

Revival or Judgment—Is God About to Move Positively or Negatively?

I was first introduced to the concept that God only moves and functions positively when I was planting my first church in Manitou Springs, Colorado. What I was hearing was a strange doctrine that didn't set well in my spirit, but I endeavored to allow God to change my theology if I was unbalanced or incorrect even slightly.

Was it possible that God was more relaxed and carefree than I understood Him to be? Was His method of kingdom advance simply a revelation of how good He is?

I noticed quickly that those who were buying into this philosophy were living without a contending spirit. If the unction for prayer was there, it was mostly to enjoy God's presence (which I highly value, of course) but not to intercede with passion and fire. Desire for experience was there, but fervency in mission was lacking.

The second time I dealt with this fast-growing doctrine that exclusively promotes God's happy nature was in Detroit.

After a season of truly amazing encounters in the glory of God, I was stricken by the Lord with a severe, weighty message—that season needed to give way to a focus on the blood, the cross, brokenness and repentance. Those who were sold out to a culture of positivity found themselves outside of the "happy sauce" they so enjoyed as they were being called into the depths of God's heart.

Those depths include clearer revelations of God's mission, of His response to the infection of evil in the land, the cost of His Son's brutal slaughter on the cross, the horror of hell

and the disease of apathy in the church. The reaction of many was to pull back and dream of the good old days as if God had somehow left the room. He never left. He actually intensified and the way He manifested changed. He was inviting us into the deep realities of the age. He was looking for a remnant army to carry this light but troubling burden.

While I always want to grow in understanding God's more positive characteristics, I can't allow myself to stop my learning at that point. I crave to understand God as He is—in fullness—whether it's positive, negative, encouraging or troubling. Further, I can't presume He will only move on the earth in a positive fashion. Honestly, you have to be quite lacking in biblical knowledge to presume that He would be restricted to functioning in that manner. God always has, and still does, move in both revival and judgment. They aren't competing ideas. They are intentionally intertwined. They go together.

“But the Lord remains forever; He has established His throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness; He will give judgment to the peoples in uprightness” (Ps. 9:7-8).

We Should Be Praying for Judgment

“Then the trees of the forest will ring out before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever” (1 Chr. 16:33-34).

We should be singing for joy regarding His judgment!

Let me make something clear right up front—judgment isn't the result of an evil God doing evil things. Judgment is a vehicle used by a loving God to positively impact those who will respond (though the impact will certainly be negative for the

rebellious). Judgment is an act of deep love. It has to be, as God is love just as He is the Judge. He doesn't lay down love when He moves in judgment and He doesn't forsake justice when He pours out His love.

We as end-time Christians should be ardent supporters of God's judgment, of His act of love.

In America, we have a justice system. It's a good one. I can't imagine anybody reading this wanting to eliminate it in favor of anarchy. When someone murders, that person should be tried and judged—not because we hate that person but because we want them restored *and* because we love the others who are in harm's way if they were to go free. We agree with the judge's verdict of guilty and with the sentence of prison for the sake of both the murderer and the general public.

If we can trust our nation's justice system, even with all of its inadequacies, we certainly can trust the judgment of a perfect, loving God, right?

People need to know this! It's critical that we preach about Jesus as the Judge. We can't eliminate that from the gospel message!

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

I often pray that God will judge me. I actually crave it! I trust Him. He loves me, and I know that. He's not evil. He's not out to destroy me. I need His judgment in my life so any and every issue of my heart is dealt with. I can't let it fester. It needs to be addressed so I can repent and shift into a life of greater consecration. I know a life that's compromised by sin can do great damage to me and others. God's loving judgment in my life will resolve that.

“Now all has been heard. Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl. 12:13-14).

The whole duty of man is to:

1. Fear God
2. Keep His commandments

Do we understand how critical both fear of the Lord and obedience are?

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall be punished with eternal destruction, isolated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

If we don't obey, judgment will come to us. God will deal with our nation in similar fashion, and we should embrace that—because the judgment that comes *after* we leave the earth is permanent. Our fate is sealed.

“As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this comes the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

This should result in the fear of the Lord returning in full force to the church!

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

The Bible tells us that judgment begins in the house of God.

This is good, not bad—though the results can be quite terrible if repentance isn't the result. If we plan on continuing in sin, I can understand why we'd be anti-judgment. That makes sense. However, whether you are opposed to judgment or not makes no difference—it will come to you if you don't repent.

Those in the church are most definitely at great risk if repentance doesn't come. Hell is their future.

“For if we willfully continue to sin after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26-27).

Are you starting to see why judgment now is so glorious? It's a part of God's divine plan of redemption. In fact, we as Christians are called to enact judgment in certain situations.

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more the things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

For example, if someone continues in sexual sin the church leadership is to turn them over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh! When is the last time you saw this happen in a church? Why is such harsh judgment necessary? The Bible tells us its so their spirits might be saved.

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles, that a man has his father's wife. But you are arrogant. Instead you should have mourned, so that he who has done this deed might be removed from among you. For indeed, though absent in body but present in spirit, I have already,

as if I were present, judged him who has done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you are assembled, along with my spirit, in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

Additionally, we can’t even eat with supposed Christians who are sexually immoral. That type of judgment is mandated. We have no option but to exercise it.

“But I have written to you not to keep company with any man who is called a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. Do not even eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?” (1 Cor. 5:11-12).

Again, the reason we do this is not because we hate people—but because we love them! Judgment now is restorative. The final judgment is not. Judgment now should be celebrated and welcomed as a way to avoid eternal judgment in the end.

“So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:49-50).

Evil Must Be Addressed

When revival comes, that will be the first invitation to the world to surrender their lives fully to Jesus. Those who reject that call will be visited by more direct, negative, persuasive measures—judgment. Again, this is an act of love that will encourage the greatest number of people to respond to God as possible.

Completely different from judgment, however, is God's wrath. This is what we should be trembling about. When we understand the potential of God's wrath, and that those who are not in Christ are living under threat of the outpouring of His wrath every second of their lives, judgment will actually be cried out for! We need God's wise justice to deal with every situation on the planet so His wrath hits as few people as possible.

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36).

"His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean His floor and gather His wheat into the granary, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12).

"Whoever will not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town" (Matt. 10:14-15).

God is much more severe than we often realize! We must address the evil in the land, and trusting both revival and God's judgment are necessary. If judgment doesn't come, more people will go to hell, and evil will overtake the earth. It's as simple as that.

We can't fall in love with a God who manifests positively and reject Him when He manifests in judgment or wrath.

"But because of your hardness and impenitent heart, you are storing up treasures of wrath against yourself on the day of wrath when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed" (Rom. 2:5).

In fact, I believe the rejection of God's negative traits, of His judgment and wrath, is setting up millions for destruction. How many current Christians will reject God when they see Him destroying a fourth and then a third of the earth? How many cursed God when He brought the floods of death to the entire world, save eight?

"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, 'Come!' So I looked, and there was a pale horse, and the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed him. Power over a fourth of the earth was given to them, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:7-8).

"A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues—by the fire and by the smoke and by the brimstone, which came out of their mouths" (Rev. 9:18).

"So God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I will destroy them with the earth'" (Gen. 6:13).

How will you react when a holy and just God moves in severe and fearful ways? When God moves negatively, will you presume it's actually Satan doing it? Or, will fear of the Lord result? This is a critical question!

"So God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I will destroy them with the earth" (Acts 5:10-11).

Will you commit the sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit by attributing an act of God to Satan or will true fear of the Lord come upon you?

"But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal condemnation.' For they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:29-30).

Where Does This Leave Us?

Christian friend, we should be sober, but we can be at peace!

If we are obedient and serving God in love, the Bible is clear—we are in a very good place!

“We know that we live in Him, and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way God’s love is perfected in us, so that we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. Whoever fears is not perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:13-20).

There is no fear of eternal judgment if we are in the love of God.

However, please take note of the warning that follows in that passage:

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? We have this commandment from Him: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21).

Your theology doesn’t save you. Your surrender to Jesus and obedience to Him does. We can attempt to rest on the

encouragement in the passage shared above in 1 John 4 but actually be unsaved and unprotected from final judgment if we are haters and liars. If we say we love God but hate another, we can't presume to be exempt from judgment—temporal or eternal.

This is why we must live our lives consecrated and surrendered, fueled by the supernatural grace, the power of God. If we do, God is well able to keep us.

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with rejoicing, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen” (Jude 1:24-25).

Jesus is coming soon as King and Judge. His Spirit is moving on the earth now. Judgment is here, and wrath is coming. Love will win, and our eternities hang in the balance. I encourage you to trust God's judgment in your life. Your eternity hangs in the balance.

“‘Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me to give to each one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.’ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Outside are dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices a lie. ‘I, Jesus, have sent My angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.’ The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ Let him who hears say, ‘Come.’ Let him who is thirsty come. Let him who desires take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:12-17).