

POST-CROSS WRATH

- A. Introduction: Jesus warned that prior to His return to earth there will be false Christs and false prophets. The Lord warned His followers to make sure that we don't fall for these deceptions. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
1. Consequently, to heed His warning, we're taking time to look at who Jesus is and what He came into this world to do—according to the Bible. God's Word is our protection against deception. Ps 91:4
 - a. People are increasingly vulnerable to accepting a false Christ and false gospel for several reasons.
 1. We live in a culture that has largely abandoned objective truth. Many people now determine what is true based on how they feel about something rather than by examining the evidence.
 2. According to numerous surveys, Bible reading among professing Christians is at an all time low. And, rather than challenging people with Bible truths, much current popular preaching is aimed primarily at making people feel good and offering ways to improve their lives. There's nothing wrong with those goals, but such preaching does little to increase Bible knowledge.
 - b. The gospel is being altered and the Person and the work of Jesus is being misrepresented like never before—not just among unbelievers, but among people who profess to be Christians.
 - c. It is becoming more common to hear so called "Christians" challenge the idea that God has wrath against sin or that people will be punished for sin. Those who hold to what the Bible says about sin, wrath, judgment, punishment, and Hell are increasingly being labeled as haters, judgers, and bigots.
 2. Recently, we've been looking at what the Bible says about God's wrath. We've made these points.
 - a. God is holy (separate from evil), righteous (right), and just (does what is right). To be true to Himself and His holy, righteous, just nature, God can't ignore or overlook sin. II Tim 2:13
 1. His wrath must be expressed and sin punished. God's wrath is an expression of justice, or an administering of justice. The right and just punishment for sin is eternal separation from God.
 2. Almighty God devised a plan to express His wrath toward sin and be true to His righteous, just nature, without destroying us (or forever removing us from Himself).
 - A. Jesus took on flesh, was born into this world, and went to the Cross to be punished for our sin. The wrath that should have gone to us for sin went to our Substitute. Isa 53:4-6
 - B. The gospel or good news of Jesus is that through His death, burial, and resurrection we have been delivered from the wrath of God. I Cor 15:1-4
 - b. God's righteous wrath toward sin has been expressed, but you must receive that expression in order for His wrath to be removed from you. You receive it by acknowledging Jesus as Savior and bowing you knee to Him as Lord. John 3:16-18
 1. John 3:36—If a person has not received Christ and His sacrifice, then God's wrath abides or remains on them. During their lifetime, God deals with them in mercy, giving them a witness of Himself. II Pet 3:9; Acts 14:16-17; Rom 1:20; etc.
 2. However, if they do not respond to His witness, when they leave this earth at death, they will face the wrath of God. They will experience eternal death or eternal separation from Him, first in Hell, then in the second death. Rev 20:11-15
 3. Tonight, we're going to continue our discussion of what the Bible says about God's wrath. We're going to address the incorrect idea that the Cross changed God and that He no longer has wrath against sin.
 - a. It's not unusual to hear Christians say that God is no longer angry about sin. Wrath, they say, was Old Testament and we live under the New Testament. God has no more wrath against sin.
 1. Sincere, well-meaning men of God preach these ideas. For many, it comes out of a genuine desire to help people who are wrongly afraid of God. These teachers testify that they grew up in religious homes where there was an overemphasis on wrath and punishment. Consequently,

- even though they were submitted to God, they lived in terror of what He might do to them.
2. The problem is, much of what they say, although well meaning, is inaccurate. Thirty years ago, you could be inexact with the Scriptures, but people knew what you meant because they themselves were Bible readers and had some knowledge of the truth.
 3. But imprecise is actually inaccurate. And in our culture, because of the times that we are living in, imprecision (which is inaccurate) has become error and some of it is becoming heresy.
 - A. Inaccurate teaching about God's wrath has morphed into: Daddy God doesn't care if we sin. He's not angry anymore! We're under grace!
 - B. Some have even gone so far as to say that because God has no more wrath against sin and all men are saved—no matter what they believe or how they live.
- b. The Cross didn't change God because He never changes (Heb 13:8; Mal 3:6). The Cross opened the way for Him to change us from sinners into sons—and still be true to His holy, righteous nature. As we will find out in this lesson, God still has wrath against sin.
- B. We've been making the point that to appreciate the good news you must understand the bad news. Let's begin by looking at the first people to whom Jesus came and why His message to them was good news.
1. The Bible is a historical record of real people who needed the gospel or good news as much as we do. They, like us, were guilty of sin before a holy God and deserving of the wrath of God.
 - a. None of those people ceased to exist when they left their bodies at death. All of them are somewhere right now—based on their response to Jesus and the gospel that He proclaimed to them.
 - b. Based on the writings of their prophets (the Old Testament prophets), these people understood that sin was their biggest problem. They knew that, following Adam's sin, God promised a Redeemer (Messiah) the Seed (Jesus) of the woman (Mary) who would undo the damage done. Gen 3:15
 1. The prophets revealed that the promised Messiah was going to establish the kingdom of God on the earth (Dan 2:4; Dan 7:27). The writings of the prophets made it clear that sinners won't have a place in God's kingdom (Ps 15:1-2; Ps 24:3-4; Isa 57:15; Zech 12-13; etc.)
 2. First century Jews further understood that the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom would also mean judgment on unrighteousness and the removal of all that corrupts.
 - A. The prophets were not clearly shown that there would be two separate comings of the Lord, first as the Suffering Savior and then as the Conquering King.
 - B. The prophets called what we know at the second coming of Christ the Day of the Lord and described as a time of wrath. Isa 13:9; Joel 2:11; Zeph 1:14-15; Ps 104; 35; Ps 37:28
 2. This information framed the mindset of first century Jesus. When John the Baptist began his ministry, he had everyone's attention because of his message: Repent for the kingdom of Heaven (or God) is at hand. Be baptized for (unto) the remission (wiping out) of sins. Matt 3:2; Luke 3:3
 - a. First century Jews were expecting the Messiah to bring the kingdom to earth. They knew sinners could not enter the kingdom. So they came to John and prepared for the coming kingdom.
 1. Repent is made up of two Greek words that mean to think differently (reconsider, to change the mind, implying the feeling of regret, sorrow). The word implies turning from sin toward God.
 2. This was not Christian baptism. John was offering ceremonial cleansing in preparation for the coming king and His kingdom. Baptism comes from a word that means to dip or immerse.
 - A. Ceremonial purification (or baptism) was common among the Jews. They baptized or ceremonially purified priests and other people, along with clothing, furniture, and utensils.
 - B. Repent, confess, and be cleansed was a familiar pattern. Proselytes (new converts) to Israel (Judaism) had to renounce all idols (repent and confess), promise submission to the Law of Moses, and be cleansed (baptized).
 - b. Notice John's comment to the Pharisees and Sadducees (Israel's hypocrite religious leaders) who came to check out his ministry: Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is coming? Matt 3:7

3. Then Jesus came on the scene with the same message with added details: The time is fulfilled. The kingdom is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel (good news). Mark 1:14-15
 - a. These first century men and women understood that God has wrath against sin. Therefore, good news for them was: Jesus has come to deliver you from the wrath that is coming.
 1. Jesus didn't immediately inform them of that fact. His three year ministry was a transition time as He prepared men and women to receive the New Covenant (lessons for another time).
 2. The crowds that followed Jesus knew that they had to have righteousness to enter the kingdom. During this period He told them: Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled (Matt 5:6). Your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 5:20). Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33).
 - b. Once Jesus paid for sin and rose from the dead He sent His apostles out to preach: Believe on Jesus and His sacrifice and your sin will be remitted. You'll qualify for the kingdom Luke 24:46-48
- C. References to God's wrath on sinful people did not end with the Cross, however. Jesus taught Paul the gospel he preached (Gal 1:11-12) and he indicated that the wrath of God is a real danger to people post-Cross.
 1. Consider Paul's epistle to the Romans. It was written almost thirty years after Jesus went to the Cross.
 - a. When Paul wrote, he not been to the church in Rome, but hoped to visit soon. He sent the epistle in anticipation of his visit and laid out his most systematic presentation of the gospel he preached.
 - b. Paul opened his letter with greetings and introductory remarks (Rom 1-14). Then he got right to it:
 - I I am ready to preach the gospel to you at Rome (Rom 1:15).
 1. Rom 1:16—For I am not ashamed of the Gospel (good news) of Christ; for it is God's power working unto salvation (for deliverance from eternal death) to everyone who believes. (Amp)
 2. Rom 1:17—I see in it God's plan for making men right in his sight, a process begun and continued by their faith. For, as the scripture says: The righteous shall live by faith. (Phillips)
 3. Rom 1:18—On the other hand (Berkeley), God's wrath and indignation are revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. (Amp)
 2. Paul then launched into a detailed explanation of the fact that all men (pagans, moralists, Jews—all) are guilty of sin and in need of salvation from God's wrath. Rom 1:18-3:20
 - a. To someone who might argue: But, I'm not like the "bad" people, Paul made it clear that you do what they do, and by refusing to acknowledge that you also are guilty of sin:
 1. By your obstinate refusal to repent (you're) storing up for yourself an experience of the wrath of God in the day of his anger when he shows his hand in righteous judgment. (Rom 2:5, Phillips)
 2. He will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deed. (Rom 2:8, NLT)
 - b. Then Paul explained God's plan to make men right with Himself, His plan of justification—how God has dealt with man's sin in a way that is just or right so that we can be justified or made right.
 1. Rom 3:21—But now we are seeing the righteousness of God declared...it is a right relationship given to, and operating in, all who have faith in Jesus Christ. (Phillips)
 2. Rom 3:24—A man who has faith is now freely acquitted in the eyes of God by his generous dealing in the redemptive act of Christ Jesus. (Phillips)
 3. Rom 3:25—For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us (NLT).
 4. Rom 3:25—26—God has done this to demonstrate his righteousness both in wiping out of the sins of the past (the time when he withheld his hand), and by showing in the present time that he is a just God and that he justifies every man who has faith in Jesus. (Phillips)
 - e. Rom 5:8-9—Paul wrote that God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to die for us. Now

that we are justified (acquitted, declared not guilty, declared righteous) we will be saved from wrath through Him. “What reason have we to fear the wrath of God? (v9, Phillips)

3. Paul wrote about the wrath of God in a letter to the church at Ephesus, written about AD 64. Paul established the church and spent three years with them, daily teaching them. Acts 19:1-10; Acts 20:31
 - a. They had a context, a familiarity with Paul and his ministry, so he didn't lay the gospel out in the same way as in Romans. He opened with a statement about God's eternal plan to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters through faith in Christ. Eph 1:3-6
 1. He reminded them that by God's grace, through the blood of Christ, we have redemption (deliverance from the penalty and power of sin) and remission (the wiping out of sins). Eph 1:7
 2. Then Paul prayed that they would know the hope inspired by God's call, the riches of God's inheritance in the saints, and the greatness of His power in and toward them. Eph 1:16-23
 - b. From the second half of v 20 to the end of v23 is a parenthesis. The thought expressed in v20 continues in Eph 2:1-3 where Paul reminds them of what they were before they believed on Jesus.
 1. They were dead—cut off from God and His life—because of their sin. They followed the course of this wicked world and the dictates of its wicked ruler, the prince of the power of the air. They fulfilled the lusts of their body and mind, and were by nature children of wrath.
 - A. Our very nature exposed us to Divine Wrath, like the rest of mankind (20th Cent); and were in our original state deserving of anger like all others (Weymouth).
 - B. Nature means natural production or lineal descent. Through their first birth they (and us) were subject to the wrath of God—pre-Cross and post-Cross.
 2. However, the gospel is supernatural. Through the same power that raised Christ from the dead, sinners can be turned into holy, righteous sons of God (lessons for another day).
4. Later in the epistle Paul discussed how to walk out the inward changes in our nature, including exhortations to bring an end to sinful practices and become followers (imitators) of God. Eph 5:1-5
 - a. He admonishes them: Don't act like sinful, unsaved people anymore. Don't let anyone tell you that it's okay to live sinfully. You are different now (lessons for another day).
 - b. But note that he specifically warned them: Eph 5:6—Don't let anyone fool you with empty words. It is these very things which bring down the wrath of God on the disobedient. (Phillips)
 - c. The Greek word translated disobedient means disbelief. The word means “not to allow one's self to be persuaded or believe” (*Strong's Concordance*). It is the same word translated believeth not in John 3:36. Those who refuse to believe on Jesus will face the wrath of God when they die.
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say, but consider this thought as we close. Since the fall of man in Eden, God has made it clear that a day of reckoning is coming—a day (or period of time) when He will carry out justice or judgment on all unrighteousness (sin). Note that these are all New Testament verses.
 1. Thirty years after the Cross Jude wrote that Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam (Gen 5:21-24), prophesied that the Lord will one day come and carry out judgment on the ungodly. Jude 14-15
 2. About twenty years after the Cross, Paul declared to unbelievers in Athens, Greece: “He commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31, ESV).
3. The wrath of God didn't cease to exist at the Cross. It remains on those who don't acknowledge Jesus and His sacrifice for sin. John 3:36
 - a. Jesus is coming again in wrath to deal with all who throughout human history have rejected Him. The wrath in the Book of Revelation is called the wrath of the Lamb. Rev 6:16-17
 - b. But those who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord have been delivered from the wrath to come. We can face the coming day of reckoning with assurance (boldness) because we are possessors of the righteousness of God through Christ. I John 4:17 (Lots more next week!)