

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 2)

Christ's Approach to Sin

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Last in my sermon of this series, we saw that everyone has misconceptions about Jesus Christ. As we went through the gospels we saw that it began with the Magi and Herod; then there were His parents; then the townsfolk in Nazareth; then John the Baptist had doubts while in prison; His disciples could not quite figure Him out at various times; even His enemies did not understand Him at all; and down through history people have continued to misunderstand what Jesus Christ is really all about. And so, we live in a society with misconceptions about Jesus Christ through and through. Of course, before we were called into this church, we had misconceptions of our own about Him. We concluded that these misconceptions continue on today.

We do learn the truth, but we do not learn it fully; not all at once. It takes a long time for us to come out of what we were, and what we thought, or thought we knew. It takes a long time to learn the truth and apply it in our lives. So it takes a long time for us to get the true conception of Jesus Christ in our minds.

Really, we never fully get rid of some of the misconceptions that we have, because He is so great and complex, so righteous and far above us that we really cannot understand Him fully. But of course, these various opinions about Christ, and the things that He taught, have lead to disastrous false doctrines within Christianity and disastrous consequences from without.

We have brought some of these false doctrines into the church with us. Dr. Herman Hoeh said years ago, "Laodiceanism does not start in the church, but it is in the world, and we bring it from the world into the church." And so, it is the same thing with other false conceptions of Christ and false doctrines about what He taught.

But, if we allow these misconceptions to linger in us, if we allow them to fester within us, then they steer us off the path, and true knowledge of our Savior remains an elusive goal. We end up going away from Him, not toward Him.

We also saw that John 17:3 tells us plainly that eternal life is to know the Father and the Son. This encapsulates everything down to what our job is on this earth. We are always to seek Him, to come to know Him better, to learn His way more fully, and begin to incorporate those things into our lives; in this way, we approach closer and closer to the way that they are—the way they live.

In John 14:6 Jesus describes Himself as, "The Way, The Truth, and The Life." He is the way that we are supposed to go. He speaks the truth. He is the life that we are looking toward, and want to have. And, those three aspects encapsulates what we are trying to incorporate into our own lives—to follow His way; to believe and practice the truth; and to have eternal life like He lives.

God has called us into the church. It is His family that He has called us into. And families are alike. They have similar characteristics. They look alike, they think alike, they act alike, and even like the same jokes. They just do things that are the same. And so, He has given us a pattern in His Son, Jesus Christ, of the way that He wants His family to look, to act, and to be. And so, we have this sterling example in the perfect Jesus Christ.

That is why we are called Christians, because we are to follow Christ. He is the Archegos—the Forerunner—the Captain of our salvation—the Trailblazer. We follow Him through whatever path He has cut out for us. And we will reach that goal if we follow Him. But, if we have a wrong or inaccurate knowledge of Christ and His way of life and teachings, we will not end up with the character and image of the true Jesus stamped upon us.

So, following the pattern that He has set out in His Son, and following it as precisely as we can, is essential to getting the proper result. It is essential for reaching the goal that is set before us.

Turn to II Corinthians 11. We will begin some new material at this point.

We are going to be jumping into the middle of an argument that Paul is giving to the Corinthian church, and it actually began in II Corinthians 1 when it is mentioned that some are for Paul, while some are for Apollos, while some others are for Cephas, and still others are for Christ. And so, there was this rivalry—not in Paul's mind, or any of the other ministers, and certainly not in Christ's mind. But the people had been comparing the ministers, and some were saying, "Hey, I really love to listen to Apollos. He is quite the orator, and I just learn so much from Him." While, some liked Peter—maybe he was just bombastic, laying it out on the line very simply. And then there was Paul, who came up with all these twisted arguments (as some thought they were), scratching their heads and thinking, "What is he trying to tell us? This is awfully complex and complicated." And so, they were demeaning Paul in a way.

But Paul was the actual pastor of their church. He was the one in charge. And, he was

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arguing about his own authority. He had to say, "Look, this is what God has set up. I am not the best speaker, sure, but I have certain qualifications here." And so Paul is arguing for his authority. He did not need to, but he felt he had to show them who was boss in this case, because they were such a fractious group.

Now in this particular section, these first four verses of II Corinthians 11, Paul is making one point in particular.

II Corinthians 11:1 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.

Meaning, "Yeah, you put up with me. You like these other ones much better, but you put up with me."

But now, he starts saying why he may be better qualified, at least in one point.

II Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Now he was the one who had founded that congregation. He is the one who started that ball rolling. All of these other ministers were latecomers. Paul was saying, "I am like your mid-wife, or the match-maker here. I am the one who really cares how things go for you, and I want you to make it into the Kingdom of God because I have been with you from the very beginning.

II Corinthians 11:3-4 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

What Paul is saying is that the attitude they were expressing was leading them away from Christ. He points out the source of it all. Satan is the one causing all these divisions within the church, and Paul was afraid that their attitude about seeking a minister here, and a different minister there, and trying to find what they thought was the best for them, or whatever, accepting all ideas, and allowing everyone a fair hearing,

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was going to move them away from the simplicity that was in Christ.

Now, we think of simplicity in a different way than it is presented here in this passage. Simplicity, here, according to the best definition that I could find is, "full devotion."

"So that your minds may be corrupted from the full devotion that is in Christ."

He was saying that they were beginning to stray from a full understanding of the true Christ, and that is why he launches into these things about if someone else preaches another Jesus, a Jesus that is not quite true, then you may likely chase after this other Jesus and go further away from the truth of the gospel. "You may very well put up with it." Or, "You may endure them gladly," meaning that they would be happy to have these other people preaching another Jesus—if they continue on in the way that they have been. The Corinthians had been so accommodating to every point of view, that he felt that they were in danger of taking themselves right out of the church. That is how bad it had gotten, these schisms within the church, and their "open" minds.

Now, let us think about Corinth. Recall the series of sermons I did on *The Themes of I Corinthians* (2007, tape Numbers 815, 818, 823A, 825, 828, 831A, and 848). We saw the Corinthian church and the corrupt society of the city of Corinth; that they were a rather hedonistic bunch; the people had been called out of that. And so, the other Jesus that they would probably prefer would be one who was a bit more permissive, not so straight-laced, maybe lenient even—allowing them to do certain things that that mean old Paul would not let them do.

Paul was pretty hard on them about this. He saw them as a bunch of wild people who needed to be brought onto the reservation and changed. Sure, God had called them, but they were still out there in this culture; and they needed to learn God's way more fully, so they would act like true Christians, and not like Corinthians, who had the bad reputation throughout the whole Mediterranean region.

So as we see in I and II Corinthians, Paul lays it on them pretty hard. "Kick that guy out who is committing incest! And do it right now!" He gave them rather harsh exhortations. Some thought them as mean and punitive. "Paul, you come here and just flay us all the time for all these bad things!"

But from Paul's point of view, they were a sign of his deep love and concern for them. That is what he meant in verse 2, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy." He wanted them to make it into the Kingdom of God, and he was willing to do whatever it

took to make sure that they would conform to the image of Jesus Christ.

Now, from their perspective, it was tough—tough love. He felt it was just what was necessary. But you see, Paul did not do this because he was a mean person. Paul did not do this because he liked a bit of viciousness once in a while. No, Paul did it because he was reflecting on what Christ taught him. And if Christ had actually been among the Christians bodily like He had been with Paul and the disciples earlier, He, too, would have given them the same grief over those same sins and over their tolerance of them.

Remember, they wanted a Jesus who was easy on them, accommodating, lenient, and permissive. But the Jesus that Paul taught them, in order to counter their normal attitude, was one who was quite intolerant of sin. He had to swing them the other way.

Paul knew that Jesus as God did not abide sin.

Paul, in learning about Christ, had incorporated enough of Jesus' character and teaching into his own life and ministry that when Paul went to one of these wild Greek towns like Corinth, he followed the same pattern of godliness—the way of life—the teaching—the gospel—that Christ had.

There is another place where he told the hearers that he tried to be all things to all men. He tried to suit his style toward his audience. And in this case, he needed to bring them back from the edge of a very cataclysmic fall that they might have if they continued in their current way of life.

It is interesting that in I Corinthians 11:1 Paul very succinctly says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." So this was Paul's pattern for his ministry, especially in Corinth, teaching Jesus as a stern taskmaster against sin, because Paul wanted them to repent, and wanted them to live a godly life—the life of Christ Himself.

So, to reiterate my main point here in this introduction, any deviation in our conception of the true Jesus will skew both our doctrine and our practice of the truth. It might be small, but if we think of Jesus wrongly—a wrong understanding of the way that He would approach something—we will not come up with the right answer.

Now I know that this is difficult, I am not saying that we are going to be perfect in this life, but the more true our conception of Jesus Christ is, the more true our discernment and wisdom will be in handling various situations that arise.

Think of it this way in terms of following a pattern, an example, or a template. If a

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seamstress changes the pattern of a dress in some small way, the finished product will not quite look like what is on the outside of the package—or it will not fit as it should. It probably never does, because no one is perfect. But even so, it will not look like what is advertised on the outside of the package, because there has been an alteration.

If a baker confuses the measurements for salt and sugar in his cake, it cannot taste as it is supposed to. If a bomb squad member confuses his wires, it may well explode in his face. In the same way, worshipping and following the wrong Jesus can be just as dangerous—eternally it is more dangerous.

Today, we are going to continue in this short series, "Do You Recognize this Man?" And since this is the first Day of Unleavened Bread, we are going to concentrate on a very pertinent facet of His character—His approach to sin (which we have already started into a little bit).

Now, this is an especially vital point for us today because we actually are like Corinth. We live in a culture that has essentially slipped its moorings concerning God's law and sin. We probably do not think of ourselves to be as bad as Corinth, but I think that in some ways, we are probably worse. I do not know if this is totally true, maybe theirs was a bit more blatant, however there is a lot of blatant sin out there in the world today, and we have come out of that world, and we need to understand that Jesus Christ is against these sins.

But, this is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so turn back to Exodus 12. I am sure that most of you all know the basics of this season, but I want to read the scriptures to make sure we understand that this is why we are here today. And, this will lead into a discussion of sin.

Exodus 12:15 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

This goes to show you just how important removing sin [from your life] is, as well as keeping sin out.

Exodus 12:16 'On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be

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prepared by you.

So he gives us time to prepare a light meal. Eating is important in this context.

Exodus 12:17-20 'So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'

So, as is very plain to see, here, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to be observed as a memorial. This was given before it actually occurred, this coming out of Egypt, and for us we observe it as a memorial looking back on the time that God brought the Israelites out of that oppressive environment of Egypt. Egypt is a symbol of the sinful, anti-God world and culture. And the Israelites were essentially powerless to bring themselves out from it.

So, God was the One who had to stretch out His mighty hand and arm, and bring them out by His own power. And He led them out by the hand of Moses.

And of course, last night, the Night to be Much Observed is one of those clues that we have that it was God watching over Israel that allowed them to come out. It was His night of observation, He watching over them as they walked out of the land. And just as He watches over us, as we walk out of a very sinful world, controlled by Satan the Devil in the background. And of course, our human nature plays along quite happily unless something intervenes in our lives to bring us out of that. And so, we see the parallel between God working in the life of Israel, to bring them freedom from oppression, and into their own land—the Promised Land—and, ourselves whom God plucks out of the world and puts on the path through a wilderness to the Kingdom of God. And of course, for us, He brings us out of sin, and as we go through the wilderness, He purges us from those sins through various experiences.

So, God wants us to take special care to think about our lives at this time of the year, to

remember His mighty hand and outstretched arm as it worked in our own lives. He was the One who provided the way of escape from the clutches of Satan the Devil, from this present evil world, as Paul says, and the terribly destructive effects of sin. It was He who did it; because, before, we were ignorant of the true God. We may have thought we were seeking Him, but it really was another God, not the truth, because our misconceptions were affecting us.

And so, His intervention in our lives did something to our minds to turn us about and begin to seek Him and repent. And so, every year we have to think this through once again. He tells us to rededicate ourselves to the fight against sin, because it is never going to really be over as long as we are in this human flesh. Our flesh is too weak. Our minds are too weak to fully put it off. Though we want to put it off; we want to live righteously; we want to live without sin; we want to be pure in every way; our frame is just not made that way. It would take total concentration all the time. So I guess it could be done, since Jesus Christ did it, but He had the Holy Spirit without measure, and He was God in the flesh. So, He could do it, but we cannot. I hate to say it, but we cannot do it. And that is why it is a constant struggle to put it out, to recognize it. We have been too far corrupted in our lives before God reached in and called us for us to ever become perfect. We are already tainted.

And even though Christ's blood covers our sins, we have got all of this history behind us, all this baggage and bad habits that we keep slipping back into. Therefore, we have the Passover every year to remind us that Christ's blood covers us. And then we have the Day of Unleavened Bread to remind us that this fight against sin is going on, and just like He did for Israel, God is going to give us the power. He will stretch out His mighty hand and arm in order to bring us out and keep bringing us out, and to also push us all the way through the wilderness so that we get to the Promised Land. He is with us all the way, but there is quite a bit that we must do. We must cooperate with Him, we have to search the sin out, and we have to dig it out and put it out; and of course, He is assisting us all the while. But, He wants us every year to remember what He did for the Israelites and what He continues to do for us.

So, He wants us to rededicate ourselves at this time of year to the fight against sin, and all of its forms, so that we wage total war against this very corrosive, corrupting enemy—sin.

And, He wants us to carry the battle to the very heart of the problem.

It is kind of like the leavening that we put out. It is kind of physical. We can do it, and we can think that we have done our job, but that is just a symbol.

God wants us to reach in to where the sin begins, and clean that area up, which we will get to today. We want to remove it so far away from us that there is no trace of it left and nothing is left to surge back and infect us again.

Please turn I Corinthians 5. This is where Paul "yelled" at them.

I Corinthians 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

In other words, if we do not get it all out, there is going to be a small bit there that will grow back, and pretty soon, you are back to the same old problem again.

I Corinthians 5:7-8 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I want to emphasize the word "purge." This word in Greek is "ekkathairo." This means to clean out thoroughly. This is what we usually do each year removing the leavening from our homes, going into the cracks and the crevasses, and taking it out. The emphasis in this passage is on cleansing all abomination, all filth, all impurities, with certain emphasis upon "all," not just some, but everything—purge it completely out. That is what it means—to rid or remove completely so that not one vestige of it remains.

I want to tell on Aric, my son. When he was younger, he was climbing over some chairs that were set up in the living room because we were cleaning out the kitchen for the Day of Unleavened Bread. And Aric was just a little tyke, and climbing over everything, including them. Well, he falls down. And instead of falling on the floor, on the carpet, and everything being okay, he has to hit the edge of the wall instead right on his forehead. And you know how head wounds bleed. And so we took him up to the emergency room, and they put him up on a gurney there, and a lady came in to clean out his wound. She got out this big thing of salt-water, and a squeeze bottle, and opened that wound up, and put that down there, and was squeezing this thing in there trying to get every last little bit of whatever it was that was in there out.

But the illustration here is that she was taking this saline solution and purging any kind of impurity that might still be in there (because they wanted to put a stitch in there, and

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six on the outside. It was a lot). They wanted to make sure that that wound was perfectly clean, because they wanted to seal it up. They wanted to make sure that there was nothing in there to cause infection.

This is the kind of thing that God wants us to do with sin. He wants us to get in there, and just clean it out as thoroughly as possible, to get every little bit out (so as not to cause a new infection of sin).

Now you have a good visual aid to remember.

Let us see, though, why God wants us to do this. Do not let it get too far from your mind about who the God of the Old Testament is, because this dove-tails down right into the life of Jesus Christ, because He was the God who inspired Solomon to write these Proverbs.

Proverbs 15:9-10 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves him who follows righteousness. Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way, and he who hates correction will die.

So this is what Jesus Christ thinks of sin. It is an abomination to Him. He cannot stand it. He will not abide it in His presence. I am talking of the glorified Christ right now in heaven—Christ when He walked this earth had to abide it for a time, because he lived among us, coming to know what we go through.

If we wish to be with Him, and to be like Him, we have to purge all sin from ourselves. He does not want brothers and sisters who are abominations. It just will not happen. And so, because we are human, because we still sin, we need, on occasion, harsh correction, kind of like what Paul gave to the Corinthians. If we fail to correct ourselves harshly, if we do not have the stomach to scour ourselves for sin, well, we will die. That is what it says at the end of verse 10, "He who hates reproof will die." There is an end. Death is one of those things—it is the end where God can put a terminus to wickedness through death.

And then, there is the second death for us. I mean, it is not just physical death that we have to be afraid of, but it is the second death for those who do not repent. You will have no more hope.

So, if we will not commit to total war, total purging against the sins lurking in our hearts—known sin, or secret sin—then we have a dire problem, because our God will

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not stand for it.

Some might still think such things like, "Little Jesus, meek and mild. He does not really think like that, does He?"

Yes He does. And He did not mince any words.

Matthew 5:27-30 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Is Jesus only using hyperbole? Is He just being rhetorical? Is He just using a figure of speech? Or, is He really saying that it is very bad?

Do we think that He did not mean this?

So then, what is He saying? If we have a sin, for instance, using this illustration, if we lust (and in this culture there are so very many opportunities for a man or woman to succumb to lust), if we have one of these sins that we just cannot shake, are we willing to take extreme measures to rid ourselves of it, to purge it, and to get at the root of it to clear it out of our character? Are we willing to do what it takes and go into the wound and purge out all that is not supposed to be there?

Half measures will not do. In the case of the wound like I described above, if you leave bacteria in there, it will fester and cause an infection. It is the same way with yeast. If you leave yeast in the bread, it is going to rise, and multiply, and produce that gas that will puff it up, and fill the whole lump.

So against sin, we have to be decisive, we have to be harsh, and we have to be sacrificial with ourselves. This is the best way—the only way—to do the job, to look at ourselves to purge out our sins and not looking to other people to purge their sin.

Notice that He does not say, "If your brother is lustful, you cut off his hand, and pluck out his eye, and so you will help your brother." No. He says, "Pluck your own eye out and

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cut your own hand off."

He is saying that we must get to the root of our own problems. In this illustration the eye is the member of the body that usually inaugurates a man's lust. A man will see a pretty woman walk by, and his eyes light up. That is where it starts. And then, his imagination, if he is not careful, will kick into high gear; and as Jesus said, he will then have already begun to commit adultery with her mentally and emotionally in his heart.

And then, the hand is the next one mentioned by Christ. It is the next member that gets into the act. The hand is the biblical symbol of doing something, of working, of acting upon something. And so, the eye sees, the mind begins working, and then the hand starts reaching. The fornication has gone from mental to physical.

Now, let us think about this. Do we pluck out our eyes or cut off our hands to keep us from lusting? I do not think so. I am sure that there are many one-eyed, one-handed men out there who just love to sit on the sidewalk watching the girls walk by.

Perhaps it would reduce the occurrence, I do not know, but Jesus has already identified the starting place of the sin, the true location where the sin exists.

Matthew 5:28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

That is where the sin really begins—in the heart. Notice that He does not say to cut out your heart. You know that a man can live without a hand or an eye, but if you cut out his heart, he would die. You cannot cut out the heart. You have to change it. You have to get in there with that saline solution and scrub and wash and make it clean.

What Jesus is talking about is our mind—our character. That is where the harsh correction has to occur. We must really beat ourselves up to turn our minds and hearts to the way of Christ. We have to declare total war on our tolerance for sin—remove it all.

This saying above about cutting off the hand or plucking out the eye may be the most extreme of His statements regarding sin, meaning this is something He has told us to do that is so radical. Sin is so destructive to us, so harmful to our lives and characters that He recommends us taking these extreme measures to root it out. We have to mortify ourselves. We have to kill our members. Paul was following that example when he wrote that. We have to mortify our flesh. Put it through the rigors so that we can remove the sin. The reason why we have to do that is because the holiness and spiritual purity

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that God wants us to put on is so important to life in God's kingdom that we are to put ourselves through whatever hardships and sacrifices that are necessary to attain it. It is no holds barred.

If we have to get rough with ourselves, then we better do it; because the goal that is before us, the holiness that God wants us to have is so important; the image of Jesus Christ that we are supposed to be putting on, that new man, is so vital to our eternal life, that whatever we do now to root out the sins and to put on the image of Jesus Christ is worth it.

Paul says in I Timothy 6:12, "We are to fight the good fight of faith." That word "fight" is from the Greek "agonizomai." This means to agonize, to strive, to struggle for all we are worth to the point of exhaustion or death to accomplish the goal or task at hand. You use the last measure of your strength if you have to.

Now, in this next part of the sermon I want to contrast two sides of Jesus' approach to sin. And I think that you will find this interesting.

We cannot discount the book of Revelation when we look at the nature of Christ. This book is all about Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. And so, the mind of our Savior is just as much revealed in this book as it is in the four gospel accounts.

Now notice what is said here. We are going to go to the proclamation of the third angel. Remember who sent this angel too.

Revelation 14:9-11 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Revelation 14:17-20 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the

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great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

One thousand six hundred furlongs is about 184 miles it says in my Bible's margin. That is a lot of blood.

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

We will not go through them, but they are pretty horrific.

Now, this is what happens to those who fail to repent and purge their sins. They place themselves squarely on a collision course with the annihilating judgment of God in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Who is the Judge? John 5:22 says that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. So, the One who is passing sentence here on this sin is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the One who says, "Go and reap the grapes of wrath." And all this blood is spilled.

Christ hates sin so much that He is willing to cause great destruction on the earth, killing million of people to impress upon mankind the need to repent and turn their hearts to follow His way of life.

How many millions of people have to die for there to be blood up to several feet deep for 184 miles? Talk about horrifying! Is this hyperbole?

And then, the seven last plagues are no picnic. God's wrath against sin is so strong, having been held back for so long that it will burst forth in absolute terrifying violence in the Day of the Lord. It is like a waterfall that has been held back, and finally it bursts forth. This is the result. A huge example in lives and destruction to show that God means what He says regarding sin.

In this passage, in John 5, the context is right after He was told that all judgment was committed to Him by the Father. Jesus is explaining here just what the judgment entails.

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John 5:24-30 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Okay, what He does here is that He explains His job as Judge. And He gives the good news first and actually emphasizes, speaking mostly about it, that for those who believe in Him, (which summarizes not just agreement, but also correct practice and obedience and submission to living the life of God—all encapsulated in that one word believe) these people He promises to consider worthy of everlasting life. And He will give it to us in the resurrection from the dead. And that is the good news that we are all happy to understand and work toward. It is wonderful.

He discerns in us and those people, belief and correct practice, putting on the image of Christ. He, then, welcomes us into the Kingdom of God.

But this is only one side of it. There is a dark side of all this, because judgment has two sides—the blade that wields is double-edged. It can either be for us or against us. For those who do not believe, those who reject Him, those who refuse to repent, who habitually practice evil, He promises swift condemnation. It is the proverbial weeping and gnashing of teeth. Elsewhere, He calls it being consigned to everlasting fire, to be thrown into the fires of gehenna—hell fire, and brimstone as we saw there in Revelation 14. They are all different ways of describing the second death—the lake of fire.

So, on the one hand He is very willing to give eternal life to those who believe, but He is equally prepared to dish out eternal death. I am sure that He would rather do the former, but He will do the latter if He must because He will not abide sin. That is what verse 30 is there for—that He will judge righteously.

No one is going to get in because they are a friend or buddy. We were talking on Sabbath about the sons of Zebedee and the patronage system, "Let us be on your right

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hand and your left." No, you must earn it. You have to qualify for it, you have to sacrifice for it, and you have to serve for it.

So, He will judge righteously. He will judge fairly, He will judge equitably, and He will judge justly. And, He will make those decisions because He is the Judge. It has been given into His hand to do. He will call them as He sees them.

So you must understand that Jesus Christ has these two sides to Him. He will grant eternal life, and He can also condemn to eternal death. It is in His hands.

Now, let us go through a series of scriptures, because there is a theme that runs through them.

Mark 10:17-22 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Think about the themes here. This passage is found toward the end of the Bread of Life section, and Jesus just lost a fair number of disciples because they could not take His teachings.

John 6:67-70 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

The lawyers have just complained:

Luke 11:46-48 And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men

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with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs.

Luke 11:52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

John 8:21-24 Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?" And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Okay. We have just finished these four passages. Did you figure out the theme? There are actually more scriptures I could have read, but I only picked out these four. And these will suffice to show the theme.

The theme is that Jesus Christ is not hesitant to point out sin. He saw it, and He called it out. In all cases He did it out of concern for those to whom He spoke. But did you notice that the way that He said it was different each time. Not just the words, but the attitudes, too, that were under them.

To the rich young ruler, about whom it is said He loved, He reveals the man's sins very carefully, lovingly, and softly. He did not come right out and say, "You are awfully greedy. You have a problem with money, do you not know that?" No, but rather He said, "Go and sell what you have, and give to the poor." He eased him into it. But the young man understood enough to know what He was asking him to do, and that is why he went away so sorrowful.

Now, when talking to the disciples in John 6, He points out that the Devil was among them, rather startlingly, too, shocking them. "Have I not picked you twelve, and one of you is a Devil!" ("Who is it?") He had to shock them to get them thinking and giving Judas a warning, who I am sure already had ideas in his head, that this was not the Jesus he had signed on to follow earlier.

Now, to the lawyers, He sets them straight rather sternly, "Woe to you! You are keeping

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all these people out of the Kingdom of God by your stupid pronouncements!" He was right in their face. They should have known better. They were sticking their heads in the Old Testament all the time. That is the law that they were supposed to be such professionals about. And so, He was very stern with them.

And to the Jews in general, John 8, He speaks matter-of-factly to them. "You have rejected Me, so then you will die in your sins, unrepentant, unforgiven. If you cannot tell the difference of Me from heaven and you all from earth, then you are going to die the way that you are."

Now, here is one for everyone in Luke 11. Jesus is speaking to His disciples, but actually everyone, all mankind in general,

Luke 11:13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

The part I want, here, is, "If you, then, being evil..."

He paints humanity with quite a broad brush. Every one of us is evil. He pulls no punches. And even for us whom the blood of Jesus Christ has covered, our sins are forgiven, even so our natures have only changed marginally. Let us face it. It is something we all have to understand—that anywhere on this side of Jesus Christ in His absolute perfection is evil. As long as we even have a smidgen of human nature influenced by Satan the Devil—wickedness, sin, iniquity, or transgressions, missing the mark, or however you wish to put it—most of that still lies within us. And so, in a very broad way, He is letting us know that we are full of sin.

Now, let us look at the other side of the coin, in Luke 7.

Luke 7:36-39 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for

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she is a sinner."

Luke 7:44-50 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

This next passage, in John 5, concerns the man who had been at the Pool of Bethesda, whom Christ had told to take up his bed and walk. Later the Pharisees questioned the man because he was carrying that bed on the Sabbath.

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

John 8:3-4 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act."

John 8:10-11 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Now notice that this is three passages when Jesus came across definite sinful people, but He treated them far differently and certainly differently from those other groups mentioned above.

The woman who anointed His feet—He outright forgives her, very tenderly, because her actions, especially her sorrow and humility combined with her service had manifested her faith. She showed Him that she was changing, and He forgave her sins.

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And to the man who took up his bed and walked—he was given a warning not to fall back into a state of impurity, after being cleansed. Now, he had been given a great gift, and now he had to strive to be worthy of it. Otherwise, as Peter says, he would sink back even further than where he had been before. It would be like the dog going back to its vomit. So Jesus was giving the same warning.

Now, to the woman caught in adultery—she had been scared straight, because she thought she was going to die right there, being stoned. And now, she owed Jesus her life because He had found a way to keep her from being executed. And now she had a chance to turn her life around, to take the opportunity He had provided her to repent and walk the narrow path.

So, in each case it is a little bit different, and He approaches each just as uniquely, to give them the best start along their new life. Now in these cases Jesus shows forbearance, kindness, patience, gentleness, and mercy.

I do not know if you picked up on this throughout all those examples, but much of His reaction had to do with the attitude of the sinner. If the sinner shows hardness of heart, then Jesus reacts with equal harshness. But, if the sinner is humble and sorry, He responds with kindness and patience.

Which way would we like for Him to respond to us?

Let us conclude in Romans 11. Paul says,

Romans 11:22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Now, this has been the *modus operandi* of God forever—for as long as humans have been around. As God of the Old Testament, Jesus treated the Israelites as they treated Him. He actually extended much more mercy, patience, and forbearance than they deserved for all their stiff-necked shenanigans. And, He will act toward us in the same way; meaning, He will act in kind to us.

Jesus' attitudes toward sin is a no-holds-barred hatred. He hates sin. It is an abomination. He cannot abide it. He gave His very life to redeem us from it. It was the only way out, and He made the sacrifice to make sure that sin could be dealt with forever, and completely purged from the universe. So, He reacts with severity when it

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persists.

But if we are humble and repentant, He is very willing to extend mercy and forgiveness. He will give us what it takes to overcome it, and beyond that to grow in His holy righteous character.

So His reaction to us is up to us. Will we make Him come down on us with severity? Or will He make His goodness to shine upon us?

The choice is yours.

You all have a very wonderful holy day!