

Judging the World and Angels: 1 Corinthians 6:2-3

“Do you not know that we will judge the world?”

“Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

Paul’s questions in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 are rhetorical. Both expect an affirmative answer, perhaps an emphatic answer: “Of course!” However, for many Christians an honest answer might sound something like: “Umm, w-e-l-l . . . no . . . I didn’t know.”

We have been correctly taught that God will judge. In fact, Christians are taught that they should not judge others; leave vengeance up to God. So, what did Paul mean?

First, the idea of *judgment* always includes the elements of discernment and separation. In scripture, God’s judgment *separates* the godly and the ungodly according to His *discernment*.

Jesus prophesied against the generation of His day:

“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.” (Matthew 12:41 NASB)

The choice made by the residents of Nineveh in the days of Jonah stands to condemn the generation of people who Jesus taught. The people of Nineveh heard the declaration of God and made a proper response in faith. Those of Jesus’ day rejected His message.

The writer of Hebrews stated that Noah condemned (judged) the world in his day. He did so by listening to God’s revelation and making a proper response by building the ark. (Hebrews 11:7)

In the days of Noah a separation was made between the godly and the ungodly. The separation was actually made before the rain started. The separation was even made before Noah preached. God had judged. He made a distinction between those who would model their lives after Him and those do not. Those who are like God are ‘godly.’

Noah separated himself from the ungodly people when he chose to be godly, when he chose to listen to God and follow his revealed instruction. The flood cleaned up the mess.

In the days of Jonah God was ready to clean up the ‘mess’ of ungodliness in Nineveh. Warned by Jonah, the people responded to the revelation of God. By comparison Jesus was greater than Jonah and His message was greater than the message of Jonah. The response of the people of Nineveh to an inferior prophet and an inferior message will condemn (judge) the people who rejected Jesus. In His prophecy, Jesus warned the people of his day that God would again separate the ungodly from the godly: judgment.

Christians are like Nineveh and Noah. We have listened to the gospel. We have made a proper response to the call of the gospel. In doing so we stand in judgment of all who reject the message of Jesus Christ.

As for the angels . . .

Consider that angels stand in the presence of God. They do not walk by faith, but by sight. They have seen the glory of God. So, angels who do not “keep their own domain” (Jude 1:6), that is, angels who sin (2 Peter 2:4) are judged (condemned) by those people who have made a proper response in faith to their God whose face is yet unseen.

Christians judge the world and angels by making a proper response to the revelation of God.