

CONDEMNATION

“Whoever believes in [the Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

- John 3:18

1. Condemnation is a judicial/legal term for: (1) a pronouncement of a guilty verdict; and (2) the adjudication of punishment upon a guilty person.

a. Key biblical words for condemnation are:

(1) *עָרַפְתָּ*: “to be (become) guilty...to make oneself guilty...to pronounce, declare guilty...to cause to be condemned” (*HALOT*, 1294-95).

(2) *κατάκριμα*: “the use of the term ‘condemnation’ does not denote merely a pronouncement of guilt..., but the adjudication of punishment...judicial pronouncement upon a guilty person, *condemnation, punishment, penalty*” (*BDAG*, 518).

(3) *κατακρίνω*: “pronounce a sentence after determination of guilt, *pronounce a sentence on...someone*” (*BDAG*, 519).

(4) *κατάκρισις*: “a judicial verdict involving a penalty, *condemnation*” (*BDAG*, 519).

b. Early Old Testament examples include:

(1) **Ex 22:9** 9 ...Every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, This is it, the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns [declares guilty] shall pay double to his neighbour.

(2) **Dt 25:1-2** 1 If there is a dispute between men, they come into court, and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty, 2 then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge....

2. The opposite of condemnation is justification.

a. Justification is “to render a favourable verdict, *vindicate*...as activity of humans *justify, vindicate, treat as just*...of experience or activity of transcendent figures, esp. in relation to humans...of God *be found in the right, be free of charges*...Esp. of pers. ...*be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous* and thereby become *δίκαιος*, receive the divine gift of *δικαιοσύνη* through faith in Christ Jesus and apart from νόμος as a basis for evaluation” (*BDAG*, 249).

b. Again and again in Scripture we see the juxtaposition of condemnation and justification.

(1) **1 Ki 8:31-32** 31 If a man sins against his neighbour, is made to take an oath, and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, 32 then hear in heaven, act, and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

(2) **Pr 12:2** 2 A good man obtains grace [justification] from Yahweh, but a man of evil devices he condemns [condemnation].

(3) **Ro 5:16-18** 16 ...The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ...18 As one trespass

led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

- (4) Romans 1:18-3:20 may be labelled “Condemnation.” Romans 3:21-5:[] may be labelled “Justification.”

c. Principles.

- (1) Condemnation results in punishment; justification results in reward.
(2) At final judgment a person is either condemned or justified. There is no third option. Concepts like purgatory are not biblical concepts.

3. God’s condemnation and justification are absolutely fair.

- a. **Pr 17:15** 15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to Yahweh.
- b. We are never in a position to condemn God.
(1) **Job 40:6-8** 6 ...Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 7 Dress for action like a man. I will question you, and you make it known to me. 8 Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?
(2) See *Problem of Evil*.
- c. We are never in a position to condemn other people.
(1) **Ro 2:1** 1 ...You have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.
- d. Condemnation and justification are exclusively God’s prerogative.
- e. Principles.
(1) None of us can tell a person we don’t like to “go to hell.”
(2) We can call an act sinful, but we are never allowed to condemn someone to hell.
(3) Calling an act sinful is not condemnation. For example, if we tell a person sodomy is morally wrong, that is not “judging” them. Opening up a legal code and showing a person what it says is not “judging” them, it’s informing them.

4. Without Jesus, every human being deserves condemnation.

- a. We deserve condemnation based on positional sin.
(1) **Ro 5:16-18** 16 ...The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Messiah. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.
- b. We deserve condemnation based on our operational sins.
(1) **Ro 3:22-23** 22 ...There is no distinction. 23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....
(2) **Eph 2:1-2** 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
- c. Even righteous Job admits he deserves condemnation.

- (1) **Job 9:15-20** 15 Though I [Job] am in the right, I cannot answer [God]. I must appeal for mercy to my accuser. ... 19 If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him? 20 Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me. Though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.
- (2) **Job 9:29-31** 29 I [Job] shall be condemned. Why then do I labor in vain? 30 If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, 31 yet you [God] will plunge me into a pit, and my own clothes will abhor me.
- d. Moses' ministry was one of condemnation.
 - (1) **2 Co 3:7-9** 7 ...If the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.
 - (2) The purpose of Mosaic law was to make clear our condemnation, setting up our justification in Messiah.
- e. Principles.
 - (1) From Hitler and Stalin to Mother Theresa and Gandhi, we are all guilty, and our condemnation is deserved.
 - (2) We may be relatively righteous compared to other human beings, but that doesn't make us righteous in God's sight.
 - (3) The biblical worldview doesn't flatter man. It tells us we are God's image bearers, but it also tells us we are sinners and justly condemned without Jesus.

5. The Father sent his one and only Son to be condemned in our place.

- a. Jesus came to justify us, not to condemn us. God desires to justify every human being. If he had his way, no one would be condemned.
 - (1) **Jn 3:17** 17 ...God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
- b. Though he was innocent, Jesus was unjustly condemned by the Jews and Romans.
 - (1) **Mt 20:18** 18 See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death.
 - (2) **Mt 26:66** 66 What is your judgment? [The Jewish leaders] answered, He [Jesus] deserves death.
 - (3) **Mt 27:3** 3 ...When Judas, [Jesus'] betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders....
 - (4) **Mk 14:64** 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision? And [the Jewish Sanhedrin] all condemned [Jesus] as deserving death.
- c. The Father condemned sin in the flesh through Jesus' death and resurrection. This is why God the Son had to become the man Jesus of Nazareth. Humanity's condemnation had to be dealt with by a human, a perfect human, the God-man.
 - (1) **Ro 8:3** 3 By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh.

- d. The Innocent One, Jesus, was condemned in place of the guilty ones. He took upon himself our condemnation that judicially we might be set free.
 - (1) “In my place condemned He stood” (Philip B. Bliss, “Hallelujah! What a Saviour” (1875)).
- e. Adam brought condemnation and death. Jesus brought justification and life.
 - (1) **Ro 5:16-18** 16 ...The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Messiah. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

6. Satan and his world system have been condemned already.

- a. **Jn 12:31** 31 Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
- b. **1 Co 11:31-32** 31 ...If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.
- c. **Heb 11:7** 7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.
- d. Principles.
 - (1) Every time we are drawn to join in Satan’s world system, we are to remember it already has been condemned at the cross.
 - (2) The condemnation of Satan and his world system has been pronounced but not fully carried out yet.

7. Unbelievers, too, will be condemned.

- a. Failure to change one’s mind about Jesus results in condemnation.
 - (1) **Mt 11:20-22** 20 ...[Jesus] began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not change their minds [about him]. 21 Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have changed their minds long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.
 - (2) **Mt 12:41-42** 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they changed their minds at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.
- b. The basis for condemnation is the sin of unbelief, not personal sins.
 - (1) **Mk 16:16** 16 Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

- (2) **Jn 3:18** 18 Whoever believes in [the Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- (3) **Jn 12:47-48** 47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them [by believing in me], I [Jesus] do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge. The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.
- (4) **2 Th 2:11-12** 11 ...God sends [unbelievers] a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, 12 in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
- c. Our lives of faith, reverent fear, and obedience to God serve to condemn the world.
 - (1) **Heb 11:7** 7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.
- d. There will be varying degrees of condemnation.
 - (1) **Mt 11:22-24** 22 ...I [Jesus] tell you [Chorazin], it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ...24 But I tell you [Capernaum] that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.
 - (2) **Lk 20:46-47** 46 Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts, 47 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.

8. Believers, by contrast, are not condemned.

- a. **Ps 34:22** 22 Yahweh redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him [believe in him] will be condemned.
- b. **Ro 8:1** 1 There is...now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Jesus.
- c. God disciplines believers, but he never condemns them.
 - (1) **1 Co 11:31-32** 31 ...If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

9. If the Creator does not condemn us, certainly no creature can.

- a. **Ro 8:33-34** 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Messiah Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
- b. The Jews' accusations against Jesus fell flat.
 - (1) **Jn 18:38** 38 ...[Pilate] went back outside to the Jews and told them, I find no guilt in him [Jesus].
- c. The Jews' accusations against Paul fell flat (Ac 23:29; 25:18; 26:31-32).
- d. Satan's accusations against us fall flat.
 - (1) **Re 12:9-11** 9 ...The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation, the power, the kingdom of our God,

and the authority of his Messiah have come, for the accuser (κατήγορ) of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, who accuses (κατηγορέω) them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

(2) κατηγορέω: “nearly always as legal t.t.: *bring charges* in court” (BDAG, 533).

e. People’s accusations against us fall flat.

(1) **Ps 37:32-33** 32 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. 33 Yahweh will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.

(2) **Ps 94:20-23** 20 Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? 21 They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. 22 But Yahweh has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. 23 He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness. Yahweh our God will wipe them out.

(3) **Ps 109:29-31** 29 May my accusers be clothed with dishonour. May they be wrapped in their own shame as in a cloak! 30 With my mouth I will give great thanks to Yahweh. I will praise him in the midst of the throng. 31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.

(4) **Is 50:7-9** 7 ...Lord Yahweh helps me. Therefore I have not been disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold, Lord Yahweh helps me. Who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment. The moth will eat them up.

(5) **Is 54:17** 17 ...No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the inheritance of the servants of Yahweh and their vindication (קִיּוּם) from me, declares Yahweh.

(6) **Jn 9:9-11** 9 ...When [the scribes and Pharisees] heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus stood up and said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? 11 She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on sin no more.