

# Lesson 11 | Date

## God's Love and Judgment

**Study Text:** Exodus 20:4–6; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 7:10–11; 37:37–38; 86:15–16; Matthew 13:41–43; Ephesians 2:4–5; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 4:7–10; Revelation 20:11–15; 22:12–16

**Central Truth:** God's judgment is governed by His love and mercy.

**Key Verse:** Deuteronomy 32:4

**He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he (KJV).**

**He is the Rock, his works are perfect and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he (NIV).**

### Learning Objectives

- Define the terms mercy, grace, and judgment as used in the Bible.
- Recognize the loving compassion of God toward humanity.
- Choose to show mercy to those who oppose us, and therefore may not seem to deserve mercy.

## Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** Some high-profile speakers and teachers in our secular society have made the claim that a loving God could never bring judgment upon His creation. Within this flawed and dangerous belief is an assumption that God cannot be both loving and just: He cannot both love people and hold them responsible for their sins against Him. It is important for us, as believers, to keep in mind that **God's love and His judgment are not mutually exclusive**. He longs for everyone to accept His love and obey Him, and in doing so avoid the judgment that will ultimately befall all who refuse to acknowledge Him as Creator and Lord.

### Opening Activity— Love and Judgment—Not Opposites

*Ask: What is Mercy, Grace, Judgment?*

*What earthly examples can you think of when love and judgment may go hand-in-hand?* Examples might include parents, grandparents, teachers, or church leaders who provide both love and discipline.

We love our children yet we discipline them.

**Say:** A loving parent must provide discipline or judgment to help children learn what is right and wrong. **God loves humanity even more than a parent loves a child, but He**

**also requires that humanity recognize Him for who He is.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

People who criticize Christianity often point to the judgmental nature of what they perceive to be the Christian belief system. **They say that Christians judge people rather than love them.** These individuals often claim that if God exists, He would be loving and not judgmental like those who claim to follow Him. Being able to answer these critics of Christianity is important. **Today's lesson will provide answers to these questions and challenge students to trust God with their futures.**

## **Part 1— God Is Merciful and Loving**

### **The Mercy of God**

Psalm 86:15–16; Ephesians 2:4–5

**[Psa 86:15-16 KJV] 15 But thou, O Lord, [art] a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.**

**[Eph 2:4-5 KJV] 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)**

**Say:** David recognized God's great mercy, quoting from Exodus 34:6, where God said of himself, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (niv). In that setting, God had delivered His people from Egypt, but they had already rebelled by building a golden calf, which was reminiscent of the gods the Egyptians served. In the Exodus passage, God was giving Moses the Ten Commandments for the second time, and was reminding Moses of the great mercy that He was extending to the Israelites. David, himself, relied on that mercy in his own life. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**[Exo 34:6 KJV] 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,**

**Believers tend to place a lot of focus on God's grace, and rightly so. Grace refersto God's willingness to forgive, redeem, cleanse, and reward the people He has created.** However, it is important not to lose focus or appreciation for a similar trait of God: His mercy. **Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone by God, even though it is within**

**His power and righteous justice to punish. Without the mercy of God, grace would be incomplete.** God's grace demonstrates one aspect of God's love by providing the means to have a relationship with Him. **His mercy obliterates our sins that have separated us from God, leaving us in right standing with Him. In a sense, one might say that grace allows us to walk forward. Mercy allows us to not suffer the consequences of our past.**

David recognized the importance of both grace and mercy. **He recognized that God can become angry, but He is not easily provoked. God provides people every opportunity to change their behavior. David made many mistakes in his life, but he could count on God to forgive him if he humbly repented of his sins (Psalm 86:15–16).**

The apostle Paul affirmed the love and mercy of God. **Paul used the word “rich” when referring to God’s mercy (Ephesians 2:4, niv). God does not distribute His mercy with hesitation. He is generous with it. He has an unlimited supply.** He desires to forgive the past of anyone who is willing to ask. That mercy, in turn, reminds us of His grace—the grace through which we have been saved. We were dead, but now we are alive.

**Paul described the two sides of a Christian’s salvation in verse 5: He wipes away a person’s sin the moment he or she cries out in repentance for mercy and grace. At that moment, the Christian is given a new life. The Christian is born again. From that moment on, he or she can live without guilt or shame for what has been done in the past (Ephesians 2:5).**

### ***Discuss***

? How do you respond to people who treat you badly?

? As recipients of God’s great mercy, how can we show mercy to those around us? Who might those people be?

## **The Love of God**

1 John 4:7–10

**[1Jo 4:7-10 KJV] 7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.**

**Say:** The verses in this section are found in the first Epistle of John the apostle. It is appropriate for us to read about the love of God from John's perspective. In his Gospel, John referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (see John 13:23; 21:7; 21:20, NIV), possibly to avoid naming himself in his account of the Savior. In light of this focus on love, we might conclude that John recognized and cherished the great love God the Father, demonstrated through His Son in the most quoted verse of the Bible, John 3:16. [Quote, or have a student quote John 3:16.] (Share your highlights from the following text.)

It is likely that few understood the love of God more than the apostle John. **John recognized that true love is a gift from God. God's mercy is grounded in His love for all of His Creation. John stated that if Christians have God living in them, then they should be people of love as well** (1 John 4:7).

**John asserted that if a person does not demonstrate love to others, that person must not know God or have a relationship with Him. John based this conclusion on the fact that God is love. Love is His chief identifiable attribute** (1 John 4:8). This is not to say, then, that love is His only activity, but that all of His activity is loving activity. **When God creates, He creates in love. When He rules, He rules in love. When He judges, He judges in love.**

God loves everyone, but everyone has, through sin, been lost in his or her rebellion against Him. **In God's "economy," so to speak—His way of doing things—no human could pay the price necessary for the sins committed against Him. His love compelled Him to send Jesus, God the Son, to earth to pay the ultimate price for our transgressions against Him. Furthermore, He provided a way for Christians to live in right relationship with Him based on the relationship that Jesus has with the Father** (1 John 4:9). **The God Society.**

**The greatest love that any person can hold or demonstrate will never measure up to the love that God has for the world.** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit knew the pain and suffering that would be involved in sending God the Son to earth. **God's love cannot be described because it transcends our understanding.** It goes against all human logic. Jesus humbled himself and paid the price for sins that had been committed against God (1 John 4:10).

### ***Discuss***

? Why do you think some people have a hard time forgiving others?

? How has God's love for you affected your life?

### **Resource Packet Item 1: Love and Mercy**

Distribute the work sheet, “Love and Mercy.” You may want to divide the class into groups for their initial discussion. Reserve a few minutes for each student to individually reflect and respond to the final question in each of the two sections.

## **Part 2—God’s Righteous and Perfect Judgment**

### **God’s Righteous Judgment**

Exodus 20:4–6; Psalm 37:37–38

**[Exo 20:4-6 KJV] 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness [of any thing] that [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.**

**[Psa 37:37-38 KJV] 37 Mark the perfect [man], and behold the upright: for the end of [that] man [is] peace. 38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.**

**Say:** The first two of the Ten Commandments focused on worshipping only God, our Creator—including not mingling our worship of Him with the worship of something else.

**Nothing else is worthy of worship because He made all things. To worship anything else is to worship created things rather than the Creator himself.**

Paul described sinful people by saying, “They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised” (Romans 1:25). It is illogical to put a created thing on a par with or above its Creator. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**God declared through Moses that He should not share His worship with anything that He had created (Exodus 20:4–6). It was not uncommon during Bible times for those who engaged in pagan worship to associate their gods with items that they could see. Often, they would limit their view of the god to the image that represented it. No image could ever be constructed that could represent the greatness of God, a truth that is evident through the teaching of Exodus 20:4.**

**God is not willing to share allegiances with any other god. It was common for those involved in pagan worship to add a new god to the mix and worship this new god. The God of Israel would not share His exalted status with gods that**

were only poor substitutions for reality. God is jealous. The term translated “jealous” here is only used of God in Scripture, and it makes reference to God as having no rival—meaning that we must recognize that nothing can compare to Him. His jealousy is based on His knowledge that nothing else deserves worship (Exodus 20:5–6).

The psalmist expressed the justice of God as he described the result of a person’s choice (Psalm 37:37–38). **People who choose to recognize God and worship Him through obedient living will have a future that is peaceful. Indeed, we as Christians know that we will one day rest in the place of peace, the presence of God. People who choose to reject the authority of God also choose to reject God’s invitation to experience salvation. These individuals will not have a future of peace. They will experience the judgment of God.**

### ***Discuss***

? What implications does God’s love have for your daily life?

? What created things can you name that people have worshipped? What created things might believers be tempted to worship?

## **God’s Just Judgment**

Revelation 20:11–15; 22:12–16

**[Rev 20:11-15 KJV] 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

**[Rev 22:12-16 KJV] 12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward [is] with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14 Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the**

**city. 15 For without [are] dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, [and] the bright and morning star.**

**Say:** These verses are near the end of the Bible and are part of the Revelation of the end times that God gave to John. This is the culmination of God's story of redemption. He created humankind and provided for their needs, yet they chose to rebel against Him. He gave His Son as the Sacrifice to atone for humanity's sin, but many of them still choose to reject Him. Yet He has a perfect plan for those who choose to respond to His love by accepting salvation through Jesus Christ. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**At the end of time, every person will be judged according to their lives. This judgment is referred to as “The Great White Throne Judgment.” Those who have lived their lives in rebellion against God will face horrific judgment (Revelation 20:11).**

**Jesus will determine the verdict of each case based on a uniform standard.** The history of each person has been recorded in one of two books. One contains the names of all individuals who have placed their faith in Jesus. This document is called the Book of Life. But all who choose to live according to their own standards will have their record placed in the second book. **The Bible does not give this book a name, but an apt name for it might be the Book of Death** (Revelation 20:12–13).

**All people throughout the ages who have rejected Jesus as Lord, will be cast into the lake of fire. This is not an act of an unloving God. This is an act of a just God. He will not ignore unrepented sin at the time of judgment** (Revelation 20:14–15).

**People often accuse God of being unloving because He sends people to hell. Yet this is not true. God gives everyone a chance to recognize Him and respond to Him. Hell is the place reserved for people who rejected God on earth.**

**Whereas the future that awaits those who reject God will be horrific, the home that is on the horizon for those who have placed their faith in Jesus will be amazing.** The beautiful heavenly home that awaits the faithful will be great, yet it pales in comparison to the joy that believers will experience as they spend eternity in the presence of God. **This is not a reward that Christians have earned, but it is the future they have chosen—and, as a result, they have been cleansed and been made fit for God's everlasting presence** (Revelation 22:12–16).

### ***Discuss***

? What right does God have to judge humanity?

? How does the final judgment motivate you in the way you live?

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Parables of Final Judgment**

Distribute the work sheet and divide your class into small groups. Assign each parable to one or more small groups, then ask the groups to report their findings.

## **Part 3— Why Does a Loving God Judge?**

### **A Wrong Question**

Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 7:10–11; Matthew 13:41–43

**[Deu 32:4 KJV] 4 [He is] the Rock, his work [is] perfect: for all his ways [are] judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right [is] he.**

**[Psa 7:10-11 KJV] 10 My defence [is] of God, which saveth the upright in heart. 11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry [with the wicked] every day.**

**[Mat 13:41-43 KJV] 41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

**Say:** People who would like to justify their choices to live in sin often cite God's love as evidence that He couldn't possibly judge wrongdoers. They see love and judgment as polar opposites. However, God's love is demonstrated in His judgment. By giving multiple warnings of judgment to come, He is giving people ample opportunities to turn from their sin and be in relationship with Him, and He has freely made a way for people to avoid His judgment. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**Asking the question, "Why does a loving God judge?" reveals a basic misunderstanding of the words "love" and "judge."** Love does not preclude the ability of a person to see right from wrong. We discipline our children because we love them. The concept that "love is blind" is romantic at best, and most often dangerous.

**A second error with the question is that it assumes God is wrong to judge. This is the ultimate form of arrogance. God created all things. He keeps all things going. He knows all things.** God does not make mistakes and He does no wrong. To suggest that He could do wrong is to confess that one does not believe He is truly God. (Deuteronomy 32:4).

The psalmist states that God exercises righteous judgment to reward those who acknowledge Him and to punish those who oppose Him. God's judgment toward someone who remains alive is an act of love in itself. It is His way of gaining the person's attention. If those who oppose God are able to recognize their error and turn from it, they have the chance to ask for mercy (Psalm 7:10–11).

**Jesus made the options as clear as possible when He spoke of the end of time.** He proclaimed that at the end of time, those who lived sinful lives would be cast into a fiery judgment. He set this in opposition to those who chose to live righteous lives. Those individuals will shine in the kingdom of God. **Jesus then invited everyone who is willing to hear and believe to become a part of the kingdom of God** (Matthew 13:41–43).

### ***Discuss***

? Why do you think the concept of a judgment day bothers some people?

? How does God's judgment of sin reflect His love for humanity?

## **Make the Right Choice**

Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 3:9

**[Heb 12:14 KJV] 14 Follow peace with all [men], and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:**

**[2Pe 3:9 KJV] 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

**Say: God desires to have a loving relationship with each of us. He is patient and loving, but He will not force us to obey Him.** Just as He gave Adam and Eve free will in the Garden of Eden, He give us the freedom to choose to worship Him or to reject Him. When we choose to serve Him, He helps us to live in the holiness that pleases Him. Each day, we make choices to obey Him or disobey Him as He guides our path. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**The writer of Hebrews commanded his readers to live peaceful and holy lives. People cannot live in peace and live a holy life before God without the Spirit of God living within them. By contrast, people cannot be true followers of**

**God if they do not commit to pursuing holy lives. Every person is responsible for the choice he or she makes with regard to holy living** (Hebrews 12:14).

No one knows when the Day of Judgment will come. Some skeptics believe that it will never come because it has been so long since Jesus prophesied about it. Peter explains that God has delayed the Day of Judgment because He wants to give everyone a chance to repent of wickedness and turn to Christ for salvation (2 Peter 3:9). **However, people must not fool themselves into thinking that God has forgotten about the Day of Judgment. It will happen, and when it does, it will be too late for people to change their minds about God.**

### **Resource Packet Item 3: Mercy Before Judgment**

Distribute the work sheet and allow small groups to discuss it briefly, then report to the class and discuss their answers.

#### ***Discuss***

? If today were your last day on earth, how would you live it?

? What does the fact that God has not brought time to an end yet reveal to you about God's nature?

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** While the idea of God's judgment often causes fear, we must be grateful that His love provided a way for us to be forgiven and to live in right relationship with Him. He calls believers to demonstrate His love to our world to help others avoid the coming judgment.

## **Living It Out**

### **Ministry in Action**

- Find a tangible way to share God's love with someone this week.
- Examine the choices you make to be sure you are obeying God in your daily life.
- Pray for the salvation of a coworker or friend who is an unbeliever.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

### **Monday:**

Lord, Have Mercy.  
Psalm 41:4–13

**[Psa 41:4-13 KJV] 4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. 5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? 6 And if he come to see [me], he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; [when] he goeth abroad, he telleth [it]. 7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8 An evil**

disease, [say they], cleaveth fast unto him: and [now] that he lieth he shall rise up no more. 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up [his] heel against me. 10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. 13 Blessed [be] the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

**Tuesday:**

Mercy and Refuge.

Psalm 57:1–11

[Psa 57:1-11 KJV] 1 [[To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.]] Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until [these] calamities be overpast. 2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth [all things] for me. 3 He shall send from heaven, and save me [from] the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4 My soul [is] among lions: [and] I lie [even among] them that are set on fire, [even] the sons of men, whose teeth [are] spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; [let] thy glory [be] above all the earth. 6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen [themselves]. Selah. 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I [myself] will awake early. 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10 For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: [let] thy glory [be] above all the earth.

**Wednesday:**

Love Good; Establish Justice.

Amos 5:11–15

[Amo 5:11-15 KJV] 11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading [is] upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. 12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate [from their right]. 13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it [is] an evil time. 14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. 15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

**Thursday:**

Be Merciful to Me, a Sinner.  
Luke 18:8–14

**[Luk 18:8-14 KJV] 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? 9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men [are], extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as [his] eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified [rather] than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**

**Friday:**

Walk in Love.  
2 John 1:3–6

**[2Jo 1:3-6 KJV] 3 Grace be with you, mercy, [and] peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. 5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.**

**Saturday:**

Remain in God's Love.  
Jude 1:20–22

**[Jde 1:20-22 KJV] 20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:**