

THEISM

God is Our Judge

A judge is someone who evaluates a matter, ideally after careful deliberation based on correct standards, weighing of pertinent evidences, and testing of premises. A judge then usually acts in positive and/or negative ways considered appropriate to whatever opinions have been made. Everyone makes judgments about all aspects of life – e.g. family, work, history, science, art, literature, politics, current events, etc. However, our concern here is about judgments related to human behavior.

God expects people to make judgments in the governance of society according to his standards. After the Israelites left Egypt, but before they came to Mt. Sinai, Moses sat to judge everyone who came to him with their difficulties that he might tell them the statutes of God and his laws (Exodus 18:13-16). He also appointed judges over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens and taught them the statutes of the Lord (Exodus 18:19-24), to judge righteously (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they were instructed that judges should set in their gates to give people righteous judgments. He said, “You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe” (Deuteronomy 16:18-20). A difficult case should be taken to the priests who would pronounce a sentence of judgment according to the law (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). After Israel entered the Promised Land, the Lord raised up judges to deliver the Israelites from their enemies (Judges 2:18-19) and to administer justice during their lifetimes (Judges 3:10; 4:4; 10:2-3; 12:7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14; 15:20; 16:31). The primary role intended for a king was that of a judge (2 Samuel 8:15, 1 Chronicles 18:14; 1 Kings 3:11-12, 28; 2 Chronicles 19:4-11). Kings also appointed judges (1 Chronicles 23:4; 2 Chronicles 19:5). When Jehoshaphat appointed judges, he said, “Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (2 Chronicles 19:7). In the church, individuals are to judge others in seeking reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-17). The church is expected to have within it men wise enough to judge between brethren (1 Corinthians 6:2-5; see also 1 Corinthians 5:3-5). Disciples should be able to discern whether a prophet is true or false by his fruits (Matthew 7:15-20).

God expects people to make judgments in personal relationships according to his standards. “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:15). “He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” (James 4:11-12). “Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand” (Romans 14:4). “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:9). Jesus spoke against hypocritical judgments, saying “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye;’ and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1-5). “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37).

Although God expects people to make judgments in their personal lives, **God is our judge.** *God judges all the earth* (Genesis 18:25; Isaiah 66:16). He assesses human behavior (1 Kings 8:32; 2 Samuel 11:27). He opposes those who do evil (Genesis 6:3, 5, 13). He punishes the proud (Psalm 31:23; 94:2). He dispenses rewards (2 Timothy 4:8). “He will have compassion on His servants” (Psalm 135:14).

God judges righteously (Psalm 7:11; 9:8; 67:4; 72:2; 96:13; 98:9) and without partiality (1 Peter 1:17). “With righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4).

God judges nations (Genesis 15:14; Judges 11:27; 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 96:10; 2 Chronicles 20:5-17; Isaiah 2:4; Joel 3:12). “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off” (Micah 4:3).

God judges individuals (1 Corinthians 5:13). “He puts down one, and exalts another” (Psalm 75:7). “If one man sins against another, God will judge him” (1 Samuel 2:25). Eli was told that God would judge him “for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.” (1 Samuel 3:12-13).

God makes temporal judgments (Genesis 15:5; 31:53; 1 Samuel 24:12, 15). He brings vengeance upon the wicked (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30). “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

God’s judgments have eternal significance. The Apostle John saw “a great white throne and Him who sat on it.” He “saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. . . . And the dead were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books. . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11, 12, 15). Jesus said that “the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:27-29).

God has delegated authority to Christ to judge the world. Jesus himself said, “When the Son of Man comes . . . He will sit on the throne of His glory. All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:31-32). Peter told Cornelius’ household that Jesus “was ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). Paul wrote Timothy that this would occur “at His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:1). Paul told the Athenians that God “has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). To the Romans, Paul wrote, “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Romans 2:16). “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). In addition, Paul wrote to the Corinthians “that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

“Therefore, beloved, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. . . . Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ . . .” (2 Peter 3:14, 17-18). “Watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is” (Mark 13:33, also verses 34-37).

Copyright © November, 2005, by Robert L. Waggoner. Permission is granted to copy and distribute this document for non-profit educational purposes if reproduced in full without additions or deletions. Why not distribute this document to others? For other essays about God and additional information regarding biblical theism, go to the website www.biblicaltheism.com