomplish our purpose on this earth and have truly fulfilled life.

Acts 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

In v47-49, we find the word 'judge' four times. Our Lord would rather save us than judge us. It is an incredible fact that the unbeliever will face at the judgment every bit of Scripture he has ever read or heard according to v48. The very Word that he rejects becomes his judge. Why? Because the written Word points to the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

If a man refused to hear and obey the teaching of Jesus Christ through the Bible, he sentences himself.

Hebrews 12:25-26 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not

escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."

The Americans, not like the people of the third world, have very little excuse not to know about Jesus Christ, the only one true God, because there are plenty of opportunities to hear about them from just about every which way. If you are not a born-again Christian and you are in this church, you have even less excuse not to make the right decision to follow God rather than the praise of men.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Unbelief is progressive. The more a person rejects Jesus, the harder one's heart becomes against Him.

2) The danger of believing in Jesus Christ can bring compromise because many of us want to be accepted by men more than God. Remember, Jesus didn't compromise His love for you on the cross.