

JEREMIAH 31:34; JOHN 5:22 HAS GOD REALLY FORGOTTEN OUR SINS?

“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”¹

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.”

Her name was Dorothy. When Lynda and I first began our walk in the Faith, Dorothy and Ben, her husband encouraged us in the Faith. On several occasions, Dorothy told of her struggles in her early Christian walk. She knew she had been a terrible sinner, but she had heard of the grace of God in Christ the Lord and received Him as Master over her life.

However, faith that Jesus was the Son of God and that He died because of her sin brought her little peace. She worried that perhaps her sins were too great, or that she was unworthy of such mercy, or that perhaps her sins weren't truly forgiven. It didn't help that about her were friends and family members who held that a person could be condemned after being saved. Well-meaning family members insisted that she had to “hold onto salvation,” and Dorothy knew that her faith was weak. The anguish of her soul was only intensified by an extended hospitalisation. And thus her torment continued until one day she reached a conclusion. In her words, “If God can't save me, I can't be saved; and worrying won't change anything. Jesus, here I am. It's your worry, now.” From that point, Dorothy was free of fear; she never again doubted that God had indeed redeemed her from her sins.

There is a clash between human experience and divine promise. God declares that He will forget the sin of those who are forgiven. Our experience informs us that forgetting is virtually impossible. Though details of past insults and slights may be blurred with time, we struggle to forget that we were hurt by the actions or words of others. Long after the injury was received we will remember that we were wounded.

Before moving into the message, let me caution that what is often done is precisely what has been suggested by the preceding words. We attempt to create God in our image, rather than accepting that we are created in the image of God. Because we cannot forget that we were wounded, we imagine that God must surely remember our sins. Perhaps we imagine that the sins of others are greater than ours, but we think God must remember our sin. Rather than relying on our experience, limited as it is, our appeal must be to God's Word.

THE DIVINE PROMISE — “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” God had said, “The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” [**JEREMIAH 31:31-34**].

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The promise that sin will both be forgiven and forgotten is addressed to those under the New Covenant. Vital to understanding the message is the knowledge that the New Covenant encompasses those who are of the Faith during this Age of Grace. This speaks of confidence that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is very God in human flesh, that He provided a sacrifice for sinful mankind, that He conquered death, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Listen to an extended recounting of the change God has implemented as He permitted the Old Covenant to pass away even as He instituted the New Covenant under which we now live. “The point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

“For he finds fault with them when he says:

‘Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand
to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.’

“In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” [**HEBREWS 8:1-13**].

Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant [see **HEBREWS 9:15; 12:24**]. This New Covenant assures those under that Covenant that they have an eternal inheritance, just as it written in the Word. Jesus the Lord “is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” [**HEBREWS 9:15-22**].

Therefore, the promise to forget sin is given only to those under the New Covenant. What was future at the time Jeremiah wrote is current in this present Age of Grace. There is a precious promise given to all who are under this Covenant of Grace. Paul has written of we who are in the Faith, “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” [**ROMANS 8:31-39**].

Who shall condemn? If Christ died for us and was raised for us; He shall not condemn those for whom He died. Thus, we conclude, that sin has been put away through the sacrifice of Jesus our Lord [**HEBREWS 9:26**].

JUDGEMENT LIES UNDER THE PURVIEW OF THE SON OF GOD — “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.” This raises a couple of vital questions: “Who judges sin?” and “What are the judgements to be rendered?” The first question needs but a moment, for it is addressed by the second of the texts chosen to address the question this evening. All judgement has been entrusted to the Son of God.

Let me emphasise this truth quickly and succinctly by referring to several passages. Jesus says in **JOHN 5:27**, The Father “has given [the Son] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.” Again, in **JOHN 9:39**, Jesus testifies, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”

Peter testified in **ACTS 10:42** that God “commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that [Jesus] is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.” Mankind must give an account for life to Him who is the author of life. But, what is this judgement?

DIVINE JUDGEMENTS FOUND IN THE WORD — Many times, you will hear an ill-informed speaker refer to “the Judgement.” Often, the one making that particular reference is operating under the assumption that all mankind must stand before God in one great singular assize. However, there are multiple judgements referenced in the Word of God.

There has already been one judgement: **SIN WAS JUDGED AT THE CROSS OF CHRIST**. There can be no doubt that sin is awful—it is an affront to Holy God. The evidence for this is that sin caused the death of the holy Son of God. He died, not because of His own sinfulness, but because of the sin of all mankind. This is the testimony Paul gives in the Second Corinthian letter, when he writes, “For our sake [God] made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:21].

It is written that Christ “has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” [HEBREWS 9:26-28].

The testimony of the Master Himself points to a judgement that leads to life when He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” [JOHN 5:24].

There awaits **THE JUDGEMENT OF THE NATIONS** over which the Master Himself shall preside. Throughout the days of the Great Tribulation, the earth and all who live in it will suffer terrible judgements poured out as mankind is brought to account. At the conclusion of those awful days, we read of yet another judgement. Jesus spoke of this judgement during the Olivet Discourse. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” [MATTHEW 25:31-46].

The nations—those individuals who survive the Great Tribulation—will be held to account for their life. They will give an account of whether they anticipated the return of the Master as revealed through their treatment of His people—the nation Israel. The storm clouds are even now gathering, presaging that dreadful judgement.

We are warned of **THE JUDGEMENT OF SINNERS** at the conclusion of the Millennium. Though sinners are now condemned, there awaits an awful judgement for all who are lost. How dark is that awful scene which John paints near the end of the Apocalypse. "I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" [**REVELATION 20:11-15**]. How awful to know that people we know, people with whom we work and with whom we speak each day, must hear those awful words, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness" [**MATTHEW 7:23**].

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT BEFORE THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST awaits the redeemed. The Apostle reminds us that "We must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" [**2 CORINTHIANS 5:10**]. I know that many people fear that judgement. However, it is not a judgement to find out whether we deserve salvation or not! That has already been settled at the cross! This is a judgement to determine rewards.

I have often taken comfort from the words of the Apostle. "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" [**1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15**].

Before the Judgement Seat of Christ, all that detracts from His glorious work will be removed so that only that which glorifies Him shall remain. All of this earth, all of the self-life, all of the exaltation of the self, shall be removed so that only that which glorifies the Son remains. For this reason, Paul appends this final note in that passage: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you" [**1 CORINTHIANS 3:16**]?

OUR PRESENT SITUATION AND THE JUDGEMENT WE SHALL FACE — The question that was posed is actually focused on believers. Here is the question again: "Has God really forgotten our sins?" Was I to rephrase the question, it would be, "For what, then, are we to be judged?" On the authority of God's Word, we are confident that God has truly forgotten the sin of those whom He has forgiven in Christ the Lord. Moreover, they shall never come into judgement for sin.

The judgement we anticipate is a judgement to reveal the perfection of His work in us. The wood of exaltation of self, the hay of acquisition of material things and the straw of friendships built on mere emotion rather than on Christ, will all be burned up. All that will remain is that which glorifies the Father, the efforts to honour the Master through declaring the message of life and the souls that are redeemed. All will persist eternally to the glory of the Son. Amen.