

DELIVERED FROM WRATH

- A. Introduction: II Tim 3:1—The apostle Paul wrote that prior to the second coming of Jesus perilous times will come on the earth. The word perilous means difficult, grievous, painful, dangerous, and hard to bear. It carries the idea of violent, hard to handle, furious, fierce (Matt 8:28).
1. The Bible gives us much information about world conditions at the time of Jesus' return. God's Word speaks of a final world ruler (inspired and empowered by Satan) who will preside over a global system of government, economy, and religion. Dan 7:1-28; Dan 8:25-27; Dan 11:40-44; Rev 13:1-18
 - a. This man's actions and the responses of the people of the world to him will produce great calamity. This final ruler will draw the world into a nuclear, chemical, and biological holocaust. If Jesus did not return and bring an end to the fighting, every human being would die. Matt 24:21-22
 - b. The circumstances that will lead to these catastrophes are setting up now. As a result, our country and the world are experiencing challenges that will get worse before they get better.
 2. Understanding what is happening and why will help us deal with the months and years ahead. We are coming to the end of this age. This world the way it is isn't the way it's supposed to be—the way God intended it to be. And it's not going to go on forever as it is. I Cor 7:31
 - a. Almighty God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him. He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; etc.
 1. Jesus Christ came to earth the first time to pay for sin. His sacrificial death on the Cross makes possible for sinners to be transformed into sons and daughters of God through faith in Him.
 2. Jesus will come again to cleanse the earth of all sin, corruption, and death, and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family.
 - b. To have peace of mind in the midst of the turmoil preceding the Lord's return we must learn to keep our focus on the end result. Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan for a family in a wonderful home—this planet renewed and restored.
 3. For several weeks we have been looking at what the return of Jesus meant to the first generation of Christians—the people who walked and talked with Him when He was here two thousand years ago.
 - a. They expected Jesus to return within their lifetimes which meant they would see the perilous times that will precede His coming. Yet they were not afraid. They were joyful and full of hope. We are considering what they knew that gave them that perspective.
 1. Recently, we've talked about how the Book of Revelation was a book of comfort and hope for them because it gives the end of the plan. After reporting great catastrophe, it ends with a wonderful description of God on earth with His family of redeemed sons and daughters.
 2. Rev 21:1-7—Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people...He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain...all who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children (NLT).
 - b. Rev 6:16-17; Rev 14:7—The Book of Revelation refers to these final catastrophic years that precede the Lord's return as the wrath of the Lamb and the hour of His judgment.
 1. This scares many sincere Christians because they mistakenly think that the chaos of these final years comes from an angry, wrathful God who's had enough and lets the final generation of human beings have it.
 2. In this lesson we want to revisit and add to some things we've already said about God's wrath as we consider what the wrath of the Lamb meant to the first Christians. The first Christians heard the wrath of God not as God is going to get us, but as God is going to get our enemies.

- B. The first Christians had a perspective that was given to them from the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the portion of the Bible that had been written in their day. Jesus confirmed, clarified, and added to what the prophets wrote, as did His apostles when they went out to proclaim the gospel.
1. Remember, these first Christians knew from the Old Testament prophets (the Bible), that the Lord is coming and will restore the earth to pre-sin, Eden-like conditions, and establish His kingdom on earth.
 - a. The prophets referred to the Lord's coming as the day of the Lord and revealed that He will accomplish three things when He comes. He will deal with His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His kingdom on earth.
 - b. The prophets weren't clearly shown that there would be two comings of the Lord, even though some of their prophecies contain both the first and second coming in one passage. Isa 9:6; Isa 61:1-2; etc.
 2. The prophets also spoke of a time of wrath associated with the Lord's coming. You may recall that when Jesus came to earth the first time, He was preceded by John the Baptist who exhorted Israel to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Matt 3:1-5
 - a. John's message resonated with the people because they (Israel) had been waiting for centuries for the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom. They presumed that the Lord's coming would mean deliverance from the Romans who controlled and oppressed them.
 - b. John commanded those who came to him to repent (turn from sin) and be cleansed to prepare for the Lord's coming. The Law of Moses and their system of blood sacrifices had built into them the concept that they had to be pure (cleansed of sin) to meet the Lord. Ps 24:3-4
 1. Matt 3:7—Notice that when the Pharisees showed up to see what was going on, John said: Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
 2. They knew that wrath was coming, but they knew there was a remedy for it through submission to God. That's why the multitudes came to be cleansed.
 - c. None of them knew yet that Jesus was going to offer the final, once for all sacrifice for sin to save them from the wrath to come.
 3. These first century men and women knew that God has wrath against sin and that wrath is associated with the day of the Lord. But they knew that those who belong to the Lord will be saved. Zeph 1:14-15
 - a. Zephaniah (ministered from 630-625 BC) was a contemporary of the early ministry of Jeremiah—the eleventh hour prophet who saw the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon (586 BC).
 1. Israel was deep into idol worship with all the related degenerate activities, and Zephaniah was sent to urge them to turn back to or be destroyed by the Babylonian Empire.
 2. Like many of the prophets, Zephaniah was given short range prophecies that directly related to the people of his day along with long prophecies about the distant future and the coming of the Lord. (Lots of lessons for another day)
 - b. But note the points that related to our discussion. The prophet warned of coming judgment on the wicked in Israel. But he assured them that the Lord is a place of safety—short term and long term—for those who are His.
 1. Zeph 2:3—Walk humbly and do what is right; perhaps even yet the Lord will protect you from his wrath in that day of doom (TLB).
 2. Zeph 3:14-15—Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. For the Lord will remove His hand of judgment and will disperse the armies of your enemy. And the Lord himself, the King of Israel, will live among you! At last your troubles will be over, and you will fear disaster no more (NLT).
 3. Zeph 3:17—For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will clam all your fears. He will exult over you by signing a happy song (NLT).
 4. We have a lot of misconceptions about what God's wrath is and how He expresses it. Those wrong

ideas cause us to be afraid when there is no reason to fear.

- a. We think of wrath in terms of human anger: I get mad and in an angry outburst let you have it by hurting you in some way. The wrath of God is nothing like the wrath of man.
 1. James 1:20 makes that clear—the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (In future lessons we'll talk about God's wrath in the Old Testament that seem like angry blowups.)
 2. Rom 13:4—The same word used for the wrath of God is also used to describe what happens when civil authorities carry out the penalty for broken laws. God's wrath is His right and just response to mankind's sin, or the punishment for sin. It is not an emotional response to man's sin. It is a judicial response.
 - A. Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden God has made it clear that He will separate the good from the bad and remove from His creation those who do evil (Jude 14-15). Jesus echoed that sentiment when He was here the first time (Matt 13:41-43).
 - B. The ultimate punishment for sin is eternal separation from God. That is the wrath of God. There won't be any sinful people in the family home once earth renewed. II Thess 2:1-9
 - b. When Jesus went to the Cross He took the punishment due us for our sin on Himself. Because of the value of His Person (fully God and fully man) He was able to satisfy justice on our behalf.
 1. There is no more wrath for sin for all who put faith in Him as Savior and Lord. To acknowledge Him as Savior means you believe that He paid the debt you owed for sin to save you from wrath. To acknowledge Him as Lord means that you turn from sin to live in obedience to Him.
 2. If a person refuses the offer of salvation from sin through Jesus, the wrath of God awaits them when they die. They will be eternally separated from God. John 3:36
5. When Jesus appeared to His apostles on resurrection day He used the Old Testament prophecies about Himself to explain to the apostles how His death satisfied justice in regard to their sin. Luke 24:44-48
- a. Then He commissioned them to go out and preach repentance and remission of sin in His name—turn from sin to Me and have your sins washed away.
 - b. Part of the message that they preached was: We are delivered from the wrath to come. Note some statements that Paul made.
 1. Rom 5:8-9—But God shows and clearly proves His [own] love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, died for us. Therefore, since we are now justified—acquitted, made righteous and brought into right relationship with God—by Christ's blood, how much more [certain is it that] we shall be saved by Him from the indignation and wrath of God (Amp).
 2. I Thess 1:9-10—(Others in the region have heard about your faith and talk about how) you turned away from idols to serve the true and living God. And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment (NLT).
6. The first Christians knew from the prophets there will be a time of calamity and tribulation associated with the day of the Lord, but that God's people will be delivered (Dan 12:1-2).
- a. When John received more details about it and referred to the events as the wrath of the Lamb in the Book of Revelation, they weren't disturbed.
 1. They heard it in terms of the prophets—God comes to deal with the ungodly, deliver His people, and then live with them forever. Isa 63:1-6; Joel 3:1-2; Rev 14:14-10; etc.
 2. They understood that it's part of the process of cleansing and restoring the earth by removing all that harms, offends, and corrupts. Rev 11:18
 - b. One quick note before we move on. The calamity of the final years prior to the Lord's return is not from God. It is the consequence of human behavior apart from God. It is connected to the Lord so that people understand the calamity that comes from rejecting God. Remember what we've

already discussed in previous lessons. We have more to say about this in next week's lesson.

- C. These first Christians were and are real people with real lives. They were just as interested in the coming of the Lord as we are. Remember, they expected to see the Lord's return in their lifetime which meant that they would see the tribulation as well. But they had a number of examples of Almighty God removing His people before wrath and judgment came, and of Him preserving them in the midst of it.
1. Luke 17:26-30—Jesus compared the season of His return to the days of Noah and Lot. Both of these events were judgments: the flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (We will get to what happened and why.)
 - a. Both of these events were judgments: the flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (we will get to what happened and why in later lessons).
 - b. Notice that in both instances normal life went on right up until the catastrophe came. They ate, drank, married, built, bought, sold, and planted. And many were unaware and caught off guard.
 2. There are many lessons to be learned from what happened in Noah and Lot's day. But consider these points in connection with where we find ourselves right now.
 - a. Notice both Noah and Lot were righteous men who lived in the midst of great and disturbing sin.
 1. Gen 6:5—The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination and intention of all human thinking was only evil continually (Amp).
 2. II Pet 2:8—(Lot) was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day (NLT).
 - b. Noah and his family were preserved in the ark in the midst of the flood (Heb 11:7). They survived to begin a new life in a cleansed world (Gen 6-9). Lot was delivered from Sodom before destruction came. There are numerous pictures of the Lord's protection and provision for His people in each of these incidents.
 1. Before the flood occurred Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, was taken off the earth by God without dying in a spectacular demonstration of life after this life. Gen 5:22-24; Heb 11:5
 2. I Thess 4:13-18—Enoch's translation is a picture of what Paul revealed will happen to a generation of believers on earth prior to the Lord's return. They will be caught up to Heaven without dying—before judgment comes.
 3. Lot was delivered from Sodom before destruction came. Judgment couldn't begin until Lot was removed (Gen 19:14; 21-22). The presence of a righteous man in that wicked city was a restraining force. Paul wrote that there is a restraint on the rise of the final world ruler. He won't be revealed to bring his destruction until the restraint is removed (II Thess 2:6-7).
 4. Rev 4:1—In the Book of Revelation John was caught up into Heaven before judgment came on the earth just as Enoch and Lot were taken out before judgment came. The church is referred to 18 times in chapters 1-3. But once John was taken into Heaven and the tribulation begins, the church is not mentioned again until Rev 22:16 after the earth is made new.
- D. Conclusion: The first Christians knew calamity is coming. But they weren't afraid. They knew that God will preserve and protect His people. They knew they would make it through. They did. They are in Heaven now, waiting to return to this world to be reunited with their bodies and live on earth again. Rev 5:10
1. The circumstances that will be in place when the Lord Jesus returns are setting up now. We will see increasing troubles and chaos. But Jesus is our ark of safety.
 2. Not only does He preserve us from ultimate judgment—eternal separation from God—He will preserve us through whatever is ahead. This must be our focus as we face the months and years ahead.