

## THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH

- A. Introduction: The return of Jesus Christ to this world is near. And, as predicted by the Bible, the world is experiencing increasing turmoil, violence, and chaos (II Tim 3:1). It is important that Christians understand the times we're living in and that we learn how to navigate through the days, months, and years ahead. Let's begin by reviewing some key points before we add new information.
1. The second coming or the return of Jesus to this world is a foundational Christian doctrine. It completes God's plan of redemption, His plan to deliver human beings from sin. Remember the big picture.
    - a. God desires a family. He created human beings to become His sons and daughters and made earth to be home for Himself and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin, beginning with the first man, Adam. Eph 1:5-4; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:2; etc.
      1. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay for sin through His death on the Cross. By doing so He opened the way for sinners to be transformed into sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. Heb 9:26; John 1:12-13
      2. He will come again to cleanse the earth of all corruption and death and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family of redeemed sons and daughters. Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:13
      3. The Bible opens in the Book of Genesis with God on earth with His son Adam (Gen 2; Luke 3:38). It closes with God and His redeemed family together on this earth renewed and restored—God's plan for a family in a beautiful, perfect home completed (Rev 21-22).
    - b. The term second coming applies to more than a one day event. The completion of God's plan takes place over a period of time and a number of events take place during that time period.
      1. People tend to want to talk about the individual people and events (such as Antichrist, 666, the new world order; etc.). But if you consider these events apart from the overall plan of God and the context of the entire Bible you can confuse or unnecessarily scare yourself. In these lessons I'm giving you an overview that will help you understand the individual events.
      2. The second coming of Jesus is supposed to be a source of hope and joy for believers in and through the hardships of life. It helps us recognize and live with the awareness that there is more to live than just this life and that the greater and better part is ahead in the life to come. Titus 2:11-13; Rom 8:18; I Pet 1:17; I Pet 2:11
    - c. In the last several lessons we've made the point that there is wrath and judgment associated with the second coming of Jesus. This fact unnecessarily scares many sincere Christians who have no reason to fear. We need accurate understanding of what God's wrath and judgment is, why it is consistent with a good God, and how it does and does not affect us.
  2. Acts 17:31—The apostle Paul preached that God has set a day in which He will judge the world. World refers to all humanity, not just those on earth at the time of Jesus' return. This day of reckoning or Judgment Day is not a literal 24 hour day. It's a period of time associated with Jesus' second coming.
    - a. The second coming of Jesus affects every human being who has ever been conceived because it is the culmination of God's plan for humanity. No one ceases to exist when they die.
    - b. All who have died are somewhere now (either in Heaven or in Hell) awaiting the completion of God's plan for a family on a renewed and restored earth.
    - c. Notice that God is going to judge the world in righteousness or according to justice by Jesus. This means a number of things. Consider two.
      1. Jesus is the Judge and He is coming to administer justice. This includes rewarding those who are His and removing from contact with Himself, His family, and the family home all who are not His.
      2. Jesus is the standard by which all men will be judged, the standard by which justice will be meted out. How did they respond to the revelation of Jesus given to them in their lifetime?

3. God's offer to become part of His family is open to all, but the Bible is clear that many have and will refuse His offer of salvation.
    - a. God has promised from the beginning to remove from His creation all that is not of Him—and that's a good thing. Without this removal, there will never be peace in this world.
    - b. Jesus said that at the end of this age: I, the son of Man, will send my angels, and they will remove from my Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil...then the godly will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom (Matt 13:41-43, NLT). Corruption due to sin is removed from God's kingdom removed one of two ways.
      1. By transformation: Sinners are transformed into sons and daughters of God through the power of God when they put faith in Christ and His sacrifice at the Cross.
      2. By removal: Sinners are forever banished from the presence of God and His family and consigned to a place called the second death. Rev 20:14
    - c. II Thess 1:7-9—When the Lord Jesus appears from Heaven He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus (NLT). Such people will pay the penalty and suffer the punishment of everlasting ruin (destruction and perdition) and [eternal exclusion and banishment] from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Amp).
      1. The word translated judgment in this verse (vengeance in the KJV) comes from a word that means to carry out justice.
      2. This fact should both encourage us and sober us. We can be encouraged because conditions in this world won't always be as they are now—marred by sin, corruption and death. We should also recognize what is most important—people coming to saving knowledge of Jesus.
  4. Rev 6:15-17—One of the terms used for certain event connected with Christ's return is the Day of His wrath or the wrath of the Lamb. Revelation has much to say about the wrath of the Lamb. For the rest of this lesson we're going to begin to set the stage for talking about what this term means.
    - a. Remember what we've already said about God's wrath. It is not an emotional outburst at humanity because of our sin. Wrath is God's righteous and just response to sin. Righteous means right and just means doing what is right. It is right and just to punish sin.
    - b. The punishment due to us for our sin went to Jesus on the Cross. God's wrath was poured out on our Substitute.
      1. If you've accepted Jesus and His sacrifice then there is no more wrath due you for your sin. You are delivered from the wrath to come, the wrath of the Lamb. I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9; Rom 5:9
      2. Wrath is never mentioned in Scripture in connection with believers. Wrath is for the children of disobedience—those unwilling to be persuaded of the truth. Eph 5:6; Col 3:6
    - c. We're afraid of God's wrath because, due to misunderstanding and lack of good teaching, we're think we're going to get it because we still fall short in certain areas.
      1. We mistakenly think that our bad circumstances are God's way of punishing us. Or we think that He's going to humiliate us on Judgment Day by exposing our shortcomings to everyone.
      2. Let's consider what the wrath of God meant to those people who first about the wrath of the Lamb, the first century Christians to whom the Book of Revelation was first given.
- B. When Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago He took on flesh in the midst of a people group that was looking for God to come and establish His kingdom on earth—first century Israel, the Jews.
1. When the first man Adam sinned in the Garden God immediately began to unveil His plan to undo the damage done with the promise of a coming Redeemer (Jesus) who would restore the family and the family home. Gen 3:15

- a. God began to progressively reveal His plan of redemption—His plan to deliver human beings and the earth from sin, corruption and death through His prophets.
- b. The prophets revealed that the Redeemer (the Messiah) would one day come to deal with the ungodly, deliver His people, and then live among them forever. They referred to this period of time as the Day of the Lord. Joel 2:1; 11; Joel 2:31-32; Joel 3:14-21; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:14-15; etc.
  1. The prophets wrote that the Lord will one day come, establish His eternal kingdom here, and restore the conditions of Eden on earth. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:13-14; Dan 7:26-27; Isa 51:3; Ezek 36:35; etc.
  2. First century Jews understood from the writings of the prophets that sin had to be dealt with because unrighteousness will have no place in the kingdom of God. Remember the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam. Gen 5:22-24; Jude 14-15
- c. They also had a well developed concept of God as a Judge who judges people. And it didn't scare them like it does us. Each verse below deserves its own lesson, but note these points.
  1. Gen 15:13—The first time the word judge appears in connection with God is where God told Abraham that his descendant would be afflicted as slaves in Egypt for 400. God promised to judge Egypt. The word means to bring justice.
  2. Gen 18:25—When Preincarnate Jesus (Jesus before He took on flesh) came to Abraham while on His way to Sodom, Abraham understood that God the Judge does right. He doesn't destroy the righteous with the wicked. He delivers the righteous.
  3. First century Jews knew that the Lord is going to judge the world with righteousness.
    - A. Ps 9:7-10—But the Lord reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness. The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O Lord, have never abandoned anyone who searched for you (NLT).
    - B. Ps 96:12-13—Let the fields and their crops burst forth with joy! Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise before the Lord! For the Lord is coming! He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and all the nations with his truth (NLT).
    - C. Ps 98:7-9—Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the earth and all living things join in. Let the rivers clap their hands in glee! Let the hills sing out their songs of joy before the Lord. For the Lord is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness (NLT).
2. Matt 3:1-6—Jesus' public ministry was preceded by John the Baptist, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord (Isa 40:1-5). John had everyone's attention and multitudes came out to see him. He had the message they were waiting to hear.
  - a. They were looking for the Redeemer and they knew from the prophets that they needed to prepare for the Lord's coming. John had the right message: The kingdom of Heaven is at hand and here's what you must do: repent and be baptized.
    1. Repent means to think differently and implies turning from unbelief and sin to God. Express your willingness to turn from sin to God by acknowledging your sinfulness and need for cleansing. Believe that His kingdom is at hand. Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance—Let your lives prove your change of heart (Matt 3:8, Amp).
    2. Be baptized. This is not Christian baptism. The Jews practiced ceremonial purification or washing as a symbol of purification. By being immersed in water they demonstrated their willingness to be made clean or free from sin.
  - b. Notice what John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to see what was going on. They were religious leaders who rejected both John's ministry and Jesus' ministry. John's question to them was: Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come (Matt 3:7).

1. First century Jews understood that a time of wrath, a time of administering justice for sin was coming. But they also knew that you can escape the wrath by dealing with your sin.
  2. John's baptism pictures the idea that through having your sins washed away you are delivered from the wrath to come. We are washed from our sin through the blood of Christ. Rev 1:5
  3. God is righteous (right) and just (always does right). To be true to His righteous and just nature He must respond to sin. Wrath is God's righteous and just response to man's sin. The just and righteous penalty for sin is death or eternal separation from God who is Life. However, if this penalty is enforced, God's plan for a family will not be realized.
    - a. So the Lord devised a way to carry out justice in regard to our sin without violating His righteous nature and without losing us. At the Cross Jesus took the penalty for our sin on Himself. God's wrath went to Jesus. Justice was carried out in regard to our sin.
    - b. John 3:16-18—Jesus came to earth and died so that men would not perish but have eternal life. Perish means to destroy fully and refers to future punishment or exclusion from God's kingdom.
      1. God sent Jesus not to condemn the world, but to save it. Condemned is a Greek word that means to decide mentally or judicially. Judicial means of or relating to an administration of justice. A judicial decision is one that is pronounced, ordered, or enforced by a court.
      2. The use of these legal terms are sometimes misinterpreted to mean that God is a harsh judge who is out to get us. But the opposite is true. These legal terms show us that God works according to Law.
        - A. He is not arbitrary (impulsive or random) or capricious (changeable, fickle). He does not deal with us according to whim. You can count on Him to be what He is—a good God who always does good to people.
        - B. His righteousness and justice are expressions of His love. Jer 9:24—I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord (ESV).
    - c. John 3:36—God's wrath has been expressed. But you must receive this expression in order for His wrath to be removed from you. He is dealing with men in mercy. If someone has not accepted Jesus and His sacrifice then God's wrath (irreversible separation from Him, His kingdom and His family) awaits you when you die.
- C. Conclusion: We have a lot more to say about the wrath of the Lamb. For now, it is enough to know that He is the Judge of all the earth and He exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness.
1. When He returns to this world, all will be made right. And because of His sacrifice on the Cross we have a glorious future ahead of us.
  2. As the world grows darker and the days get crazier, we must remember the big picture. Jesus is coming back to complete the plan of God. Life on earth will finally be what we all long for it to be.
  3. Right now, the most important thing is to keep your focus on Jesus, stay faithful to Him, and shine your light brightly. Lots more next week!!