

The Bible Warns About the Dangers of Judging ... But

Judgment is a part of grace. When you experience true grace with repentance, you don't have to fear biblical judgment. "Don't judge me," has to be the most oft-used response when it comes to Christianity and any behavior the Bible refers to as sinful. I have jokingly said, "'Don't judge me' is the Facebook Christian's favorite verse to partially quote."

Most people don't understand Jesus, grace or judgment, so they end up patching together their partial understandings to create their own version of the truth. It is true the Bible warns of the dangers of judging. Matthew 7:1 says, "Judge not, that you be not judged." But you can't stop there; you must continue to read the teaching of Jesus. Matthew 7:2 says, "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured again for you." Jesus is instructing us to not judge impartially or hypocritically, but too many believers have interpreted this to mean don't judge at all.

In the book of Jonah, God sent a prophet named Jonah to the wicked city of Nineveh. Like Sodom, the sin of Nineveh had reached the heavens, so God sent Jonah to the city to warn the people of the wrath and judgment that was coming to them. "The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment (preach against it, cry out) against it because I have seen how wicked its people are" (Jonah 1:1-2, NLT).

God instructed Jonah to cry out, to preach against and warn the people of the judgment of God that was coming to them. If this happened today, many Christians on social media would tell Jonah to stop judging people. They would tell Jonah to be more loving. They would tell Jonah, "He who is without sin,

cast the first stone.”

The mature Christian understands that judgment is a reality for all mankind, and God had His servants, prophets, apostles, disciples and even Jesus preach repentance and judgment. God did this not because He desires judgment, but because He desires mercy and grace. Jonah 3:10 says, “When God saw their actions, that they turned from their evil ways, He changed His mind about the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” God had Jonah preach judgment because He intended grace. God intends grace and mercy for us. Psalm 103:8 says, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.”

We don’t need to fear judgment when we have the fear of the Lord. We need to seek to understand judgment and why God set up His government with judges. Originally, God set up His government to be run through His chosen people (the Israelites), particularly through judges and priests. After Moses and Joshua led the children of Israel out of slavery and into the promised land and established their nation, the people quickly fell away from God. Judges 2:10 says, “That entire generation passed away, and after them grew up a generation who did not know the Lord or the deeds that He had done for Israel.”

The new generation didn’t know God or follow Him. They began to compromise and live sinful lives, and were soon overcome by grief and trouble (Judges 2:14-15). This was a period of anarchy and confusion for the Israelites.

Originally, God had the priest and judges govern and lead His chosen people. The priests instructed Israel on worship and keeping the law. The judges were to turn the hearts of the people wholeheartedly to God. The judges saved Israel from the consequences of their sin. Even the word “judge” in the Hebrew is *šōp_eṭîm*, from which it derives its name, one who “saved.”

In the book of Judges, whenever a judge died, the people compromised with sin and sexuality and abandoned their spiritual calling to adopt the customs and behavior of those around them. The people grew tired of being judged. They didn't care for God's system of priests and judges, and they wanted a king (1 Sam. 8:5-9).

Samuel, with words from God, went on to warn the children of Israel of all the hardships and consequences they would face as a result of their refusal to be judged. Samuel gave them a stern warning, but they refused to listen. They didn't want to be judged. They wanted a king to rule over them. The Lord spoke to my spirit as I read these Bible verses. He said, "If you won't be judged, you will be ruled." How true has that become? Today, Christians reject godly judging, reject accountability and reject instructions. Like the children of Israel, we want to do what we think is right in our own eyes and ignore the Word of God, which was written according to what is right in His eyes. Let's learn from the mistakes of the children of Israel, embrace the fear of the Lord, and seek to understand the purpose of judgment and what the Bible teaches on judging.

Landon Schott and his wife, Heather, founded The Rev Ministries in 2008 and launched a 24/7 online youth & young adult network dedicated to turning the heart of a generation to Jesus through Christ-centered media. Landon received his Bachelor Of Arts from Trinity Theological Seminary and authored Jezebel: The Witch Is Back, a spiritual warfare book. His new book Gay Awareness is set to be released March of 2016. Connect with Landon on Instagram or Twitter @LandonSchott