

this story says that it was about a pound in weight and “very costly” (John 12:3). It represented a large sum of money; some have suggested a year’s wages. It obviously represented many years of savings for Mary. It may have taken all the money she had to her name. Yet Mary brought it all to Jesus.

Giving to God all our material possessions is a tremendous statement of our faith in Him. Yet notice, when Mary came to Jesus with this costly gift, representing her tremendous faith and devotion to Him, she stood “behind Him weeping” (Luke 7:38). This is the attitude we will assume in the judgment. We will come with our surrender, our gifts of devotion, our works of love, yet we will stand behind Jesus, and for good reason.

Despite all of Mary’s devotion, gifts and works, she was still condemned by Simon and others. Some found fault with her gift, others with her conduct, but Simon especially pointed to her past. “She is a sinner,” said the Pharisee (Luke 7:39)—not only because of what she was now doing, but also because of what she once was. And so it is in the judgment. In the murmuring and criticism of the Pharisee we find a picture of Satan’s accusations against all sinners.

Our lives, our devotion, our gifts of sacrifice and love make it evident that the love of God has changed our hearts. Yet, because the law of God is the standard in the judgment, Satan will still point to our sins of the past and argue that we are unworthy of eternal life (see James 2:10-13; 1 John 3:4). And based solely on our lives, his argument is right. All have sinned and the wages of sin is death (see Romans 3:23, 6:23). Everything, both good and bad, is brought forward in the judgment. No matter how good our lives may be, we cannot save ourselves (see Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). That is why we will stand in the judgment behind Jesus, just as Mary did. This means we trust in His works, His obedience, His perfect love and righteousness for our salvation (see 1 Corinthians 1:29-31; Isaiah 54:17).

Our works and devotion testify to our faith in His righteousness by which we are saved.

Having such faith in His love, knowing the depths of God’s forgiveness toward us is the power of the gospel. It produces works, not as the means of our salvation but as the fruit. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Love is the agent through which faith in Jesus produces works (see Galatians 5:6). Our love is strengthened as we understand and experience God’s forgiveness toward us.

Jesus brings this important lesson to the forefront for Simon in His story of two debtors who are forgiven by their master. One of the debtors owed a greater sum and Jesus applies that debtor to Mary, saying:

“Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:44-47).

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible makes that last verse very clear: “Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little” (Luke 7:47, NRSV).

Mary loved much because she realized she had been forgiven much. It was not a case of her being a worse sinner than Simon that made her so devoted to Jesus. Sin, no matter how small, cost the life of God’s dear Son. Many of us fail to comprehend the enormity of our forgiven debt due to our own self-righteousness. In Mary’s life, her good works testify of her faith in Jesus, but they never caused her to become self-righteous. So it will be with all who embrace salvation. When commended by the Lord Jesus for their good works, they hardly seem to remember them (see Matthew 25:37-39). On the other hand, those who become self-righteous, trusting in their obedience for salvation, offer their works as reason why they should be saved (see Matthew 7:21-23).

The very first work of the saved is belief in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Consider the words of Jesus on this point:

“Then said they unto Him, ‘What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent’” (John 6:28-29).

So belief in God is work, work that God wants to do in our hearts. When this work is done, our faith in Jesus is then evinced by our love for God and for our fellow man. (see 1 Peter 4:7-8; James 2:8, 12-13).

Our treatment, our attitude, and our thoughts and feelings toward other sinners are a testimony as to whether or not we have accepted the gift of salvation and the righteousness of God:

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

Summary

The good news of God’s infinite love for the world through Jesus Christ is the power of the gospel. When we see and accept this gift personally, our hearts and lives are changed. Such a change becomes a witness for God and His character of love in this world of sin and darkness. When we obey the gospel and reveal God’s mercy to the unmerciful and, in our eyes, the undeserving, we show God to be blameless in the way He has dealt with the sin problem. Many will not accept this witness and allow God’s character to be vindicated in their own hearts. Yet God reveals Himself to the world through us. The lost will be without excuse. In the end, every tongue, whether of the saved or the lost, will confess that God always was and ever shall be Love. Amen.

STUDY 5 OF 13

Printed in the USA by Light Bearers Ministry • 37457 Jasper Lowell Rd • Jasper, OR 97438
(541)988-3333 • www.lbm.org

GOD’S LAST MESSAGE TO THE WORLD 5

We learned in our first study on the judgment that Satan is resisting the salvation that Christ has accomplished for every soul (see Zechariah 3:2). The devil is the accuser, who accuses us “before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10). The fact that he is accusing us before God implies that he is also accusing God. God has been blamed for the sin problem and for the way He has dealt with sin from its very inception. So then, the hour of judgment brought to view in Revelation 14, is not only the hour of *our* judgment, but also the hour of *His* judgment. We pick up part 2 of our study in the book of Romans:

“Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged’” (Romans 3:4, NKJV).

The apostle Paul is here quoting from an Old Testament scripture found in Psalm 51:4. It reads:

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.”

Other versions like the NAS and the NKJV use the word “blameless.”

Notice two points in these verses concerning sin and how God deals with it. First, the major party violated in every sin is God. He is the one against whom all sin. Yes, we sin against people; but God is the creator, the owner of all people. He made us and has bought us with the gift of His Son. Jesus paid the terrible price for all sin. And because He loves each one as His own, whatever we do to one another, we do to Him (see Matthew 25:40, 45).

Second, David is praying that God will be “clear” or “blameless” when He deals with sin or judges. The implication being that there is some degree of fault attributed to God for the way He is dealing with sin. Is God fair? Is He merciful? Is He just? Will He be completely blameless or clear when all is said and done?

This is a very important part of the whole sin problem. At sin’s

The Hour of Judgment Part 2

Revelation 14 Study Guides

Ultimately, when we are called to the hour of His judgment, we are actually called to measure God, to see Him for who He really is.

inception, Adam blamed Eve for his sin and Eve blamed the serpent (see Genesis 3:12-13). Where were they really directing the blame? God made Eve, the serpent and the tree. Fallen humanity, consequently, immediately began to blame God for sin. This is our natural inclination.

Measure God

Is God to blame for sin? Could He have handled Lucifer in a different way, a better way? What kind of God is He to allow so much suffering? Why did He allow Satan to come to this earth? These are questions that need to be answered and resolved in the minds of millions, perhaps even billions. They can only be answered by knowing God. The Bible says that God is all wise and all loving. He has used all His wisdom and His love to rectify the sin problem. Yet God is not trying to defend Himself, rather He seeks to reveal Himself. Ultimately, when we are called to the hour of His judgment, we are actually called to measure God, to see Him for who He really is. Revelation chapter 11 touches this idea.

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there’” (Revelation 11:1, NKJV).

Here John is given a measuring device and told to measure three things: the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there. To measure the worshipers in the temple means to measure everyone who professes to worship God. But why is John first told to measure the temple and the altar? What do they represent?

According to the Bible, the temple of God is the place where God dwells: “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament” (Revelation 11:19). To measure the temple of God is to measure God, to judge God. We do it all the time, whenever we ask questions like:

Why does God allow so much sin and suffering?

Why does He let innocent people die?

Where was God when I needed Him?

These and a hundred other questions we ask concerning sin, suffering and redemption, reveal that we are judging or measuring God. Don't misunderstand. God wants us to ask questions. He wants us to measure Him (see Ephesians 3:18-19). He longs to show us what He is really like, for this is the only way He can assuage the mistrust that was planted in our hearts by Satan's artful attack against Him at the fall. Ponder Satan's words in this context:

“Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5).

Satan was basically insinuating that God was holding something back from us in Eden: “God is selfishly withholding wisdom that can make you gods just like Him.” In this way Lucifer tempted us to mistrust God's character and doubt His love. He led us to disobey God and, as soon as that was accomplished, Satan began accusing us before God: “Justice demands that

You destroy mankind because they have disobeyed Your law.” Satan is using us to attack and accuse God.

God can do nothing to convince or win the heart of Satan; but He can still win back the loyalty of our hearts. Rather than seek to justify Himself, God allows us, and even encourages us, to measure Him. God wants to show us how He has dealt with sin. He has nothing to hide. Even when we first turned from Him, He lovingly pursued us, manifesting changeless love (see Genesis 3:8-9; Malachi 3:6). Through a revelation of His character, God will be cleared in His dealings with sin. Satan's accusations will be cast down. In fact, as far as heaven is concerned, they already are.

“The accuser of our brethren *is* cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10).

Now notice the verse following this last one:

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Revelation 12:12).

The heavens and all that dwell in them are called to rejoice. The character of God has been clearly seen by the unfallen universe. In their minds Satan's accusations have been cast down. This clarifying demonstration of the character of God took place on Calvary, where the devil was unmasked as a murderer and a liar from the beginning. But the inhabitants of earth—those who have not yet seen the full and true revelation of the character of God—have not yet fully understood and appreciated the gift of the cross. Here on this planet, Satan still has a foothold. We still have sympathy for the devil. He has come here with great power, with accusing power, but his time is short. Soon this earth will be lightened with the glory of God (see Revelation 18:1). Soon the changeless love of God for the human race, manifest in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world, will shine as a flood of light upon every nation, tongue and people. Until that time Satan continues to malign both God and humanity as illustrated in the story of Job.

God and Job Are Both Accused

“So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’” (Job 1:9-11, NKJV).

Who is Satan accusing here? He accuses both God and Job. Job is being accused of serving God from selfish motives and God is being accused of buying Job's loyalty. “Job doesn't really love you,” Satan suggests. God allows Satan to try Job in order to clear them *both*. Job experiences some amazingly difficult times. He loses his wealth, his children, his friends and his reputation. And finally he loses his health. Yet, the Bible says,

“In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22, NKJV).

“Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God” (NAS).

How would you feel about God if all this happened to you? Or perhaps the

question is, how *do* you feel about God since some of it has? Do you find yourself blaming God? It's hard not to. How was Job able to remain faithful to God? How did he endure all this loss and yet refuse to blame God? Like all of us, Job struggled. He wrestled to understand what was happening. In the end, God simply showed Job more of Himself.

Job saw that God was much bigger than he was; he was simply a representative of God. Job eventually recognized that his suffering, in a small way, represented the pain and suffering that sin has brought to God's heart since sin's very inception. If Job was suffering at the hand of Satan, then how much more was God suffering? If Job was innocent from any wrongdoing, then how much more was God innocent from blame? Job realized that even though he might not understand all things, God is good and merciful and just.

“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6)

This is what we need to do in order to overcome the accusations of Satan, the pain and suffering he has brought to our world through sin, and our questions about God. We need to see more of God, to measure Him, to behold His love.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

“God is love” (1 John 4:8) and, therefore, He is not afraid to be measured. He is not hiding from our questions, but longs to answer them.

Mary Illustrates the Nature of the Judgment

The hour of judgment, therefore, involves both God and mankind. In accusing us, Satan is accusing God. He charges that, in view of our sinfulness, it is unfair for God to love us. Another illustration of this controversy is vividly portrayed in the story of Mary Magdalene.

“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, ‘This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner.’” (Luke 7:37-39).

This story holds for us an illustration of the judgment. Notice first that God is being accused here as well as Mary. “This man, if he were a prophet,” is what the Pharisee states. In other words, if Jesus Christ was from God, or even God Himself, He would never allow sinners to draw close to Him like that. The Pharisee asserts that God is angry with sinners, He hates them and is ready to condemn them rather than allow them to come close to Him. “How dare Jesus be so gracious to a sinner!” is the accusation of Satan against God. Yet Jesus reveals that while God hates the sin, He loves the sinner.

Mary brought to Jesus an alabaster box of ointment. John's version of