

## GOD'S FIERCE WRATH

- A. Introduction: For several weeks we have been examining God's actions in the Old Testament as part of a larger study of God's wrath and judgment at the second coming of Jesus.
1. The Bible reveals that the years leading up to the Lord's return will be perilous, with a time of tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen. II Tim 3:1; Matt 24:21-22
    - a. Many believe that this impending peril will be the work of an angry God who has finally had enough of sinful humanity and blasts the world with His wrath and judgment.
    - b. We've made the point in previous lessons that the calamity of these final years of human history doesn't come from God. It will be the result of human choice and consequences of those choices.
      1. The world will embrace a false Christ (Antichrist) and his actions and the reactions of humanity to him will produce the tribulation these final years of human history. (See earlier lessons for more details about this)
      2. This affects you and me because we are beginning to see increasing turmoil in the earth as the circumstances that will produce this final tribulation set up. (See earlier lessons)
  2. The idea that the calamity and chaos of these last few years of human history in this present age won't be expressions of God's anger brings up a question.
    - a. What about God's actions in the Old Testament where He seems angry, arbitrary, and vindictive and does seem to send harsh punishments down on people? We addressed this in the last five lessons.
    - b. We examined how the first readers understood the Old Testament accounts that trouble us and discovered that there is no contradiction between the God of the Old and New Testaments.
  3. In this lesson we're going to build on what we've learned about the Old Testament and transition back to discussing Jesus' return, along with how we can prepare for the trouble that is ahead for this world.
- B. We begin tonight by examining a troubling Old Testament verse in terms of what we've already discussed. We're going to connect it to the New Testament and the second coming of Jesus. Isa 13:6-13
1. Let's first get the historical context. Remember, the Old Testament is primarily the history of Israel (the Jews), the people group through whom Jesus came into this world.
    - a. After being delivered from slavery in Egypt under Moses (1490 BC), Israel eventually entered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. For the next almost 400 years they functioned primarily as a tribal society. But in 1050 BC Saul was anointed as Israel's first king, followed by David (1003 BC) and then Solomon (971 BC).
    - b. When Solomon died (931 BC) the nation experienced civil war and divide in two. The ten northern tribes became known as Israel and the two southern tribes were known as Judah. During this period idol worship was an ever increasing problem in both the north and south.
      1. You may recall that right before Israel entered Canaan to settle God warned them that if they worshipped the gods of the people in the land, their enemies would overrun them and remove them from the land. Deut 4:25-28
      2. Over several hundred years, God sent many prophets to His people to call them back to Him and to warn of impending destruction if they didn't repent. In 722 BC the northern kingdom was overrun by the Assyrian Empire, and in 586 BC Babylon conquered the southern kingdom.
        - A. Isaiah was one of the prophets God sent to His wayward people. He prophesied to Judah during the last years before Israel (the northern kingdom) was overrun by Assyria.
        - B. Isaiah told Judah that if they did not turn back to God, the Lord would bring judgment on them, first through Assyria, and then through Babylon. Isaiah referred to Assyria as the rod of God's anger (Isa 10:5). Remember, God connected Himself to events He did not initiate to help men see that calamity came because they abandoned Him for false gods.

2. Isa 13:1-5—Like many of the prophets, Isaiah gave both short and long term predictive prophecy. In this passage he began by stating that Babylon will ultimately be overthrown. (This prophecy came to pass when Persia conquered Babylon almost two hundred years later, in 539 BC).
  - a. Note that the prophet called Persia the weapons of the Lord’s anger, brought by God to destroy Babylon (v5). Remember, in the Hebrew language God is said to do what He only allows.
    1. As often happens in the prophets, Isaiah’s short term predictions then flowed into long term prophecy when he made reference to the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is a term used by at least eight of the prophets to refer to what we call the second coming of Jesus. v6; v9
    2. The day of the Lord is an extensive topic, but generally, it refers to the coming of the Lord as the rightful King of earth, to take control and bring both judgment and blessing.
  - b. We aren’t going to discuss the entire passage tonight (more next week), but note several points before I make the main point for tonight.
    1. Isaiah 13:10—According to Isaiah, in the day of the Lord, the stars won’t give light and the sun and moon will be darkened. Both Jesus and Peter connected this event to the Lord’s second coming (Matt 24:29; Acts 2:19-20). And John referenced it in Revelation (Revelation 6:12).
    2. Isaiah 13:8—Isaiah reported that fear will grip people with terrible pain like a woman about to give birth. Jesus used this same metaphor (the pains of child birth) in answering His disciple when they asked Him what signs will indicate that His return is near (Matt 21:6-8).
  - c. According to Isaiah, in the day of the Lord, God will come with wrath and fierce anger to destroy the land and all sinners in it. This is a dual reference.
    1. Isaiah 13:9—Israel and Judah will be forcibly removed by Assyria and Babylon and their land left desolate because of their unrepentant idol worship: He will make the land a desolation and sweep the sinners away from it (ABPS); root out the sinners from it (Jerusalem Bible).
    2. Isaiah 13:11—But in the time when the sun and moon are darkened, the entire world will be affected. The word Hebrew translated as punish means to visit and to search out. It refers to someone paying attention to a person, either to do them good or to bring punishment.
    3. World means more that the people on earth at the time the sun and moon are darkened. It refers to all humanity, going back to Adam and Eve. (more on this in a moment)
3. This passage seems like a complete contradiction. The New Testament says that Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came to call sinners to repentance (Matt 9:13). He died so that sinners wouldn’t perish but have life (John 3:16). How do we reconcile it? We must look at the big picture.
  - a. Almighty God created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ and He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; etc.
    1. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin, beginning with Adam’s sin in the garden. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; etc.
    2. Redemption (salvation) is God’s plan to deliver both His family and the family home from sin, corruption, and death through Jesus. Eph 1:7; Heb 9:12; I Pet 1:18-19; etc.
  - b. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin at the Cross so that all who put faith in Him can be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters of God.
    1. 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. John 1:12-13; Rev 21:1-5; etc.
    2. God is not coming to earth to blast a final group of humanity for their wickedness. He is coming to reclaim and restore the earth for Himself and His family. Part of this process involves forever separating the wicked from Himself and His family.
4. The first readers of the Old Testament (the men and women who became Jesus’ first followers) knew that there are two groups of people in the world—those who are God’s and those who are not. They understood that those who are not God’s will ultimately be removed.

- a. Ps 104 is a psalm about the greatness of God as expressed through His creation. It ends with: Let all sinners vanish from the face of the earth. Let the wicked disappear forever. As for me—I will praise the Lord (v35, NLT).
  - b. Ps 37 is a psalm that exhorts believers to trust God and do what is right because there is coming a day when the wicked will be forever removed from contact with God’s family and the family home. Note how it ends: Look at those who are honest and good for a wonderful future lies before those who love peace. But the wicked will be destroyed. They have no future. The Lord saves the godly; he is their fortress in times of trouble (v37-39, NLT).
5. Jesus restated this idea when He was on earth: So it will be at the end of the world. 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 13:40-43, NLT).
- a. Paul apostle (a former Pharisee schooled in the Old Testament and taught by Jesus) stated: (Jesus) 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. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power when he comes to receive glory and praise from his holy people (II Thess 1:7-10, NLT).
    1. Judgment comes from a word that means to execute justice or carry out the right and just punishment for a crime. The just punishment for rejecting Almighty God is eternal separation from Him, first in Hell and then in the second death and the lake of fire. Rev 20:15
    2. All who reject the revelation of Jesus Christ given to their generation will be punished with everlasting destruction or eternal separation from God. The Greek word translated destruction (II Thess 1:9) means to kill, destroy, ruin. There is a destruction that is greater (worse) than physical death—eternal death or eternal separation from God who is life.
  - b. Acts 17:31—Paul preached that God has set a day (period of time) in which he will judge the world (all humanity) in righteousness (according to what is right) by Jesus (the man He raised from the dead). Jesus is the standard by which all men will be judged—how they responded to the revelation of Jesus that was given to them in their lifetime. (lots of lessons for another day)
    1. This judgment this will occur in connection with the second coming. It will involve all who have ever lived, not just the one group alive at the end. This judgment is not to determine if you are saved or not. That is decided in this life based on your response to Jesus.
    2. At this final judgment, the Lord will deal with all who throughout human history have rejected His offer of salvation. They will be brought out of Hell to stand before the Judge and it will be shown why it is right and just to forever separate them from Himself. Rev 20:11-15
    3. Those who throughout human history have believed on the Lord will be rewarded a return to this earth after it is renewed to live with God their Father forever in the home He created for us. Rev 11:18; Rev 21:1-5
  - c. One of the purposes of the day of the Lord (the second coming) is to forever remove all sinners from God’s creation so that life on earth will be what God always intended it to be. The prophet Daniel wrote this in connection with the coming day of the Lord: (God’s people) will shine as bright as the sky, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like stars forever (Dan 12:3, NLT).
- C. Isa 13:9 says that wrath is associated with the day of the Lord (the second coming). Wrath is God’s right and just response to mankind’s sin. Terms such as fierce wrath and anger are used to convey God’s abhorrence of sin and to build into human consciousness the idea that sin is not only deadly to humanity, but completely unacceptable to Him. If you don’t understand the problem, you can’t appreciate the solution.
1. God’s plan of redemption is not about destroying sinners, but transforming them. Remember the big picture—God wants sons and daughters. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God began to unveil His

plan to deliver men and women from sin through Jesus and then transform them into sons.

- a. The Lord shed the blood of an innocent animal and covered Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). When He delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage they were saved from destruction through the blood of a substitute, an unblemished lamb (Ex 13:21-23). He gave them a system of animal sacrifice to cover their sin and give them access to Him as it pictured the coming Redeemer (Leviticus 16).
  - b. When John the Baptist began his ministry and recognized Jesus he referred to Him as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), the one who delivers from the wrath to come (Matt 3:7). This is familiar imagery to those familiar with the Old Testament. This is how they heard what God was going to do with sinners. God will provide a way out of sin.
2. God's wrath is not an emotional outburst at sin (although He is sorely displeased by it). Wrath is His judicial response. To be true to His holy nature, God must carry out justice and punish sin.
- a. God, motivated by love, devised a plan to be true to His righteousness and justice. He would take wrath due us for our sin on Himself. The punishment due us for our sin went to Jesus at the Cross. For all who acknowledge Jesus, there is no more wrath due us. I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9
  - b. Rom 5:8-9—God demonstrated or gave proof of His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us. By doing so, He has delivered us from the wrath to come.
    1. Those who believe on Jesus are not only delivered from the wrath to come, they receive God's life and Spirit and become literal sons and daughters of God when they acknowledge Him.
    2. John 1:12-13—But to all who believed him and accepted him (Jesus) he gave the right to become children (sons) of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God (NLT).
    3. This new birth is the beginning of a process that will ultimately transform every part of our being and make us Christlike in everything thought, motive, and action (conform us to the image of Christ, Rom 8:29). (Many lessons for another day)
    4. Rom 5:10—For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, it is much more [certain], now that we are reconciled, that we shall be saved [daily delivered from sin's dominion] through His [resurrection] life (Amp).
  - c. There are two ways to remove sinners or bring an end to sin on the earth—remove them or transform them from sinners into sons.
    1. I Tim 1:12-16—Paul cited himself as a pattern or an example of what God wants to do for sinners: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I was the worst of them all. But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners (v15-16, NLT).
    2. Paul was aware of the scary Old Testament stuff. It didn't scare him because he understood it in terms of the big picture. He saw God's redemptive purposes in the Old Testament—God unfolding His plan to redeem all who choose to come to Him through faith in Christ.
- D. Conclusion: Jude 14-15—Enoch (the seventh generation from Adam) prophesied that the Lord will one day come with ten thousands of His saints (His holy ones) and execute (carry out) judgment (justice) upon the ungodly. That day will take place in connection with the second coming.
1. Note that there are two groups: those who belong to God and those who don't. Those who belong to God through faith in Christ will face this coming period of time as sons and daughters of God.
  2. Because we are born of God: We may have confidence for the day of judgment—with assurance and boldness to face Him—because as He is, so are we in this world (I John 4:17, Amp).
  3. As the chaos ramps up in our world and times grow darker, peace and hope come from knowing that the trouble isn't from God, that through faith in Christ you are His son or daughter and belong to Him, and that He will get you through until He gets you out.