

Cosmic Condemnation

HN/SS 18/12/05am

Reading: Genesis 3, Mark 12:1-27, Isaiah 45:22f

Study Text: John 12:31

Sing Psalms: 126, 119:137-142, 110:1-5, 48:1-4

Again and again the owner of the vineyard sent servants to collect the rent from his tenants. But each time they beat the servants and some they killed. Eventually the owner sent his one and only son, thinking that out of respect for him they would obey his son. But these wicked people took the son and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard, thinking that the place would now be theirs.

But was it? Nothing could have been further from the truth. Killing the son made only one thing certain – their condemnation. The owner would cast them out and destroy them and give the vineyard to others (Mark 12).

This parable was about to become reality. God the Father sent his Son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus had come to Jerusalem to reclaim ‘my Father’s house’, and all that rightly belonged to God – including the Scriptures and the chosen people. The Jews would take the Son and kill him, thinking they had removed the last and greatest threat to their rule in this place. But their plan would backfire. *Now is the judgment of this world* said Jesus. *Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.* Not the Son but Satan and his wicked cohorts would be cast out.

After his troubled soul was settled Jesus went on to explain the nature of his impending death and the consequences of his death – consequences for the cosmos, the whole world.

Condemnation of This World

Jesus said he did not come to judge the world but to save the world (12:47). Indeed he would draw all peoples to himself (12:32). But from the very beginning Jesus caused division. There were those who believed in him and those who refused to believe. This happened almost every time he spoke or performed a miracle.

Jesus came as the light into a dark world, a world under condemnation because of sin. Those who love the darkness because their deeds are evil hate the light and want to extinguish it (3:19f). They are condemned already because they do not believe in Jesus.

The death of Jesus would seal the destiny of all who rejected him – just as it did for Judas who betrayed him, and also Herod who mocked him. *The time has come for judgment to begin in the house of God* said Peter (I Peter 4:17). All who had a hand in putting Jesus to death were held responsible. Indeed the temple was destroyed and the people scattered within forty years of his death.

Now is the judgment of this world. ‘But the judgment of God will be at the Last Day’ you say. ‘It will be when Jesus returns, not now at his crucifixion!’ That is true – the Day of Judgment is yet to come, but in a sense it has already come, for the basis of the final judgment will be a person’s response to the death of Jesus. Many are condemned already and waiting on death row as it were. If they are physically dead their destiny is fixed. If they are physically alive they can still be saved, depending on their response to the Cross of Jesus.

God previously overlooked people’s ignorance (Acts 17). In his forbearance he passed over sins that were previously committed (Romans 3:25). But no longer! Jesus has come and died, the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Now God commands all people to repent. The death of Jesus Christ is the basis of all judgment.

Do you believe he died bearing your sins? That is the one question you and every person born into this world will have to answer on Judgment Day. If you believe in Jesus you will not be condemned – you have already passed from death to life (5:24).

Cast Out

Now the ruler of this world will be cast out (12:31). Who is the ruler of this world? Who holds power over every human being born into this world? Satan. Satan tricked Eve causing her and Adam to sin and be cast out of the Garden. They became slaves to sin and to Satan. But God said to the serpent *I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed, and he shall bruise your head and you shall crush his heel* (Genesis 3:15). Satan’s victory would not last forever.

Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, resisted Satan’s temptations. He continued to confront the power of Satan throughout his ministry. He began his ministry declaring *the kingdom of God is at hand*. Wherever he went he was confronted by disease, demon possessed souls and death, all the result of sin and tools by which Satan rules. With divine power he cast out the demons, and his disciples also cast them out in the name of Jesus. Jesus rejoiced when his disciples returned from a mission declaring *Lord even the demons submit to us in your name* (Luke 10:17). He said *I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven*.

Now the ruler of this world is cast out. Jesus was about to die at the hands of wicked men, men whose father was the devil or Satan. How could his death be construed as bruising Satan’s head? How could his death be tied in with Satan being cast out? This is the most profound twist of plans and purposes in the history of the world. The apparent triumph of Satan turned out to be his defeat.

Just as the wicked tenants thought – Ah ha, we have got rid of the son so everything will now be ours, so Satan thought he had won the final victory and consolidated his rule when he had Jesus killed. But it was victory for Jesus that was forever sealed at the Cross. The death of Jesus opened the way for the redemption of men and women. Jesus could deliver people from the kingdom of Satan and bring them into the kingdom of God. Satan was rendered impotent before the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The ruler Satan has been cast out and Jesus enthroned in his place. The sovereign God of creation has always had ultimate control of course. But it was only through the sacrifice of Jesus that sin was dealt with and we could be redeemed.

Satan is still active in the world (I Peter 5:8). He has power over men, but not Jesus Christ and those who belong to Jesus. Jesus has power to deliver you from the rule of Satan.

*In the name of Jesus we have the victory,
in the name of Jesus Satan will have to flee,
when we stand in the name Jesus tell me who can stand before
in the mighty name of Jesus we have the victory.*

Satan will be fully and finally vanquished when Jesus comes again (Revelation 20)

Crucifixion

If Satan was being cast out, Jesus was being lifted up or exalted. And being lifted up he would draw all peoples to himself. Jesus would be the focus for all humanity. It may not look like this with so few in the churches today but be assured all will have to give account to him one day. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.

Lifted up or exaltation includes the Cross. John makes it clear in v.33 that this is what Jesus meant. Jesus had to endure the Cross before he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). Being lifted up on a Cross was a peculiarly Roman method of execution. Jews stoned people to death. They had been trying to stone Jesus for a long time. But Jesus would not die by stoning. In speaking to Nicodemus (3:13) and again to the Jews (8:28) Jesus said *the Son of Man must be lifted up*. They had no idea what he meant. How would Jesus die at the hands of the Romans?

The Cross was meant to be a very humiliating way to die – and indeed it was. The condemned person was lifted up for all to see, to mock and to freely abuse. Such public execution was for all to contemplate. Yet in the purposes of God the lifting up of Jesus would not only be humiliation but exaltation also.

Raised high above the earth, people would look at him in wonder and awe. A thief on a cross beside him would say ‘Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom’. A Roman centurion would glorify God saying ‘surely this was a righteous man’. A crowd would gaze at Jesus on the Cross beating their breasts in anguish (Luke 23).

In the midst of the camp Moses lifted up a bronze snake and all who looked to it were saved from death. Jesus likened his crucifixion to this act of Moses. In being lifted up he would save all who looked to him.

I will draw all peoples to myself – what did Jesus mean? He certainly did not mean that every individual would be saved! Jesus had previously said no individual could come to him unless the Father draws him (6:44). Here the drawing is not so specific. It is the drawing of all without

distinction, not all without exception. Gentile as well as Jew, people from all nations, tribes and tongues will be drawn to Jesus on the Cross. This is the view of most scholars.

But looking further ahead to the glorious return of Jesus on the clouds of heaven and to the Day of Judgment, we know that *every knee will bow before him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father* (Philippians 2). All will acknowledge Christ is King. Some will do so gladly, some will do so ruefully. But all creation will bow before the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords.

His hour had come. But it was not just his hour – it would be the most decisive hour in the history of the world. The cosmic rule of Satan would be overthrown and Jesus would be lifted up via the Cross to rule for evermore. He declared judgment upon this world – judgment based upon belief in his sacrificial death and resurrection.

We live in a troubled world. Riots, terrorism and war cause many to fear. What does the future hold? Who is going to rule? Do you find comfort in knowing that Jesus now rules, that Satan and his followers were defeated at the Cross. Christ is King. In him we have the victory.

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