

Title: "JUDGMENT MUST
BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD!"
Text: Psalm 50:1-23
Reading: Luke 11:37-54 or Isaiah 14:14-22
Subject: Carnal and Spiritual Religion
Date: Sunday Morning - June 22, 1997
Tape # T-83

Introduction:

You will find the title of my message today in the first part of 1 Peter 4:17. Look at that verse with me for a minute.

1 Peter 4:17 "For the time *is come* that **JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD:** and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Without question, in the immediate context Peter is talking about the chastisements and afflictions God's elect suffer in this world as believers because of our faith in and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is obvious when we read the verses surrounding this text.

1 Peter 4:16-19 "Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (17) For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? (18) And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (19) Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

1. **All believers in this world, as the Church and House of God, as his people and his family, must and shall suffer trials, afflictions, and adversities.**

John Gill said, with regard to these afflictions, "As God has his set time to favour his Zion, so likewise to chastise her."

The judgment here spoken of, as relating to believers, is not the penal judgment of God upon us for the satisfaction of justice. Christ has fully satisfied the justice of God for us, by his sin-atoning sacrifice as our Substitute. His blood forever satisfied the justice of God for our sins. God will never punish his family for their sins, since he punished our Elder Brother for them.

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The judgment spoken of in 1 Peter 4:17, as far as it relates to us is the loving judgment, or chastisement of our heavenly Father, to correct and nurture his children.

“God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil.
These spring up and choke the weeds
That would else o’erspread the soil.”

Notice what Peter tells us in these verses.

- When we suffer persecution, slander, opposition, and ill-treatment for Christ’s sake, there is no reason for us to be ashamed; and we certainly must not allow these things to make us ashamed of Christ and his gospel. Instead, we ought to glorify God that we have been counted worthy to suffer for his sake (v. 16)
- These judgments, these providential chastisements, all come upon us according to the will and purpose of our God, at his set time and for the set time, *“according to the will of God”* (vv. 17, 19).
- If these things come on God’s elect, if thus the righteous are saved with great difficulty, through many trials and troubles, the everlasting judgment of God upon the ungodly, the sinner, and all those who obey not the gospel, is a matter both of certainty and of indescribable horror!
- In the midst of all our trials, let us commit the keeping of our souls to the hands of God, our heavenly Father, *“as unto a faithful Creator.”*

That is, briefly, the meaning of Peter’s words in the context. However, this statement, *“Judgment must begin at the house of God,”* has other, equally obvious applications.

2. Without a doubt, Peter’s statement had application to the judgment of God which was about to fall upon city Jerusalem, the nation of Israel, and the temple, all of which were referred to as the house of God.

Taken in that sense, Peter was saying, to his countrymen, that the time has come when God will destroy Judah as a nation of people, burn up Jerusalem, and tear down the temple, bringing to a climatic end every

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particle of the carnal ordinances and ceremonies of the legal dispensation. That is exactly what happened in 70 AD. The entire system of carnal, legal worship ended when Christ fulfilled every type and prophecy of the law by his life, death, and resurrection, by which he accomplished and obtained eternal redemption for us. In 70 AD the Lord God demonstrated the utter spiritual desolation of Jerusalem by destroying every material particle of it.

3. Today, I want to make application of this statement to the professed Church and House of God.

When the Holy Spirit declares, *“The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God,”* he is telling us that God will separate the precious from the vile. Christ will thoroughly purge his floor. He will, in his own way, at his own set time, separate the chaff from the wheat and the sheep from the goats. Turn with me now to Psalm 50, and you will see that this is a proper application of Peter’s words. ***Judgment must begin at the house of God.***

Proposition: In this prophetic psalm the Lord God himself speaks, assuring us of his purpose of grace toward his elect, teaching us the nature of true worship, and warning all who profess faith in his name but refuse to obey his Word of eternal wrath.

This psalm is a prophecy of the coming of Christ to redeem and save his people. As we read the psalm, we will see that the things dealt with in these twenty-three verses relate primarily to this gospel age. The Person speaking here is the Lord God himself. He speaks of the calling of his elect from among the Gentiles, the total abrogation of the carnal ordinances of legal worship, and the Lord’s controversy with all who profess to be his people while retaining those carnal elements of the legal dispensation.

Divisions: We will go through this verse by verse. It is a very instructive passage of Scripture. May God the Holy Spirit, who inspired these words, now effectual instruct us from them. As we go through the psalm, I want to show you five things in it.

1. God reveals his purpose of grace (vv. 1-6).
2. God teaches us the nature of true worship (vv. 7-15).
3. God exposes the wickedness of lost religionists (vv. 16-21).
4. God warns all who forget him of impending wrath (v. 22).
5. God promises salvation to every believer (v. 23).

I. GOD REVEALS HIS PURPOSE OF GRACE (vv. 1-6).

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Here is one of those rare occasions when the Lord God issues a summons to gather the whole world before him (**See Isaiah 45:20-25**). When he does, you can be sure, what he says is of immense importance. If we were wise, we would take off our shoes and tread softly. When the Triune God speaks, we ought to be like Samuel of old, and say, *“Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth thee.”* Let us hear what the Lord our God has to say.

A. The Call Of Grace (v.1)

Psalms 50:1 "The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."

Some have suggested that these three names, “The Mighty” (El), “The Mighty God” (Elohim), “The LORD” (Jehovah), used with the singular verb “called,” is a display of the Divine Trinity. It is certain that all three Persons in the glorious, triune Godhead are involved in and committed to the salvation of chosen sinners (Eph. 1:3-14). We who believe have been chosen by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and regenerated by God the Holy Spirit.

However, all three of these Divine names belong to Christ, our Savior, in whom resides all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). He who is “The Mighty God” and the Son of God is “The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” He it is of whom the psalm speaks, when it says, *“The mighty God, even the LORD hath spoken.”*

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, “The Mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken!”

- He spoke for his elect, as their Surety and Savior, in the covenant of grace before the world began.
- He spoke all things out of nothing as the sovereign Creator of all things.
- He spoke to Moses and Elijah about the death he had come to accomplish at Jerusalem.
- He speaks by his every act of providence. (Three men were taken into eternity this week: An 85 year old great-grandfather, a 53 year old father, and a 22 year old son. Did you hear God speak? I did!)
- He speaks for us in heaven.
- He speaks to men everywhere through his Word, through the preaching of the Gospel.

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2. The Lord God, our Savior calls and commands all men everywhere to hear his voice n the Gospel nd repent.

He calls sinners around the world, *“from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.”*

- The General Call
- The Effectual Call
- Both are his calls!

B. The Place Of Mercy (v. 2)

Psalms 50:2 "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."

It may be that the psalmists is here saying that Christ, our God, is the perfection of beauty, and as the perfection of beauty he shines out of Zion. That certainly is true! However, the text seems to say that...

1. God's Church, Zion, is the perfection of beauty.

"Its members are adorned with the graces of the Spirit, by which they are all glorious within; and especially as they are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and so are perfectly comely through the comeliness he hath put upon them and here it is that Christ, who is the great God, and (it is here that) our Saviour, shines forth upon his people, grants his gracious presence, and manifests himself in his ordinances, to their great joy and pleasure." *John Gill*

2. The Lord God reveals himself in the assembly of his saints and makes himself known to chosen sinners through the instrumentality of his Church by the preaching of the Gospel.

Titus 2:11-14 "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (12) Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (13) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; (14) Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Titus 3:4-7 "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us

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abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

C. The Promise Of Grace (v.3)

Psalms 50:3 "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him."

This is a threefold promise of grace. It is the promise of Christ's threefold coming to save his people. It speaks of the Lord's coming...

- To Redeem Us By His Blood.
- To Regenerate Us By His Grace.
- To Raise Us Up To Glory.

D. The Purpose Stated (vv. 4-5)

Psalms 50:4-5 "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. (5) Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

The purpose of God in all things, in creation and in providence, is the salvation of his elect, the gathering of his chosen from the four corners of the earth.

Genesis 49:10 "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*."

Isaiah 56:8 "The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."

Zechariah 10:8 "I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased."

Be sure to notice the language of verse five.

1. God's elect are here called saints even before they are called, because they were, from eternity, sanctified in Christ.
2. These chosen ones are those who have made a covenant with God, not personally, but representatively, when Christ stood as our Surety in the covenant of grace.

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3. The covenant between us and God is immutable and sure because it was a covenant made by and upon the basis of Christ's sin-atonement, blood sacrifice.

E. The End Accomplished (v.6)

When all things are finished and time shall be no more, when all God's purpose is accomplished and all his elect have been gathered into his kingdom, then God shall be glorified forever as the just and righteous, just God and Savior.

Psalm 50:6 "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah."

When our Savior at last presents the kingdom of his saints to the Father, holy, unblamable, and unproveable in his sight, saying, *Lo, I and the children which thou hast given me,* the Triune God shall be all in all.

II. IN VERSES 7-15, THE LORD OUR GOD TEACHES US THE NATURE OF TRUE WORSHIP.

Psalm 50:7-15 "Hear, O my people, **(You who profess and claim to be my people. You who wear my name. You who are confident that you are my people!)** and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: *I am God, even thy God.* (8) I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me. **(The context really demands that verse 8 would be better translated - I will not reprove you for your lack of sacrifices or your lack of burnt offerings, which should have been continually before me. The reason should be obvious. God's quarrel with men is not their failure to offer enough sacrifices, but their failure to trust Christ of whom the sacrifices spoke! Read on.)** (9) I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he goats out of thy folds. (10) For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills. (11) I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine. (12) If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof. (13) Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? (14) Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: (15) And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

These verses each us five distinct, vital truths about the worship of God. I will not spend much time expounding these things; but I hope you will hear them, mark them down, and remember them.

A. God does not need us or anything we can give him or do for him.

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He who is altogether infinite, immense, independent, and self-sufficient needs nothing. He who created all things and owns all things needs nothing. I cannot give him anything! I cannot do anything for him by which to obligate him to me! Neither can you! No man will ever worship God until he understands this fact.

B. No mere form of godliness, even if the form is biblical and required of God, will profit a man's soul.

Read the first chapter of Isaiah again. No amount of sacrifice, no religious ritual, no ceremony, no act of devotion, no amount of austere piety, no creed, no confession of faith, no amount of church attendance, no religious affiliation apart from faith in Christ will do a man any good in the sight of God. In fact, without faith in Christ, these things are eating and drinking damnation to yourself!

Those who have only a form of godliness, while denying the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ, which is the power of godliness, do not know God, no matter how sincere they may be.

C. True worship is spiritual.

True worship arises from and primarily concerns matters of the heart. True worship is not an act, but an attitude, an attitude of faith in and consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 4:23-24 "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. (24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."

Philippians 3:3 "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

God says, "*My son, Give me thine heart.*" If he gets your heart, he gets you. If he gets your heart, he gets everything. Look at verses 14-15.

- ***"Offer unto God thanksgiving."***

Thanksgiving is a sacrifice that arises from a heart of faith. You cannot give thanks in everything unless you trust God in and with everything!

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Psalms 116:17 "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD."

Hebrews 13:15 "By him (**By faith in Christ!**) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name."

1. Thank God for his grace!
2. Thank God for his providence!
3. Thank God for his Son!

• **“Pay thy vows unto the most High!”**

Ritualistic, legalistic, ceremonial, religious vows are totally forbidden. No man, no preacher, no church has a right to require anyone to bind themselves and their consciences by a religious vow. However, we have, each of us taken moral, spiritual vows before God, by which we have bound and obligated ourselves. The Lord warns us that we ought never to make such vows hastily. It is better never to make a vow than make a vow and break it.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. (5) Better *is it* that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay."

Be not hasty to speak anything to God. You may forget it. He won't!

1. This refers to all the vows we make. (Marriage - Debts - Contrats, etc.)
2. This specifically has reference to spiritual vows.

At our baptism, as believers, we made a public vow to God, a vow of devotion and consecration. We pledged ourselves to Christ, devoted ourselves publicly to him as our Lord and Savior, to his worship and service, to live by his grace for the glory of his name, to give up ourselves to him and his church, to walk with him in the newness of life, seeking in all things to obey his Word, keep his ordinances, serve his interests, and honor him.

Isaiah 4:5 "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory *shall be* a defence."

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"And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

Illustration: JEPHTHAH - *"I have lifted my hand to the LORD."*

- ***"Call upon me in the day of trouble."***

This suggests much more than simply crying out to God for help in tough times. Everyone does that. To call upon the name of the Lord is to worship and trust him. To call upon him in the day of trouble is to worship him and trust him, like old brother Job, in the day of trouble.

D. True worship carries with it the promise of salvation.

God says, *"I will deliver thee."* *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* That does not mean that you will be saved because you call upon the name of the Lord, but as surely as you call upon the name of the Lord.

E. True faith always glorifies God, particularly in the matter of salvation.

"Thou shalt glorify me." Faith glorifies God because it always ascribes the whole of salvation to him, saying, *"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."* *"Salvation is of the LORD!"*

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

III. Now look at verses 16-21. HERE GOD EXPOSES THE WICKEDNESS OF LOST RELIGIONISTS.

Psalms 50:16-21 "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? (17) Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. (18) When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. (19) Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. (20) Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. (21) These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such*

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an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

Here the Lord addresses himself to those multitudes of lost religionists in every generation who wear his name, take refuge in religion, claim to be his people, and convince themselves that they are his people. He says to them, **You have no right to wear my name, speak my Word, or lay claim to my covenant, my salvation.** This is exactly what Zerubbabel and Jeshua said to the adversaries of Benjamin and Judah, and exactly what our Lord said to the religious leaders of Israel in his day.

Ezra 2:1-3 "Now these *are* the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; (2) Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: (3) The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two."

"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

NOTE: Our Lord spoke these words to the Pharisees when he was guest at a party in a Pharisee's house and the Pharisees decided to they wanted to join his group! They wanted his name and his fame, but not his dominion nor his doctrine. Things have not changed!

A. God, who knows the hearts and motives of all men, describes the character of those religious leaders of the world in every age.

These men never change. Their character never changes.

1. They hate the instruction, the doctrines, of the Gospel (v.17).
2. They despise the Word of God (v.17).
3. They are thieves (v. 18). They rob God of his glory and rob widows houses in the name of God.
4. They are adulterers (v.18) - Literally (John 8:1-11) and Spiritually (Rev. 18:4).
5. They speak evil doctrines (v. 19), the evil doctrines of free-will, works, self-righteous religion, which promote moral evils among men.
6. They are slanderers (v. 20).

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B. At the bottom of all heresies, all forms of Arminian, free-will, works religion is the fact that those men who embrace uch heresies have very low views of God and very high views of themselves (v. 21).

God says, *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself!* That as the problem in David’s day. That as the problem in our Lord’s day. And that is the problem now. The religions of the world have very low views of God and very high views of man. That will not always be the case. Look at verses 21 and 22 together.

IV. HERE GOD WARNS THE WICKED OF HIS CERTAIN, IMPENDING WRATH.

Psalms 50:21-22 "These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes. (22) Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver."

For now, it appears that God lets men get by with their wickedness. But that is not the case. He will not forever be silent. He says, “**Consider this...**”

- A. “*I will reprove thee.*”
- B. “*I will set your crimes in order before thine eyes.*”
- C. “*I will tear you in pieces!*”
- D. “*There shall be none to deliver!*”

V. Now, look at verse 23. HERE GOD PROMISES SALVATION TO ALL WHO BELIEVE, EVEN TO THOSE WHO HAVE, HERETOFOR, DESPISED HIM AND THE GOSPEL OF HIS GRACE!

Psalms 50:23 "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I show the salvation of God."

To offer praise, in this context, is to cease from all the foolish notions of free-will, self-righteous, works salvation, and trust Christ alone. To believe on the Son of God is to quit trying to get saved by something you have done and praise him for salvation accomplished, finished, and based upon what he has done! This God given faith glorifies God for his salvation and orders (rules, governs, and motivates) the life of the one who possesses it. To all who thus trust the Son of God, God promises to show his salvation.

- The Cause of It!

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- The Basis of It!
- The Fact of It!
- The Mystery of It!
- The Wonder of It!
- The Security of It!
- The Consummation of It!

Isaiah 52:10 "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Luke 2:25-30 "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. (26) And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (27) And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, (28) Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, (29) **Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: (30) For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation.**"

Amen.