

The Justice of Yahweh

Happy Sabbath, everyone.

Last week, our topic was called “The Judgment of Yahweh,” in which we examined the process of the universal judgment. We saw that, while human beings are being judged on the basis of their faith, and rewarded according to their works, (Phil 3:9, Mat 16:27) the true judgment that is taking place is Yahweh submitting Himself to the judgment of His creatures.

Although Yah has supreme authority over all creation, He willingly permits evil to persist, and delays the punishment of sinners, so that we who stand as witnesses will know the difference between wickedness and holiness... and those who are saved are they who stand on the side of the holy. In the end, all will be compelled by the glory of Yah to declare the truth, and He tells us of that day, saying, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” (Isa 45:23)

What I would like to do this week is to examine this aspect of the judgment, that while our Father is longsuffering, and awaits His people to choose Him, so that they may serve Him with love unfeigned, and obedience unforced, there must and will come a day when He will deal with sin as it ought to be dealt with. In that day, those who have slighted His mercy, and turned away from His patience, will undergo the consequences of their judgment. This is usually what is called the judgment of Yah, but it is really the working-out of the sinners’ own judgment of Him that brings forth the fire of destruction.

One of the most essential aspects of our Father’s character is the expression of Agape love in all of His thoughts and actions. Yah IS Love, as the Scriptures tell us, (1John 4:8) and therefore there is nothing of our Creator that is not of love. This is “easy” for the mind of man to see when we discuss His mercy, longsuffering, and goodness, but we must also understand that this same love, in no less degree, is expressed in what we describe as His wrath, and punishment, and vengeance.

This is an aspect of the Father’s character that is hardly hidden in the Scriptures. We read, for example, that “the Lord Yahshua shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not Yahweh, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Yahshua the Messiah; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” (2Th 1:7-9)

And we say, “This is also love.” Of course, Seventh Day Adventists have a much easier time explaining the justice of Yahweh in terms of love than most denominations that hold to the natural immortality of the soul, and therefore an eternally burning hell...

We must be able to understand for ourselves, and explain to others, that Yah's "wrath" is also a perfect manifestation of love to the universe.

We know the passage that reads, "And Yahweh passed by before [Moses], and proclaimed, 'Yahweh, Yahweh Elohim, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.'" (Exo 34:6, 7)

For a long time, I read that verse incorrectly. I suspect many people do... seeing it to say, "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty."

In other words (as I read it then) even though Yah is merciful, and forgives those who ask, those who are guilty and will not ask for forgiveness will not be cleared, and will be destroyed by what follows in the rest of that passage. Now, while it seems to work out this way in practice, this does not properly encompass all that takes place in the judgment. Our Father has mercy for all, and has forgiven everyone his or her sin, whether they have asked for it or not. However, the passage above says, "and that will by no means clear the guilty," not, "but that will by no means clear the guilty."

There is no line between the "forgiven" and the "guilty." There is no difference between them. All have received the mercy of our Father, because Yahshua died for all, not only those who receive Him. Now, does that mean that everyone will ultimately be saved? No... we know that few find the way of life. What does this mean, then? Is it possible to be both forgiven AND guilty? It certainly is.

You may recall that Yahshua prayed for the very men who nailed Him to the cross, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We would not suggest by any means that a prayer of the Son to the Father would ever go un-answered. When Yahshua died, His prayer for the forgiveness of mankind was granted... even for those men. But unless those individuals were converted, their eyes will be among the ones who are raised to see the Son of Yah returning in judgment.

We read, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11)

There is an interesting passage from the Book of Numbers, a critical one for the Biblical understanding of sin, which reads, "And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance, and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto Yahweh, and their sin offering before Yahweh, for their ignorance. And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them, seeing all the people were in ignorance." (Num 15:25, 26)

The difference between human beings, who can be redeemed, and fallen angels who cannot, is the matter of ignorance. Angels fell knowing full well the goodness of Yah's character – it is a “mystery of iniquity.” Humans are born in ignorance, and bearing within their flesh the legacy of sin. To one degree or another, the sins that human beings commit are in ignorance; as the Spirit of Prophecy writings tell us, even most professed Christians do not truly understand the “sinfulness of sin.”

Our Father has taken pity on us for these reasons, and has paid an infinite cost through the death of His Son to redeem us from our natural inheritance, and has forgiven each one for his or her transgressions. But if that is so, and if every thought and action of our Father is Love continually, how is it that all are not saved?

It is because forgiveness does not save. We have discussed this idea briefly in other studies, but here I would like to put it in the context of the final judgment. The Scriptures never tell us, “The forgiven overcome death, and are given life everlasting.” Those who receive everlasting life are called the “redeemed,” and we must know that to “redeem” means “to take” or “to buy back.” One definition I found reads, “to make (something that is bad, unpleasant, etc.) better or more acceptable.” I can appreciate that last one quite a bit, and it relates to the idea of “taking” and “buying back” very well in a religious context.

In forgiving all of mankind, Yahweh has paid the “price,” the everlasting price, for their redemption. But at that point, no “taking” has been done; no “exchange” has been made. Because He will not use force, Yahweh must get agreement from His creatures before He can change them. Here we see a consistency with what we examined last time. Yah has every “right” to destroy all who offend Him, wiping them from existence. Instead, He receives all accusations. He bears all slander and controversy, and says to His creatures, “Judge me according to my character and my works.”

Similarly, Yah has created all, and then paid again for their redemption from death. He has every “right” to strip away all the evil from their souls and take unto Himself what He has made, but instead He gives freedom even from the compulsion of love, allowing the wicked to hide their true feelings behind justification, and to bury their consciences to suit their greed.

All are forgiven, as it is written, but only those who agree with the “exchange” will be redeemed. Only those who say, with sincerity and an understanding of their true condition, “Save me,” will benefit from the forgiveness that we have been given, and our characters will be “taken” to our Father, and made pleasant. The soul is converted, loving what it once hated, and hating what it once loved... and we are redeemed.

But we know that the wicked suffer. Paul tells us that all creation “groans” because of its separation from the Almighty. Even the worst of sinners, who believes himself above such “superstitions” as an all-loving Creator, or who wrings as much pleasure from the flesh as he can in the limited time he expects to live, even such as this are “groaning” in spirit because of

unrighteousness. Most will not admit it. Most will not permit themselves to recognize the agony of spirit that sin causes, running from distraction to diversion in the attempt to stave off hopelessness, and many succeed for a time...

But in the light of Yah's glory, truth is revealed. Illusions are stripped away, and the heart's thoughts and intentions are laid bare. It is in this light that even Lucifer will say, "My sentence is just." The justice of Yahweh is love, because it allows those who are suffering to realize (for the first time, in some cases) that they ARE suffering, and that this suffering is at an end.

Now, those who believe in everlasting torment in hell cannot truly know our Father. They can know OF Him, they can learn about Him... but while we know His character is to end suffering for His creation, many believe that He will permit suffering to continue without end for all eternity. This is not merely wrong; it is the very opposite of the way that our Father concludes the matter of iniquity.

Until these grossly deceived ones understand that the second death is "death" indeed, they cannot truly understand Yah's character. In their relationship with Him, so badly misunderstanding His justice, they must ignore what they cannot comprehend, justifying their ignorance (like any sinner) by saying, "God's will is above our understanding or judgment."

It is true that our Father's thoughts are higher than ours, and his ways far above ours. However, the way in which He deals with sin is something that He has deliberately made as transparent as possible, showing us by symbol, by parable, and by plain doctrine. He has made the closing of the work of iniquity as simple as possible, and then He calls us near and says, "Examine this." If we are not satisfied with Yah's justice, if we cannot truly agree with His judgment, then we are none of His, and we can never be perfected according to the likeness of His Son if we do not see love in even the "flaming, fiery vengeance" with which the Son shall return.

Yahweh is love, and it is our great joy to tell people about Him. In sharing the Good News of salvation, we are really telling people about the price that Yah has paid for them, for their forgiveness – already. We are saying to them, "You are forgiven!" We need not seek after forgiveness as the heathen do. We do not need to convince Yahshua to intercede for us. It is written that He "ever liveth" to do this on our behalf in the Tabernacle, day and night without ceasing, until He comes again as King. All we must do is accept the forgiveness He offers... and some will end there, saying, "Just know you are forgiven, and all is done."

No, but we must not be only "the forgiven," we must be "the redeemed." We must be "the exchanged," having sold away our old lives, and received instead the life, the new creature, the very life of Yahshua, who knew no sin, and through whom we shall never more know sin. The universe, which was invaded by transgression, must be exchanged for one in which no transgression will ever rise again. And this, brethren, is something to anticipate eagerly.

The Justice of Yahweh is Love. Sin must be judged, and destroyed. Those who choose sin, judging themselves thereby, are destroyed along with it, because sin must not be allowed to remain in the universe, not in the fallen angels, and not in rebellious humanity. It is the judgment of Yahweh, the mercy of Yahweh that saves individuals. But it is the justice of Yahweh, which destroys sin, that saves all creation. Again I say, the Judgment of Yahweh saves individuals, and the Justice of Yahweh saves the universe.

Because of the character of our loving Father in Heaven, both justice and mercy must be present. If Yah were all justice, sinners would immediately be destroyed, and individuals who might have repented would already be lost. If Yah were all mercy, sinners might be saved in the course of time, but sin would remain in the universe eternally, and creation would continue to suffer its presence indefinitely. Both are love, both are necessary for love to endure forever, and because Yah is love we may rejoice both in this day's forgiveness, and in the promise of everlasting life free from sin in the world to come.

Creation 7th day Adventism
flyinglecreature@hotmail.com