

Revelation, Laws, and Judgment
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Text: Romans 2:11-16

Romans: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Righteous Judgment of God

Central Idea of Message: God judges without respect to persons, but with regard to the light one has been given.

Introduction: God judges without respect to persons. All people from all times will be held accountable for their faith response to God elicited by the revelation which they have been given. Thus, all are without excuse for failing to turn from sin and to God.

Who we are matters nothing to God because he is completely impartial but whose we are matters greatly to God! Have you become his by faith?

I. God Judges without Respect to Persons (vv. 11-15)

A. God is impartial in judgment (v. 11)

1. This was hard for a Jew like Peter to accept (cf. Acts 10:34)

- a) Race is not considered
- b) Gender is not considered
- c) Election is not considered

d) **Judgment which is partial is corrupt, and God isn't corrupt**

2. Sin results in punishment for all

3. Paul says that God judges our nature, saved or unsaved, by our works

B. All who sin without law will perish without law (v. 12)

1. Are those without access to the Old Testament or the Ten Commandments immune to consequences?

- a) They are exempt from the charge of disregarding the written law of Moses
- b) But they are accountable for the moral law they have received in their conscience and the knowledge of God they have received through conscience and creation [nature]

2. **Revelation reveals God, whereas law reveals sin**

- a) Law convicts but cannot convert
 - b) Law condemns but cannot forgive
 - c) Law kills but cannot resurrect
 - d) Yet, law is good and quite valuable because it reveals and defines sin
3. We have identified two types of revelation thus far in Romans, and their variations are echoed in this paragraph
- a) **Special Revelation**
 - (1) **Theophanic Revelation:** an angel of the Lord appears, or the Lord in a pillar of fire or cloud (Gen. 12:7; 18:1-33; 19:1-29; 32:1-29; Exod. 3-4; 13:21)
 - (2) **Written Revelation:** the written law of Moses (Rom. 2:12)
 - (3) **Gospel Revelation:** specific "Jesus" information
 - b) **General Revelation**
 - (1) **Natural Revelation:** the law of creation revealed outwardly through the medium of nature; creation implies that there is a Creator (Rom. 1:20)
 - (2) **Innate Revelation:** the moral law of God revealed inwardly through conscience and internal "norms" (Rom. 1:19; 2:15)
4. The difference between Jew and Gentile is not one of race but one of revelation (cf. Barrett 49)
- a) The *principle* of judgment is the same - works which demonstrate belief or unbelief (cf. Thomas 80)
 - b) But the *standards* of judgment differ (cf. Thomas 80)
 - (1) Jews on the basis of the law of Moses
 - (2) Non-Jews (Gentiles) on the basis of the laws of nature and conscience
5. All are judged on the basis of the revelation God made available to each (cf. MacGorman 34)
- a) No non-Jew would be held responsible for light he or she did not have
 - b) All have the law of nature: innate light of conscience and the observable wonders of creation (cf. Rom. 1:18-23)
6. **Condemnation comes because people do not keep the law they have, not because they do not have the Mosaic law or Christianity (cf. Robertson 4:336)**

7. Are you living up to the law and light you have?
- C. **All who sin under the law are judged by the law** (v. 12)
1. God's revelation through the law of Moses provided great advantage to those having it (cf. MacGorman 33)
 2. **The law of Moses made the will of God known more completely than the law of nature (cf. MacGorman 33)**
 3. Knowledge of any of these laws also includes greater responsibility for keeping them
- D. **Doers, not hearers, are justified** (v. 13)
1. Jews heard the law of Moses read every Sabbath at their synagogue gatherings
 - a) Few abided by it
 - b) No benefit accrues to hearers of the laws, only to doers
 2. Not everyone saying "Lord, Lord" goes to heaven, only those doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21)
 - a) Mankind must do something to be saved, namely, repent of sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
 - b) This alone constitutes being a doer and not merely a hearer (cf. James 1:22)
- E. **Some without the law instinctively abide by the law** (v. 14)
1. Unaware of Old Testament commandments
 2. **"These, not having the Law, are a law to themselves" means the presence of this internal moral norm testifies to the validity of innate [inborn] General Revelation in our conscience**
 3. "They attest knowledge of divine moral standards" (Moo 151)
- F. **Those without the written law are still aware of moral law through God's self-disclosure** (v. 15)
1. Innate Revelation: again, the law of God revealed inwardly through conscience and internal norms (Rom. 1:19; 2:15)
 2. **God etches Innate Revelation [a form of General Revelation] of himself and morality in the heart of every person**
 - a) "Instinctive knowledge of right and wrong" (Barclay 53)
 - b) By doing this, God affirmed the distinction between right and wrong (cf. MacGorman 34)

- c) By drawing this distinction, God demands that right be chosen and wrong be condemned (cf. MacGorman 34)
- 3. The conscience testifies to truth
 - a) The "reflective" part of a person (McBeth 77)
 - b) Our conscience can comfort or torment us
 - c) **Standards of human conduct [morals] exist in both written and unwritten form**
 - d) **Human thoughts measured against these God-etched standards will either convict us of sin or acquit us**
 - e) This verse depicts the alternative action of one's conscience, accusing then excusing (cf. Robertson 4:337)
 - f) Guilt or discomfort results when the conscience notifies us of a wrong
 - (1) The conscience needs to be kept clear
 - (2) Repeated violation of the conscience
 - (a) Harms our faith (1 Tim. 1:19)
 - (b) Damages our conscience, making it potentially unreliable (1 Tim. 4:2)
- 4. No nation is so depraved so as to reward vice and punish virtue (cf. McBeth 76)
 - a) What nation approves of murder among its own?
 - (1) Not one!
 - (2) Although the abortion issue is challenging this innate norm because consciences have been seared and have been rendered unreliable
 - b) What nation approves of thievery?
 - c) What people group approves of rape?
 - d) What nation approves of adultery?
 - e) What people group does not honor parents?
 - f) Even if some people group set its own standards of right and wrong that group would, collectively, not live up to its own standards - because we are all lost sinners wandering in darkness!
 - g) **While people do disagree on what is right and wrong, most people everywhere agree that there are rights and wrongs, begging the question of where any concept of right and wrong originated**
 - (1) Paul's answer is from God, etched into the fabric of the human conscience

- (2) In fact, this common denominator of even establishing a concept of a right from a wrong testifies to human relatedness in construction as having been created in the image of and by the same Creator
5. The unity of the Mosaic law and the inner law have a common source, the one Great Law Giver, to whom faith is due and repentance is required

II. God Judges According to Paul's Gospel (v. 16)

- A. Inadequate definers
 1. Refuse to let Mormons define baptism, eternity, or gospel
 2. Refuse to let Jehovah's Witnesses define God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the gospel
 3. Refuse to let New Agers or Gnostics define knowledge, insight, discernment, or gospel
 4. Refuse to let Universalists define hell, salvation, repentance, or gospel
 5. Refuse to let Calvinists define depravity, election, predestination, or the gospel
 6. Refuse to let popular culture define love, truth, morality, or the gospel
 7. **Refuse to let anyone or anything other than the Bible define the terms gospel, grace, judgment, or any other biblical teaching**
 8. Those possessing Gospel [Special] Revelation will be judged according to Paul's gospel
 - a) Gospel Revelation is the law of Christ
 - b) **For those possessing only General Revelation [conscience and creation], judgment will be according to one's faith response to the one God as a result of the light he or she has**
- B. Paul's gospel
 1. Paul's Gospel Revelation is the good news of grace through Christ Jesus
 2. Paul's gospel demands a faith-righteousness, arguing that law-righteousness is impossible, with the exception of Christ Jesus
 3. Paul's gospel includes judgment, for he says that those rejecting God's grace can possess no righteousness, but will meet the law in punishment
 4. Paul's gospel, like the faith Jude preached, is the standard delivered once and for all (Jude 3)
 5. Paul's gospel must abide unaltered and be fiercely defended

- C. The secrets of the heart will be judged
 - 1. A day of judgment is coming
 - 2. God judges based on works, which issue forth from what is inside in our secret recesses: he sees the inner and the outer
 - 3. God is looking for genuine faith
 - 4. What we think is unknown, is known to him
 - a) Our hidden sins in concealed vaults are the ones most valued by us (cf. McBeth 78)
 - b) God knows our hidden life and will judge it
 - c) Soon he will raid the cellars and plunder the vaults and render just judgment
 - (1) Secret sins will be punished
 - (2) Secret deeds of righteousness will be rewarded
- D. The agency of Jesus Christ
 - 1. Judgment will be through the person of Christ
 - 2. Does obedience to the internal standard nullify salvation by faith? No
 - a) Salvation is by grace through faith and repentance, not works
 - b) Faith in God is essential regardless of the revelation one has received
 - c) Faith is the common denominator among all the people of God from all times

Conclusion: God judges impartially and he judges according to the light shed by the revelation we have received. What have you done with the revelation you have received?