

## THE DAY OF HIS JUDGMENT

- A. Introduction: This world (including our own country) is experiencing increasing difficulties. According to the Bible, things will get much worse before they get better. We're taking time to look at God's Word to find out what is happening and why so that we are prepared to deal with the challenges ahead.
1. Let's review a few of the points that we've already made. The second coming of Jesus Christ is near, and the Bible informs us that the years preceding His return will be filled with calamity.
    - a. The chaos will be the result of the actions of a final world ruler and the responses of the people of the world to him. Shortly before the Lord returns, Satan will offer the world a false christ who will become the leader of a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion.
      1. This man will ultimately lead the world to the worst war humanity has ever seen. It will be a nuclear, chemical, and biological holocaust. If Jesus did not return, every human being on earth would die. II Thess 2:3-4; 9; Dan 7:9-28; Dan 8:23-27; Rev 13:1-18; Matt 24:21-22; etc.
      2. Even though these circumstances are not yet in place, the conditions that will produce them are setting up now. And they are beginning to affect our lives in negative ways.
    - b. In these lessons we are making the point that God isn't behind the present trouble or that of the coming years. But this brings up questions about the Book of Revelation which seems to portray an angry God raining wrath and judgment down on a wicked world just prior to Christ's return.
      1. The Book of Revelation is the record of a vision that was given to John the apostle about the years immediately preceding Jesus' return. John witnessed the final world war. His descriptions (in 1<sup>st</sup> century language) are consistent with what we now know about the effects of nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare on people and the planet.
      2. No one today fully understands what every verse in Revelation means, including me. The action may look a little different than what I described last week. The examples I used were intended to illustrate the point that the destruction John saw will be the result of human choices rather than God unloading supernatural power to destroy billions of people.
  2. In the last two lessons we've focused on the people and events on the earth in the last few years leading up to the second coming. But that information is only part of what will happen. The second coming includes a number of different events that take place over a period of time (lessons for another day).
    - a. Jesus' return involves multitudes of people—not just those who are alive on earth when He comes. The second coming will affect everyone who has ever lived on earth. Remember the big picture!
    - b. God created humans to become His sons and daughters and He made earth to be a home for the family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Rom 5:12
      1. Jesus came to earth 2,000 years ago to die for our sin and make it possible for sinners to be transformed into God's sons and daughters through faith in Him. Heb 9:26; John 1:12-13
      2. He will come again to complete God's plan of redemption by cleansing the earth of all corruption and death. He will renew and restore earth to a fit forever home for Himself and His family and establish His eternal kingdom on earth. Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:13
    - c. Throughout human history God has given a witness of His saving grace through Jesus to every generation (lots of lessons for another day).
      1. All those who responded to His gospel are in Heaven waiting to return to this earth to live forever as part of God's family in the renewed family home.
      2. All those who refused God's offer of salvation through Jesus are currently in Hell and will be forever barred from the family and the family home.
- B. This brings us to two other topic connected with the second coming of Jesus—resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Both are foundational Christian doctrines (or teachings). Heb 6:2

1. To understand these doctrines, you must know that no one ceases to exist when they die. All who have ever died are somewhere right now. Consider these few points about resurrection of the dead.
  - a. All human beings have an outward and an inward part to their makeup. The outward portion is the physical body. The inward part is spirit and soul (mind and emotions). II Cor 4:16; I Thess 5:23
  - b. At death the inward and outward portions separate. The body goes into the ground and returns to dust. The inward man or woman (minus the body) passes into another dimension—either Heaven or Hell, depending on how that person responded to Jesus during his or her lifetime.
    1. Both Heaven and Hell are temporary because God did not create human beings to live as disembodied spirits, forever separated from their physical body. Separation from the body occurs only because of death, and death is present in the world only because of sin. Rom 5:12
    2. God created men and women to live with a physical body in a material world. Part of the salvation and redemption provided through the Cross is the removal of death and all its effects on God’s creation—including separation from the body. I Cor 15: 49-57
  - c. Resurrection of the dead is the reuniting of the inward and outward man that separated at death.
    1. In connection with the second coming of Christ all people will be reunited with their bodies. Various groups will be raised and reunited at different times (lessons for another day).
    2. God’s family will then come to live forever on the renewed and restored earth. However, all who do not belong to Him will go to live forever in the Lake of Fire which is the Second Death.
2. Acts 17:31—God has chosen a day (period of time) when He will judge the world (all humanity). Eternal judgment takes place during this Day (or period) of Judgment.
  - a. The purpose of Judgment Day is not to decide whether you go to Heaven or Hell. That is decided during your lifetime when you accept or reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
    1. What about Hebrews 9:27? This verse says that it is appointed unto man once to die and after this, the judgment. The verse is sometimes used to say that everyone has a time to die, and when it’s your time you die, then you get judged. But that is a misinterpretation of the verse.
      - A. If we all have a set time to die then why does the Bible tell us that certain things can lengthen our lives, such as gaining wisdom from God? Prov 3:2; Prov 9:11; Prov 10:27
      - B. Paul’s point in Hebrews 9:27 is that, in contrast to the Old Testament sacrifices in which the blood of bulls and goats had to be continually offered because it could only cover and not take away sin, Jesus shed His blood once for all time (Heb 9:26).
    2. At death a Christian departs to be with Christ in Heaven and an unbeliever passes into Hell. For a Christian, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. II Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23
  - b. The Day of Judgment will take place when Jesus returns—not when you die. Judgment Day is not a literal 24 hour day. It is a period of time connected with Christ’s return during which different groups of people will stand before the Lord for a number of reasons (lots of lessons for another day). It’s part of the completion of God’s plan of redemption.
3. When John was in Heaven witnessing the activity and events he reported in the book of Revelation, he saw an angel proclaim the gospel to the people of earth. Part of the angel’s message was that the hour of the Lord’s judgment has come—the time to complete the plan.
  - a. Rev 14:7—For the time has come when he will sit as judge (NLT); because the time has come for God to judge all people (NCV). The Greek word translated judge (*krino*) means a separation, then a decision (or a judgment) for or against. It implies justice or doing what is right.
  - b. Keep in mind that John’s first audience, his first readers, would have heard what he wrote in terms of the Old Testament prophets. This was not new information for them. From the beginning, God’s prophets predicted a day of separation, or a time of separating the wicked from the good—or a time of judgment. It’s part of God’s plan to restore the family and the family home.
    1. Jude 14-15—Now Enoch, who lived seven generations after Adam, prophesied about these

people. He said, “Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones. He will bring the world to judgment. He will convict the ungodly of all the evil things they have done in rebellion (NLT). Convict means to find guilty and implies to punish.

2. Jesus Himself said: At the end of the world (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 (Matt 13:40-41, NLT).
- c. Rev 11:18—While John was receiving the information he recorded in the Book of Revelation he witnessed the twenty four elders who surround God’s throne proclaim: Your wrath has come and the time that the dead should be judged. Notice, this includes both punishment and reward.
1. The term wrath of God is used as a figure of speech for the right and just punishment of God for sin. What takes place in the Book of Revelation is called the Day of His wrath (Rev 6:16-17) because it is time of administering justice. Justice is doing what is right. It is right to reward good and punish evil.
  2. God is not coming back to punish one group of people on earth at the end of time because He is finally fed up with our behavior. He’s coming back to deal with all people who have ever lived because it’s time for this age to come to a close and get on with the completion of God’s plan.
    - A. Those in God’s family will be rewarded with a new home (the new earth) where they will live with the Lord. Life will finally be all that God intended and all we hoped it would be.
    - B. Those who have rejected the Lord will be banished from His presence: 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. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power (II Thess 1:7-9, NLT).
      1. The word translated judgment is from a word that means to carry out justice. The punishment comes because it is right—not because God is really ticked off. The right and just punishment for sin is death or eternal separation from God who is life.
      2. The word destruction does not mean to be destroyed in the sense of ceasing to exist. It means ruin. These people will be completely ruined or forever lost to their created purpose—sonship and relationship with God.
- C. In Revelation, chapters 6, 8, 9, 15, and 16 are a chronological record of the increasingly catastrophic events that come on the earth prior to Jesus’ return. Chapters 17, 18, and 19 are informational chapters that end with Jesus coming out of Heaven. The chronological chapters pick up again in 20-22.
1. Rev 20:1-10 describes what many call the millennial kingdom—a thousand year reign of Christ on the earth in fulfillment of promises made to Israel. It will precede the establishment of the new earth.
    - a. We’re not going to discuss it for several reasons. One, there is some dispute about certain aspects of it. Two, like a lot of topics in the Book of Revelation, it’s not fully clear yet what it all means. Three, as with other topics connected to the second coming, people focus on individual events and people and neglect the end result—the completion of God’s plan of redemption.
    - b. Books on the second coming devote pages and pages to the millennial kingdom and then close with the short statement: After that we go into the eternal state. Some of the teaching makes this kingdom sound like the highlight of our future. But the highlight is the new heavens and new earth!
  2. In Rev 20:11-15 John describes a judgment scene, the Great White Throne Judgment—a major part of the Day of Judgment. It is a judgment of unbelievers. No believers in Jesus are involved in this event.
    - a. At the Great White Throne Judgment all who throughout human history have rejected God and His offer of salvation will be brought out of Hell to stand before the Lord. All of these people will then be forever banished to the lake of fire which is second death.

1. The books will be opened. What books are they? It doesn't say and that's not really the point. The point is that it will be clearly shown that it is right and just to forever remove these people from God's presence, forever silencing any protests from anyone that God has ever been unfair to anyone. God's righteousness and justice in His dealings with mankind will be clear to all.
  2. John saw all of Heaven praise God for His just and righteous judgments: Just and true are your ways; for you righteous deeds have been revealed; Yes, Lord God Almighty, your punishments are true and just; His judgments are just and true. Rev 15:3-4; Rev 16:7; Rev 19:2 (NLT)
  - b. We'll talk about Hell, the lake of fire, and the second death next week. The point for now is that all those who have rejected Jesus will experience the torment and ruin of eternal separation from all that is good, all that is light, all that is joy—all that is God. That is the wrath of God. II Thess 1:7-9
  3. This judgment scene was not new information to John's first readers. They first heard about it from the prophet Daniel. He was given a lot of information about world conditions at the second coming (much of which John elaborated on in the Book of Revelation).
    - a. In chapter 7 Daniel recorded a vision given to him by the Lord. He was shown the four great empires that would rule over the land of Israel from that time (555 BC) until the coming of the Lord.
    - b. As part of this vision Daniel saw the final world system that will be in place at the second coming, along with the ruler we know as Antichrist. He and his kingdom were worse than the others that came before (lessons for another day).
      1. Dan 7:9-10—In the time of this final empire Daniel saw a judgment scene where the Ancient of Days sat down to judge. Ancient of Days means advanced in age. In that culture age inspired reverence and respect. This title, combined with His robe, hair, and throne added to the sense of awe. v10—Then the court began its session, and the books were opened (NLT).
      2. Dan 7:13-14—The Son of Man (the Messiah, Jesus) approached the Ancient of Days and was given authority to bring this final usurper kingdom to an end and establish His eternal kingdom.
      3. Dan 7:25-27—Daniel was told that this final rebel leader will defy the Lord and His people. But then the court will pass judgment, and all his power will be taken away and completely destroyed (NLT). And the kingdom will be given to God's people.
  4. John's first readers understood that the judgment scene described in Rev 20 will produce wonderful results for God's people and the family home—the permanent removal of all that harms and hurts.
    - a. They would never have understood it to mean that God will open the books and publicly humiliate believers by revealing all our flaws and failures—as some today wrongly interpret this passage.
    - b. Have you ever heard the phrase *maranatha-anathama* (I Cor 16:22)? Early Christians used this phrase as a way to recognize fellow believers.
      1. Maranatha is an Aramaic phrase that means our Lord comes. Anathama means an accursed thing or someone excluded from God's favor and destined for destruction.
      2. The phrase was a reminder that the Lord is coming to carry out justice and make things right. That was their understanding of what is ahead, their understanding of Judgment Day.
- D. Conclusion: Jesus isn't coming back to punish one group of people on earth at the end of time because He's fed up. He's coming back because it's time to get on with the completion of God's plan and remove all that hurts and harms, and all who do wickedness. And that's a good thing!
1. There are two ways sinners can be removed from God's creation: by eternal separation from God, His family, and the family home or by transformation into sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ.
  2. Why is this information important? Because you, like me, are flawed and we fail from time to time as we serve the Lord. If you don't understand that God is not the source of the calamity coming on the earth, you'll be plagued with fears about what He might do to you. And you'll lack the confidence you need to go to Him for help in the increasingly rough days ahead. Lots more next week.