

THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT

- A. Introduction: For a number of weeks we have been talking about how to deal with the chaos and turmoil that is taking place all around us—from the pandemic to the civil unrest and lawlessness to rampant immorality and growing hostility to Judeo-Christian morality and ethics.
1. The Bible has much to say about what the world is beginning to experience. The second coming of Jesus is near and the God's Word informs us that perilous times will precede His return. II Tim 3:1
 - a. The Bible refers to the last seven years leading up to Jesus' return as a time of tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen. If Jesus did not intervene with His coming, every human being would die. Matt 24:21-22
 - b. The circumstances that will produce these perilous times are setting up now. This means that life will grow more and more challenging for us. However, if we have accurate knowledge from the Bible about what is happening and why, it will help us deal with these increasingly dark days ahead.
 1. We need to see the big picture. Jesus is coming back to earth to complete God's plan for a family in a world free from sin, corruption, and death.
 2. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay the price for sin and open the way for sinners to be transformed into sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. He will come again to cleanse this planet and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family.
 - c. We have made the point in previous lessons that the calamity of the final years prior to the Lord's return does not come from God. It is the consequence of human behavior apart from God.
 1. We have also stated that the Book of Revelation connects the chaos to the Lord so that people understand that the calamity they experience is a consequence of rejecting God.
 2. Last week I said that we would talk further about this tonight. But in preparing this lesson I realized that there is more to say about what the return of Jesus meant to the first Christians (our topic for the last several lessons).
 2. The first Christians expected to see the Lord's return in their lifetime which meant that that they also expected to see the chaos and tribulation leading up His return. Yet they were not afraid. We're considering what they knew that gave them peace and hope. We continue this discussion tonight.
 - a. The Book of Revelation refers to these final seven years leading up to the Lord's return as the wrath of the Lamb and the hour of His judgment. Rev 6:16-17; Rev 14:7
 - b. This scares Christians today because they mistakenly think that the chaos of these last years comes from an angry God who's had enough and blasts the final generation of human beings with wrath.
 1. But that's not how the first Christians perceived the wrath and judgment of God. They heard it, not as God is going to get us, but as He is going to get our enemies and deliver us.
 2. In this lesson we're going to add to what we discussed last week about God's wrath and then consider what judgment meant to the first Christians.
- B. The first Christians were Jewish. Their world view and their understanding of God were shaped by the Old Testament, the portion of the Bible that had been written when Jesus came into this world.
1. The very first time the word judge is used in the Old Testament, it is found in the midst of the account of God entering into a covenant relationship with a man named Abram (Abraham).
 - a. The Lord selected Abram to be the head of the people group through whom Jesus would come into this world (the Jews). God's plan was to settle this man and his people in the land of Canaan (modern day Israel).
 1. Although Abraham's wife was barren as a young woman and both of them were now too old to have children, God promised them that they would have a son (lessons for another day).
 2. In Gen 15:14 God told Abraham that in the future his descendents would be enslaved in a foreign land for four hundred years, but that He would then deliver them and bring them home.
 - b. In that context God said: I will judge the nation that enslaves them and they will come away with

great wealth (Gen 15:14). The word translated judge means to bring justice or pass sentence.

2. Just as the Lord predicted, Abraham's descendants ended up as slaves in Egypt several centuries later. But God raised up a man named Moses and tasked him with successfully leading Israel (Abraham's descendants) out of Egypt (many of lessons for another day).
 - a. God sent Moses to Pharaoh (king of Egypt) with a message: The Lord says: Let my people go. Pharaoh refused and then increased Israel's already overwhelming work load. Ex 5:1-23
 1. God directed Moses to tell the people: (I have heard your cries and) will free you from slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with mighty power and great acts of judgment (Ex 6:6, NLT).
 2. The Hebrew word used here comes from a verb that means to judge or pronounce sentence for or against—I will...redeem you with an uplifted arm and with great decision (Septuagint).
 - A. Note the connection between the words redemption and judgment. When we read the account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt by the power of God, we find that He delivered (redeemed) His people by defeating (judging) their enemies.
 - B. Based on God's interaction with their ancestors, the first Christians understood judgment to mean God that separates His people from their enemies.
 3. The word judgment in the New Testament is translated from a Greek word that means to distinguish or to decide judicially. To separate, distinguish between good and evil, and chose out the good.
 - b. Through a series of power demonstrations (often called plagues) Almighty God persuaded Pharaoh to release His people and allow them to return to Canaan. We will discuss the plagues in detail in later lessons. For now, consider these points.
 1. Each plague was a direct challenge to the gods of Egypt—power demonstrations designed to show both Israel and the Egyptians that there is no God but Jehovah, God Almighty: I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord (Ex 12:12, NLT).
 2. God's people (Israel) were protected from these events. When flies came on the land, there were none among the Israelites (Ex 8:22-23). When livestock began to die, Israel lost none (Ex 9:4-7). When three days of darkness fell on the land, Israel had light (Ex 10:23).
 3. Ex 8:23—In the context of Israel being protected, God directed Moses to tell Pharaoh that He would put a division between my people and yours. Division means a redemption, a ransom.
 - A. God's purposes are always redemptive. He isn't looking for as many people as He can find to destroy. God is looking for as many people He can find to save.
 - B. There were advance warnings before each plague occurred and some Egyptians realized the Lord is God and heeded His word—Some of Pharaoh's officials believed what the Lord said (and) brought their livestock and servants in (before hail fell) (Ex 9:20, NLT).
 - c. The night before the firstborn in the land died the Lord told Moses to tell Pharaoh—But among the Israelites it will be so peaceful that not even a dog will bark. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites (Ex 11:7, NLT). The Hebrew word that is translated distinction means to separate, distinguish, or divide.
 1. The Israelites were instructed to place the blood of a sacrificed lamb on their doorposts—When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you (Ex 12:13, NLT)
 2. Not a single person (man, woman, child, or animal) died that night. A clear distinction was made between those who belong to Almighty God and those who don't.
 - d. The very first time the word wrath is used in the Bible in connection with God is also found in this account of God's deliverance of Israel from bondage.
 1. After the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh released Israel from bondage. However, he quickly changed his mind and came after them, trapping them at the Red Sea. God parted the waters and Israel escaped. When the Egyptian army attempted to follow, the sea closed on them and Israel was saved. On the other side of the sea Israel had a victory celebration.
 2. As part of their victory song celebrating the Lord's deliverance of them they sang: In the

greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury (wrath); it consumes them like stubble (Ex 15:7, ESV).

3. Based on the writings of the prophets, the first Christians understood that the wrath of the Lord means the removal of the wicked.
3. God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage is a historical event, an event actually occurred. But as with many things in the Old Testament, it pictured what Jesus would do for those who put faith in Him. He is our Passover Lamb, our Redeemer, our Deliverer. I Cor 5:7
 - a. Through the sacrifice of Himself He delivered all who put faith in Him from the wrath and judgment to come (I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9; Rom 5:9). This means several things.
 1. Remember what God's wrath is. It is His right and just response to sin. The penalty for sin is eternal separation from God. At death, all who have not acknowledged Jesus as Savior and Lord experience the wrath of God. They go to a place of separation called Hell. John 3:36
 - A. This is temporary because, in connection with the second coming of Jesus, all who are in Hell will be brought out to stand before the Lord and be formally sentenced for their rebellion against God. Rev 20:11-15
 - B. It will be clearly shown why it is right and just to separate the wicked from God and His family and they will be forever confined to the second death also known as the lake of fire.
 2. The hour of God's judgment that is mentioned in Revelation (Rev 14:7) doesn't refer to what happens to the people alive on earth in the last seven years. It applies to every human being who has ever lived, and it will occur at some point after that seven year period of tribulation.
 - A. Rev 11:18—God's people will be rewarded with eternal life on the renewed and restored earth. And those who throughout human history have rejected God's offer of salvation from sin will be forever banished from the family home. Rev 11:18
 - B. Jesus Himself said: At the end of (this present 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).
 - b. We struggle with the terms wrath and judgment because we muddy the waters by wrongly defining them and misapplying them.
 1. Someone has a car accident and we declare that God is punishing them for wrong doing. Or a huge storm hits the east coast and we call it judgment from God because Congress didn't vote the way we believe they should have. There are no grounds for making such statements.
 2. In the Scriptures God's wrath and judgment is clearly connected to Him (by His own words through His prophets) and the results clearly advance His redemptive purposes in some way (many lessons for another day).
4. Also built into the consciousness of the first Christians was the idea that it is right to separate the wicked from the good (the righteous) and to protect the good from judgment. Those who are God's are good.
 - a. Before we proceed I need to make one point clear. We could teach numerous lessons on this topic. Goodness or righteousness is a gift given to those who put faith in Christ.
 - b. We don't earn God's protection from wrath and judgment on sin. We receive it through His grace as part of the blessing He gives to those who are His. Rom 5:17; Eph 2:8-9; Rom 10:9-10; etc.
 1. Rom 5:8-10—But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life (NLT)
 2. We face the hour of judgment in Christ (lessons for another day): And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world (I John 4:17, NLT).

5. The second time the word judge is used in the Bible in connection with the Lord is in Gen 18:25. It is basically the same word used in the Exodus account. It means to pronounce sentence for or against.
 - a. Preincarnate Jesus (before He took on flesh) appeared to Abraham as He was on His way to Sodom and Gomorrah (lots in the account that we aren't going to discuss now). But Abraham asked the Lord: Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?
 1. In that conversation Abraham makes the statement: Shall not the Judge of all the earth execute judgment and do righteously (Gen 18:25, Amp). In response, the Lord makes it clear that the righteous will not experience judgment for the sins of the wicked.
 2. Last week we pointed out that righteous Lot and his family were delivered from Sodom before destruction came. Judgment could not begin until they were removed. Gen 19:14; 21-22
 - b. Luke 17:26-30—Jesus compared the season of His return to the days of Noah and Lot. Both the flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah were judgments for sin (we'll discuss them in some detail in later lessons). But the first Christians knew from the Bible that God delivered righteous Noah and Lot before judgment came.
 1. When they received a book from John the apostle (the Book of Revelation) that described in detail the catastrophic events that will precede the Lord's return to execute wrath and judgment, they knew that they would be delivered. It gave them hope. God's enemies will be defeated and His plan for a family in a renewed world will be completed.
 2. They had numerous examples in the Scriptures to encourage them—from Noah in the flood lifted up above it inside the ark, to Lot removed from Sodom just in time, to Israel in Egypt protected during the plagues and then delivered through the Red Sea, with their enemies completely vanquished.
- C. Conclusion: We still have a lot to say about all of this. But for now, consider these thoughts as we close.
1. It's not what you see, but how you see what you see. I'm trying to help you develop a perspective that will enable you to look past the current chaos in our world to the end result. It will lighten the load. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17-18
 - a. But you have to make an effort to focus your mind on what the Bible says—not on the evening news, not on the multitude of opinions and ideas floating around on the internet—but on God's Word.
 - b. The hour of the Lord's judgment is not something to fear if you know the Lord. It is a vital part of completing God's plan for a family and restoring this world to what He always intended it to be.
 2. Let me close with a prayer that Paul prayed for the believers who lived in the city of Thessalonica. Remember, they are ones he wrote to about the catching away of believers prior to those final years of tribulation. I Thess 4:13-18
 - a. I Thess 3:12-13—May the Lord make your love grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love overflows toward you. As a result, Christ will make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy when you stand before God our Father on that day when our Lord Jesus comes with all those who belong to him (NLT).
 - b. That's what the hour of his judgment will look like for those who know the Lord. More next week!