

J. I. Packer's

Knowing God

Chapter 14: "God the Judge"



Quiz:

According to Dr. Packer, many Christians refuse to believe one important characteristic of God. Which of these words below would those people say does NOT describe God as shown in the Bible?

1. Father
2. Friend
3. Loves us (despite ourselves)
4. Judge
5. Eternal

What image comes to mind when you hear "**God is our judge**"?



[READ GENESIS 18:22-25]

Page 138-140 Note---God is not portrayed as a judge merely in the OT. For example:

- James 4:12---"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy."
- Hebrews 10:30—"The Lord will judge his people."
- (my favorite) Romans 3:5-6.

Hint: Find many other references to God as judge by using your Bible's concordance.

Page 140 The OT prophets emphasized the fact that God has little patience for those who resist his Law. These prophets "spend a good deal more space preaching judgement than they do predicting the Messiah and his Kingdom!"



Is this true???

“People who do not actually read the Bible confidently assure us that when we move from the Old Testament to the New, the theme of divine judgement fades into the background.” (pg. 140)

Page 141 Characteristics of God as our Judge:

1. He has authority

God is our maker...

∴

He owns us...

∴

He has the right to dispose of us.



2. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity

3. He knows the factual and moral truth

4. “God is his own executioner.”

Page 142 Retribution {Give us a definition of “retribution.”}

Paul points out that God does not show favoritism.

[READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10]

Page 143 If God were not strict and morally perfect, it would be an imperfection. {WHY IS THIS NOT POSSIBLE?}

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[READ MATTHEW 25:31-34]

And

[READ JOHN 5:22-23]

God judges no one;
Jesus has been given this power
by God.



“But it must be emphasized that the doctrine of divine judgment, and particularly of the final judgment, is not to be thought of primarily as a bogey....” {WHAT???

Page 144 **Jesus the Father’s Agent**

“It is not always realized that the main New Testament authority on final judgement...is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.”

- This doctrinal standard of many denominations, including Presbyterians, is found in The Westminster Confession of Faith. (Open your hymnals.)

Page 145 **Index of the Heart**

Dr. Packer says that “final judgement (by God) will be according to our works—that is, our *doings*...” This does not mean one gains salvation simply by performing good deeds, as some insist. In fact, in one of his later works Dr. Packer states, “Justification by works (things we have done) is the heresy of legalism.”¹

- The importance of any good deed, Packer insists, is not how perfect or successful our actions were, but whether it sprang from a heart-felt love of Christ.

God’s Gift of Justification²

Packer attempts to show how God’s gift of justification meshes with the threat of judgement.

{What do you think of Packer’s answer (bottom of pg. 145)?}

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Surprisingly, he claims that God’s final judgement will also be based on our knowledge of what God demands: “If God has been generous with you, he will expect you to serve him well. But if he has been more than generous, he will expect you to serve him even better.” (Luke 12:48b CEV) Jesus became our guide. He came to show us the pathway to His Father.

So, “it’s our obligation to follow, knowing that there is now ‘no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1.)’”
Amen

¹ Concise Theology, pg. 160.

² Justification = “God’s declaration of a person as righteous on account of his or her faith in Jesus Christ.” Mosaic, pg. 307.

Additional Sources

- *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, "Justification," ed. by George A. Buttrick. Abington Press, Nashville, 1962.
- Olson, Roger E., *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 2nd ed., Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2016.
- *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., F. L. Cross, ed., Oxford Univ. Press, England, 1974.
- Packer, J. I., *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*, Tindale House Pub., Wheaton, Illinois, 1993.
- Westminster Confession of Faith (Chap. XXXIII) of 1643 and 1647, as found in our Trinity Hymnal.

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