

JUDGMENT DAY, FINAL

A purpose of the final judgment is to judge every person, to provide a separation of the faithful from the wicked, and to make available the promised blessings of eternal reward to God's faithful children. Jesus Christ is the judge.

The concept of a final judgment requires that it be deferred until the entire mortal experience is completed. The PLAN OF SALVATION teaches of a partial judgment at the time of death, when the spirit leaves the mortal body and enters the world of spirits (Alma 40:11–14), of another partial judgment at the time of resurrection, when the spirit and the physical body are permanently resurrected and reunited (Alma 11:45); and of a final judgment (Rev. 20:12; D&C 38:5) that will consign individuals to an eternal status (D&C 29:27–29; 3 Ne. 26:4). Thus, this final judgment will take place following the reuniting of body and spirit in the RESURRECTION (Alma 11:44; 12:12). By that time, every person will have been given an opportunity to receive an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:19–20; Luke 4:18; Isa. 42:7).

At the Judgment, each person will be required to give an accounting of the use of his or her moral agency during mortality (D&C 101:78). The final judgment is the final point of eternal accountability for all voluntary actions, words, thoughts, desires, and works of the individual. The full significance of such an accounting cannot be adequately assessed unless it is realized that all judgments granted from the seat of God's justice are of infinite scope and eternal consequence (3 Ne. 26:4; D&C 76:112).

Every person born to mortality will be brought to a final judgment (Morm. 3:18–20). No mortal act, no matter how righteous or wicked, will provide exemption from this judgment.

Each individual is to be judged according to the degree of knowledge and opportunity available during mortal probation (2 Ne. 2:10). On the basis of records kept both on earth and in heaven (Rev. 20:12; 2 Ne. 29:11; D&C 128:7), each individual will be judged according to works, desires, and intent of the heart (Mosiah 4:6; 1 Ne. 15:33; D&C 33:1; 137:7–9; Alma 41:3) and assigned to an eternal kingdom. In this solemn responsibility, the Savior will apply both justice and mercy, such that every individual will know and declare that his or her reward is just (2 Ne. 9:46; Mosiah 27:31). Every soul will recognize that the record pre-

sented is true and that the Judgment constitutes a proper decision (Mosiah 16:1; 29:12) at the hand of a loving yet impartial judge (Mosiah 29:12–13; Alma 41:3–7; cf. *TPJS*, p. 218).

Not all, however, will be held equally responsible for personal mortal acts. Speaking of the Judgment, the Prophet Joseph SMITH taught that God “will judge them, ‘not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,’ those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law” (*TPJS*, p. 218).

Each brings his or her own record to this judgment, as stated by Church President John TAYLOR: “Because that record that is written by the man himself in the tablets of his own mind—that record that cannot lie—will in that day be unfolded before God and angels, and those who shall sit as judges” (*JD* 11:79; cf. Alma 41:7). Jesus Christ will be at the judgment bar, for he is the judge of both the living and the dead (Alma 11:44; Moro. 10:34; D&C 76:68).

Others will also participate in the process, but the final judgment rests with Christ. The twelve apostles of the Lamb will judge the righteous among the twelve tribes of Israel (D&C 29:12; Matt. 19:28; 1 Ne. 12:9–10), and the twelve Nephite disciples will judge the Nephites (3 Ne. 27:27). Still other prophets and righteous Saints have been appointed to help judge the works and deeds of their fellow sojourners in mortality (1 Cor. 6:2; Morm. 3:18–20). Thus, “there will be a whole hierarchy of judges who, under Christ, shall judge the righteous. He alone shall issue the decrees of damnation for the wicked” (McConkie, p. 520).

The Lord Jesus Christ earned the right to judge every earthly soul as he ensured the plan of redemption through the Atonement (3 Ne. 27:14–16; Alma 42:23). That this responsibility was explicitly given to the Son by the Father (John 5:22, 27) is attested in the Book of Mormon: “My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; . . . that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works” (3 Ne. 27:14). Evidence of the Father's divine trust is shown in giving Jesus the responsibility of pronouncing eternal judgment on the Father's own children. Christ will judge in accordance with the will of the Father (John 5:30).

The basis of justice carried out at the final judgment lies in the agency granted to mortals so

that “every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment” (D&C 101:78). There would be little value to agency without accountability. Just as Cain was counseled by the Lord, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” (Gen. 4:7), so each person has full option in making moral choices.

As a result of this final judgment, the wicked will be eternally separated from the righteous (D&C 76; Alma 41:5). This separation will be the desired state for both, for neither the wicked nor the righteous could enjoy the constant presence of others so unlike themselves. As stated by Moroni, “Ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell” (Morm. 9:4). And to the righteous, judgment will bring fulfillment of the promise that “they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever” (2 Ne. 9:18).

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JUSTICE AND MERCY

Justice and mercy are attributes of deity. They are also eternal principles. The “justice of God” (Alma 41:2; 42:14) is a principle so fundamental that without it, “God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:13). Of equivalent significance is God’s mercy, which, broadly, is the ultimate source of all of the blessings of the human race and, specifically, is the principle that allows mankind’s redemption. The competing demands of justice’s claim for punishment and mercy’s claim for forgiveness are reconciled by the unifying power of the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST.

On one hand, justice rewards righteousness. “And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21, see also D&C 82:10). On the other, justice requires penalties as a consequence of disobedience to the laws of God, for “I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31). Just as obedience to divine law leads to blessings, justice affixes a punishment to each violation of the Lord’s commandments (Alma 42:17–18, 22), and men and women will be “punished for their own sins” (A of F 2). Each person will thus be judged according to his or her works (Rom. 2:5–6; 3 Ne. 27:14; Alma 41:2–6), although the degree of accountability varies according to the extent of each person’s knowledge and culpability (2 Ne. 9:25; Mosiah 3:11). Yet the principle of mercy allows the atonement of Jesus Christ to pay the demands of justice on a repentant transgressor’s behalf in a way that reconciles the principles of mercy and justice.

Not just any person may invoke mercy on behalf of another: “Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another . . . therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:11–12). Jesus Christ alone can achieve such an infinite atonement “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10) because of his nature as the actual son of God in the flesh and because he was himself without sin (*see* ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST; JESUS CHRIST: ONLY BEGOTTEN IN THE FLESH).

Mercy is not extended arbitrarily. To protect individuals from the undeserved effects of sins for which they are not responsible, the Atonement unconditionally paid the penalty for the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It pays similarly for sins committed in ignorance (Mosiah 3:11; see also Moses 6:54). However, the Atonement removes the penalty for personal sins for which one is accountable only on the condition of individual repentance.

In this way, the concepts of justice, mercy, and the Atonement retain both a specific integrity and a logically consistent relationship: “The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and merciful God also. . . . But there is a law given, and a