

Who do You Say that I Am? Part III

Christ the Judge

Sermon

Hobart, November 17th, 2013

Devonport, November 23rd, 2013

Launceston, November 24th, 2013

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John 3:16-21

¹⁶ “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

¹⁸ “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.

²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants. ^{*}”

^{*} Or *can see God at work in what he is doing.*

INTRODUCTION:

I. MOST CIVILISED SOCIETIES HAVE HAD SOME SORT OF JUDICIARY

A. PEOPLE APPOINTED TO BE JUDGES

1. To make decisions about disputes, about what is right and wrong, to punish the guilty and protect the innocent

B. SOME HAVE BEEN GOOD, SOME NOT SO

1. In fact some who were particularly severe were labelled "the hanging judge"
 - a) Referring to the fact they were severe and merciless in handing down their punishments

C. IRONICALLY AUSTRALIA'S FIRST SO CALLED "HANGING JUDGE" WAS ALSO ONE OF OUR FIRST AND MOST FAMOUS CLERGYMEN

1. Samuel Marsden came to NSW in 1794;
 - a) After a time he became a leading influence in the new colony, including being one of the most innovative and productive farmers
 - b) Early on he was appointed a judge;
2. A.T. Yarwood says about Marsden's judicial appointment;

Clerical justices were common in England at the time but his magisterial posts kept him occupied with heavy temporal duties, and they also further estranged him as a clergyman from the convicts to whom he dispensed justice.

No aspects of Marsden's activities did more harm to his pastoral work or to his historical character in Australia than his reputation for extreme severity as a magistrate. This was firmly set by September 1800 when, in the course of an inquiry into a suspected Irish uprising, Judge Advocate **Richard Atkins** and Marsden had a suspect flogged mercilessly in the hope of securing information about hidden weapons. This particular

action was scarcely defensible, but Marsden was not the only magistrate who ordered the infliction of illegal punishments.

His general severity can be attributed to his high-mindedness, his passionate detestation of sin and his conviction that Parramatta was such a sink of iniquity that morality could be preserved only by the most rigorous disciplinary measures. For all that, the flogging parson, like the hanging judge, is commonly regarded as an unattractive character.¹

3. Clearly he was an influential and formative figure in the early colony
4. But Marsden's theology would seem to have led him to take a severe and sometimes cruel approach to his role of judge

II. TODAY;

A. WE ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TO LOOK AT THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTION FOR OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH; WHO IS JESUS?

1. We are looking at particular aspects of who Jesus is, and who he isn't
2. Examining some of the popular religious images people have had of Christ down through the years
 - a) And seeking to gain a clearer image of him, and thus a clearer view of God
 - b) Remembering that we are made in his image, and called to share in his divine nature, not to make him in our image
 - c) And not to be made in our own image, or in the image of the world around us

B. SO FAR WE HAVE LOOKED AT:

1. *The Divine Jesus* and how important it is to see Jesus as also fully human, and not to see Jesus as separated and remote from our humanity, suffering and weaknesses.

¹A. T. Yarwood, *Marsden, Samuel (1765–1838)*, published in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 2, (MUP), 1967, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/marsden-samuel-2433>

- a) And to see life and the world around us as he does, in love and as one of us, not only in his life on earth, but as the risen, ascended glorified man that he continues to be, as well as in terms of his divinity as the Son of God.

2. *Jesus as Conqueror*

- a) We looked at how seeing Jesus as a conqueror can lead us flying Jesus as a battle flag, focus on fighting for causes, and thinking God is always on our side against others,
- b) We then looked at how Jesus came as one of us, to conquer all that stands against us, and between us and our being in intimate, everlasting relationship with God
- c) And how he won victory through loving sacrifice and surrender, and God's restoring, resurrecting love and power

C. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT A THIRD COMMONLY ADOPTED PICTURE OF JESUS;

- 1. The image and impression of *Jesus as Judge*
- 2. We are going to look at what is helpful about this concept, and what may be misleading about it

D. PRAYER

BODY:

III. THE *JUDGING JESUS*

A. CLEARLY ONE OF JESUS' ROLES AND OFFICES IS JUDGE OF ALL THINGS

- 1. This fits in with what we discussed last time about his titles as King of Kings and Lord of Lords

B. THE FATHER RAISED JESUS AND BROUGHT HIM TO HIS RIGHT HAND IN POWER AND GLORY

- 1. And gave him all authority and power and judgment.

C. IT IS IMPORTANT THEN, TO UNDERSTAND

1. The type of judgment Jesus renders, and the task and purpose of His role as Judge
2. Because as we have been seeing, we tend to look at such matters with entrenched preconceptions that too often distort and hinder our understanding
3. Douglas John Hall;

Somehow, the old hellfire and brimstone theology of our puritan past has never quite disappeared, and today ...the picture of Christ as an impartial or even a vindictive judge has again found foothold amongst impressive numbers of Christians on this continent. [North America]

Individuals have frequently suffered under the impossible moral demands of those whose "Jesus" is all law and no gospel.

Indeed, whole classes and categories of human beings--including women--have never been able to measure up to the model of strong, masculine super humanity that Jesus, alas, has been caused to stand for.²

4. Our desire to be right, and be treated right,
 - a) Our desire to see ourselves justified and vindicated and those who we see as bad and wrong suitably condemned and punished,
 - b) leads too many of us Christians, to have a vindictive and legalistic view of judgment, justice and Jesus' role as judge
5. Many Christians especially from the 1800's and through to the present, have tended to see prophecy and God's future actions towards the world in terms of Christ's violent, punishing and destructive judgment

6. Hall suggests that among many;

...there lurks the same suspicion that we noticed in the first image of Christ--the suspicion that the world itself is irredeemable; that all that God could do by way of redemption is to rescue a few "souls" out of it, like brands snatched from the burning.

So in our time we have witnessed an exceptional re-emergence of that Christian dispensationalism which conceives of history as running

² Douglas John Hall, *We Would See Jesus*

inevitably towards the final dispensation--the world annihilation that is the prerequisite for ultimate salvation.

This is already "The Late, Great Planet Earth," and we are "The Terminal Generation" (Hal Linsey).

...Jesus condemns this world to destruction, but he offers "the raptured" the same things they've always dreamt of--on the other side.³

7. The desire to punish and get even, to destroy all the wicked and end up with just a chosen few who have earned their way into the good books, is not what Godly judgment is about at all

D. WE ALWAYS NEED TO SEE SUCH MATTERS IN TERMS OF "WHO GOD IS" AND HIS OVERALL NATURE, MIND AND WILL

1. Jesus is God born human, the Son of God become one of us,
 2. What we see in his life reveals God's nature and heart of love
 3. By reading the Gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, we see the true nature and purpose of God's judgment, and what Jesus came to do by way of judgment then, and what he will complete fully in the future
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³ Hall

IV. JOHN 3:1-21

3 There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ² After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you."

1. Nicodemus and the Jewish religious leaders were in the dark about God's judgment on what is right and wrong, what is good and true

a) But Nicodemus physically and spiritually comes out of the dark to the light that is Jesus

³ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again,^{*} you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

2. Jesus' judgment is that Nicodemus would not be able to understand God and his way of truth and light unless he was transformed by being born again

3. God's purpose in sending Jesus, as is brought out in a moment, was to free people from darkness and life apart from God, from sin, from death and doom which comes when we judge what is right and wrong by ourselves, as Adam and Eve chose to do by taking of the tree of knowledge, rather than putting their trust in God and taking the tree of life

a) Their judgment was off, it led to their downfall and to pain, suffering and all types of injustice, and to death

⁴ "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

⁵ Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.^{*} ⁶ Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.^{*}

^{*} Or *born from above*; also in 3:7.

^{*} Or *and spirit*. The Greek word for *Spirit* can also be translated *wind*; see 3:8.

^{*} Greek *what is born of the Spirit is spirit*.

4. All of us need to be reborn through Jesus and the Spirit so we can live our lives in his light, according to his judgments about life, rather than our own
 - a) To live by the Spirit, not by the old way of rules and laws and human nature
5. Jesus' death is the final judgment against sin and life apart from God
6. His resurrection gives us new life in the family kingdom of God
 - a) It rebirths us, transforms us, sets us right, heals us, cleans us up, forgives us
 - b) It places us in relationship with God as his adopted children, no longer orphans, living separate and contrary to God's love
 - c) And setting relationships right is what Jesus' judgment is all about

⁷ So don't be surprised when I say, 'You* must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

⁹ "How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? ¹¹ I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony.

7. This is courtroom terminology
 - a) Testimony has been given, but the religious leaders didn't accept it or use it in making their judgments about Jesus
 - b) Because their view of God was distorted, they failed to judge that Jesus was God's Son, and that he was doing God's will and teaching and carrying out God's judgments

¹² But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man* has come down from heaven.

* The Greek word for *you* is plural; also in 3:12.

8. Jesus is heaven's representative, the Son of God with us

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.*

9. Judgment is about setting things right

- a) Deciding what is wrong and fixing it
- b) Dealing with evil and the doers of evil
- c) And rescuing, saving, justifying and healing the oppressed, the victims of evil

10. As lost children God sent Jesus to rescue us

- a) To set things right again in our lives
 - (1) **To forgive us, correct us and change us**
 - (2) **To heal us and give us a new beginning**
 - (3) **To place us in his family, and lead us in his life of love, peace and blessings**

11. We have this new life with God when we are reborn in and through Jesus

- a) When his life and faith become ours
- b) When we trust in his taking our place in death, and accepting his resurrection
- c) And trust in his relationship beside the Father which he shares with us

12. In all this we trust in God's method of judging and dealing with our problems

- a) In his way of removing our guilt, in raising us out of our old estranged life, to reunite us and make us at one with him as he always intended
- b) We can't achieve this on our own
 - (1) **Our religious efforts and judgments and endeavours at setting things right always fail**

* Some manuscripts add *who lives in heaven*. "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

* Or *everyone who believes will have eternal life in him*.

B. THIS LEADS TO THE MOST WELL KNOWN VERSE IN SCRIPTURE

¹⁶ “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

1. So in context we can see that this is about God’s judgment
 - a) About God’s way of setting wrong things right
 - b) Making things as they were intended at the beginning—good!
 - c) Dealing with the ultimate enemy and destroyer—death
 - d) Through Jesus, giving us eternal life with him

¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

C. THIS SHOW UNEQUIVOCALLY WHAT GOD’S JUDGMENT IS ALL ABOUT, ITS PURPOSE AND ITS RESULT

1. It is not as is poisonously espoused too often, to condemn and punish, but to save and rescue through Jesus Christ
2. That is how Jesus judges.
 - a) His greatest act of judgment is his act of loving sacrifice that takes on all that is wrong, absorbs it all into himself
 - b) Buries it
 - c) And emerges victorious over it, with all that are his born into the life God intended from the beginning
3. Bible Knowledge Commentary on vs 17.

God’s purpose in sending **His Son** is salvation (**to save**), not damnation (**to condemn**). **God** does **not** delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23, 32). He desires that everyone be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).⁴

⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (282). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁸ “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.

4. If we trust we are not judged as fallen and guilty and condemned

- a) If we refuse to trust, then we fail to avail ourselves of rescue
- b) So the plain fact is that we remain on our own, unsaved, in the dark
- c) That is the clear judgment and truth of the situation, but it is not what God intends – and his love never wanes!

²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.*”

5. God has designed everything so that we might be rescued and born into the new life of freedom from being alone—and living as if God doesn’t care—from disbelieving him and his judgment and salvation

V. FINALLY LET’S LOOK AT JOHN 5:

A. THIS REINFORCES WHAT WE READ IN JOHN 3, AND ALSO SHOWS ANOTHER SIDE OF JESUS’ JUDGMENT

John 5:16-47

Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God

¹⁶ So the Jewish leaders began harassing* Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules.

1. They are judging Jesus according to law, religious rules and moral standards

* Or can see God at work in what he is doing.

* Or persecuting.

¹⁷ But Jesus replied, "My Father is always working, and so am I." ¹⁸ So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

¹⁹ So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.

²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. ²¹ For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. ²² In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, ²³ so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him.

²⁴ "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

2. This again is God's judgment, and Jesus role and action as our judge who sets things right for us

²⁵ "And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live. ²⁶ The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son.

²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man.* ²⁸ Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, ²⁹ and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment. ³⁰ I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgment is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will.

B. THROUGHOUT THIS PASSAGE WE SEE THERE IS ALSO THE DISCERNMENT AND PRONOUNCEMENTS OF TRUTH SIDE OF JUDGMENT

1. We see a battle over what is right and good between Jesus and the religious leaders

*"Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

2. And in this process Jesus judges their views and actions as contrary to God's

Witnesses to Jesus

³¹ "If I were to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be valid. ³² But someone else is also testifying about me, and I assure you that everything he says about me is true. ³³ In fact, you sent investigators to listen to John the Baptist, and his testimony about me was true.

3. They were seeking to investigate what was true about Jesus, to make a judgment about his bonafides, whether he was of God or not.

a) They should have accepted the truthfulness of John the Baptist's testimony

³⁴ Of course, I have no need of human witnesses, but I say these things so you might be saved.

4. Jesus desire is to speak true judgments so they might believe and be saved

a) This reinforces the fact that both his corrective judgments and his saving judgments are **all designed to set relationships right; to lead people to trust in him and be saved**

³⁵ John was like a burning and shining lamp, and you were excited for a while about his message. ³⁶ But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, ³⁸ and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you.

³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

⁴¹ "Your approval means nothing to me, ⁴² because I know you don't have God's love within you.

C. THIS IS THE KEY TO TRUE JUDGMENT, AND WHAT MAKES JESUS THE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

1. His judgment is true because he has God's love within him
 - a) It is love that underlies Godly judgment
 - b) Any judgment that is not based on God as the God of love is not Godly judgment
2. This reinforces the truth that we always need to start with "who God is", and the fact that God is love, and all he does is based on his love

⁴³ For I have come to you in my Father's name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them. ⁴⁴ No wonder you can't believe! For you gladly honor each other, but you don't care about the honor that comes from the one who alone is God.*

⁴⁵ "Yet it isn't I who will accuse you before the Father. Moses will accuse you! Yes, Moses, in whom you put your hopes.

3. Jesus doesn't even need to judge them as disbelieving and wrong
 - a) They are already shown to be wrong by Moses

⁴⁶ If you really believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you don't believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

* Some manuscripts read *from the only One*.

CONCLUSION:

A. DOUGLAS JOHN HALL

No one familiar with the Scriptures can dispense with the thought of divine judgment.

But when the religious determine that the judgment is its own end and not a means to something else, they have altogether forgotten the Jesus who came, not to destroy, but to give life more abundantly (John 10:10).⁵

B. SO WHEN WE PICTURE JESUS AS JUDGE

1. let us keep in mind that he always acts in love

- a) He is always seeking to turn people around and bring them to trust in him
- b) Always seeking to heal our hearts, our minds and our lives
- c) Particularly our relationship with the Father and with one another

2. This is how Jesus judges

- a) This is how we are being called to judge as well
- b) To always be seeking to participate in Jesus' work of setting the world right
- c) Of healing and restoring that which is broken
- d) Certainly not seeking angrily and vindictively to condemn, punish and destroy like a "hanging judge"

C. SO YET AGAIN WE SEE HOW JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER, WHO GOD REALLY IS

1. And the life we are called to participate in now, and forever

⁵ Douglas John Hall, *We Would See Jesus*

D. PRAYER

May the Lord bless us and keep us

May the Lord turn his face to shine upon us

And may he continually turn our faces more and more to him

And bring us and all the world peace

Through Jesus the loving Judge

And the Holy Spirit, our helper and comforter
