

## WRATH AT THE END

- A. Introduction: Jesus Christ is coming back to this world in the not too distant future. We are taking time to talk about what His return will mean for humanity.
1. Before Jesus left this world two thousand years ago He warned that His second coming will be preceded by tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen. Matt 24:21
    - a. The circumstances that will produce the peril and chaos of the final years of this age are setting up now. We will be increasingly affected by the turmoil and must learn how to deal with it.
      1. Jesus told His followers that when these troubling times begin to come to pass, instead of being afraid, we should be elated in joyous expectation because the plan of redemption is about to be completed. Luke 21:28
      2. Redemption is God’s plan to deliver both humanity and this planet from the sin, pain, toil, suffering, loss, and death that has plagued His creation since the earliest days of man on earth.
        - A. Jesus came the first time to pay for sin on the Cross so that sinners can be transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. John 1:12-13
        - B. Jesus will come again to restore the earth to a fit forever home for God and His family. He will cleanse it of all corruption and death, and establish His eternal kingdom here. Sin and death will be forever banished and Heaven will be on earth. Rev 21-22
    - b. To have peace, hope, and joy in the face of the perilous times ahead of us, we must understand what is happening and why—and we must learn to praise God no matter what happens. Hab 3:17-19
  2. We’ve already made the point that the second coming is a broad term for a number of events that take place over a period of time. Some of those events will include wrath and judgment.
    - a. This part of the second coming scares many who have no reason to be afraid because they don’t understand what wrath and judgment is and how it is part of God’s good plan.
    - b. To be fully excited about Jesus’ return, we must have an accurate understanding of the wrath and judgment of God and its connection to God’s plan for humanity. That’s our topic in this lesson.
- B. Before we talk about God’s wrath and judgment at the second coming we need to make some statements about God and His wrath in general.
1. The Bible refers to God as righteous and just in numerous passages. Ps 89:14—Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your (God’s) throne; mercy and loving kindness and truth go before Your face (Amp).
    - a. The idea expressed by the words righteous and just in the original Bible languages is what is right or as it should be. In other words, God is right (righteous and just) and always does what is right (righteous and just).
      1. God is not arbitrary (guided by impulse) or capricious (changeable, fickle). He does what He does because of who He is. He is righteous and just so He always does what is right and just.
      2. II Tim 2:13—God cannot deny Himself. To deny means to contradict. God does not act in contradictory ways. We can trust Him to always be and do what He is—righteous and just.
    - b. Wrath is God’s righteous and just response to sin. Although God is not pleased with sin, God’s wrath is not an emotional outburst at humanity. God expresses wrath because it is right to do so.
      1. We all understand that justice is doing what is right, or giving people what they deserve. If someone commits a horrific crime, no one is upset when appropriate punishment is meted out.
      2. The writers of the Bible understood this concept. In the context of urging Christians to obey civil law, Paul stated that those in authority execute or carry out justice on those who do wrong, calling them “agents of punishment to bring criminals to justice” (Rom 13:4, TPT). (The KJV KJV actually says “revengers who execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”.)

- A. Although our lesson isn't about Christian obligation to obey civil law, the way Paul used the word helps us understand how first century Christians understood the concept of wrath.
- B. This is not an emotional response. It is the administration of punishment for breaking the law (justice. If you exceed the speed limit you get a ticket. If you steal you go to jail.
2. All humans have failed in their moral obligation to obey their Creator. All deserve the wrath of God—or the just and right punishment for their disobedience—because all have broken His laws (sinned).
- a. To be true to His righteous and just nature, God must punish sin. He cannot overlook it or ignore it. The just and righteous penalty for sin is death or eternal separation from God who is life. Gen 2:17; Isa 59:2; Ezek 18:20
1. However, if this penalty is enforced, God's plan for a family will not come to pass. So He devised a way to carry out justice (do what is right in regard to our sin) and still have fallen men and women as sons and daughters—without violating His righteous nature and Law.
  2. Jesus took our place at the Cross, and the just and righteous wrath (punishment) that should have come to us for our sin went to Him. Justice has been satisfied in regard to our sin.
    - A. God's righteous wrath toward your sin has been expressed, but you must receive that expression in order for His wrath to be removed from you.
    - B. If you have accepted Jesus and His sacrifice at the Cross, then there is no more wrath for your sin. If you have rejected Jesus then the wrath of God (eternal separation from Him) awaits you when your body dies. John 3:36
- b. God does not dole out wrath and judgment on a sin-by-sin basis: If you commit a sin then God gives you a car wreck or disease. A car crash or disease isn't enough to pay for sin.
1. You may be thinking: Yes, but what about the Old Testament? For a discussion of God's wrath in the Old Testament, see these lessons on our website: TCC—1096 through 1104.
  2. God's wrath went to Jesus on the Cross. God's desire is to remove sin and transform the sinner. But if the sinner refuses to turn to the Lord, he won't be transformed. He will be forever removed from contact with God and His family. That is the wrath of God.
- c. Right now (in this present age), God is dealing with men in mercy as He gathers a family through Jesus. Mercy implies kindness and compassion that withholds punishment even when justice demands it (*Webster's Dictionary*).
1. God gives human beings a lifetime to repent. During this time He shows us His kindness and gives us a witness of Himself. II Pet 3:9; Luke 6:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17; Rom 1:20; etc.
  2. And, God has given humanity a spectacular, objective demonstration of His love for us. Jesus died for us while we were sinners. I John 4:9-10
3. Let me make a couple of points clear before we move on. I am not implying that God is happy with or not bothered by sin. Sin is clearly an offense to Almighty God and is greatly displeasing to Him.
- a. However, God's anger is not like man's anger—you make me mad and I punch you in the head. Our emotions aren't always righteous and they often drive us to act unrighteously, whereas God's emotions are always righteous and He expresses them righteously. James 1:20
1. Remember what we said last week about how God judges or expresses His anger to people in this life—He gives them over to the destructive effects of sin. Rom 1:24; 26; 28
  2. Sin deceives and hardens the sinner. Sin produces a downward spiral of destructive behavior that ends in a reprobate mind unable to make decisions in its own best interest. Heb 3:13
- b. I'm also not saying that God never disciplines or corrects His people—He clearly does. But He disciplines us by His Spirit through His Word—not through car wrecks. (Lessons for another day.)
- C. Let's connect the wrath and judgment of God with the second coming of Jesus. Why will there be wrath and judgment at that time and what will that mean for the people on earth?
1. When Jesus returns there will be people living on earth just as countless people have since Adam and

- Eve. However, this particular generation of humanity is going to experience events and tribulation unlike anything other generations have or ever will experience.
- a. But it won't be because God finally blows His top with mankind and throws lightning bolts down to earth. Two factors will contribute to the uniqueness of this last generation's experience.
    1. One, the end of this age will be only a few years away. We live in the age when things are not the way they're supposed to be because of sin, and "this world in its present form is passing away" (I Cor 7:31, NIV). This last generation will experience the end of the age.
    2. Two, this generation will be alive at the time when, as the Bible predicts, the world completely abandons their Creator and welcomes a false Savior—Satan's counterfeit of Jesus—Antichrist.
      - A. This man will rule over a global system of government, economy, and religion (Rev 13). His actions and the responses of the world to him will produce the tribulation and horror of these final years of human history in the present age.
        - B. When people reject God it leads to increasingly reprobate actions and decisions. The final generation will experience the effects of the worst reprobate actions and decisions ever.
  - b. In AD 95 Jesus gave John (one of Jesus' earliest followers) a vision of what will happen when the final ruler comes to power. John recorded what he saw in the Book of Revelation. Rev 6:1-17
    1. This man will draw the world to war. World War III will be a nuclear, biological, and chemical holocaust and result in the complete collapse of society and the death of millions.
      - A. These events are referred to as the wrath of the Lamb (Rev 6:16-17). They are connected to Jesus, not because He makes them happen, but because God wants it clearly understood that the calamity earth is experiencing in a direct consequence of their rejection of Him.
        - B. Remember, this age is about to come to an end. Once the catastrophic events the Bible describes begin, they will unfold over a short period of time (a few years). The generation on earth at that time will have to quickly make a definitive decision for or against the Lord.
      2. During this period, the wickedness of Satan and the wickedness of human beings who have rejected Almighty God will be on display as never before and cause some men and women to wake up and see their need for the true Savior—the Lord Jesus Christ.
  2. But there's more to the uniqueness of this time period. Not only is the end of the age at hand, the time for the final reckoning with all of humanity has also come—the time to judge the world. Jesus is the Judge and is coming to administer final justice (many lessons for another time). Acts 17:31; John 5:22-27
    - a. Because of this, the second coming will affect not just the people on earth at that time, but every human being who has ever lived. No one ceases to exist when their body dies. All are somewhere now (Heaven or Hell), depending on how they responded to the light of God's grace through Jesus.
      - b. Heaven and Hell, as they are now, are temporary because God never intended for human beings to live in a non-physical dimension without a physical body. In connection with the second coming of Jesus, all bodies will be raised from the grave and restored to their original owner.
        1. All who acknowledged the revelation of Jesus given to their generation will come to earth to live here with the Lord forever on this earth, renewed and restored. Rev 21-22
        2. All who rejected the Creator and His revelation of Himself will be forever consigned to a place of eternal separation from God and His family, in a place referred to as the Lake of Fire or the second death. Rev 20:11-15
  3. In Rev 11:15-18, as John reported what will happen when Jesus takes control of the kingdoms of this world, John described people he saw in Heaven who proclaim praise to God in the context of His wrath.
    - a. Rev 11:18—The nations were angry with you, but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants. You will reward your prophets and your holy people, all who fear your name from the least to the greatest. And you will destroy those who have caused destruction on the earth (NLT).

1. Wrath is an administration of justice. Justice involves punishment when appropriate, but there is also reward. The reward for the righteous (those in right relationship with God through Jesus) will be everlasting life as sons and daughters of God who live with Him forever on this earth, renewed and restored to pre-sin conditions.

2. The reward for the unrighteous (those who throughout human history have rejected the Lord's offer of salvation) will be everlasting separation from God and all that is good.

b. We find a definition of the destruction they will experience in 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. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and his glorious power when he comes to receive glory and praise from his holy people (NLT).

1. The Greek word translated destruction means ruin (not extinction). There is no greater ruin than to be forever lost to your created purpose—sonship and relationship with Almighty God.

2. In Rev 11:18 the Greek word that is translated destroy means to rot thoroughly and, by implication, to ruin. The time has come “for destroying the corrupters of the earth” (Amp).

A. This agrees with something Jesus said while He was here on earth: (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).

B. In connection with Jesus' second coming, the wrath of God will destroy (remove from contact with the family and the family home) every trace of the thing that has ravaged His creation—sin and its effects. And that's a good thing.

3. Without the wrath of God being expressed, without the administration of justice, there will never be peace or freedom from chaos and pain in this world.

c. If you've accepted Jesus and His sacrifice there is no more wrath for your sin. Through Jesus you are delivered from the wrath to come—eternal separation from God. I Thess 5:9; Rom 5:9

1. Rom 8:1—Therefore [there is] now no condemnation—no adjudging guilty of wrong for those who are in Christ (Amp).

2. Wrath is never mentioned in Scripture in connection with believers. Wrath is for the children of disobedience—those who refuse to believe. The Greek word translated disobedience means an unwillingness to be persuaded, willful unbelief, obstinacy. Eph 5:6; Col 3:6

D. Conclusion: We haven't said all that there is to say about God's wrath and judgment at the second coming. But consider these thoughts as we close.

1. Those who know the Lord have no reason to be afraid of His coming and what is ahead. Note what Paul (an eyewitness of Jesus) taught people about Jesus' return: Jesus...is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of coming judgment (I Thess 1:10, NLT).

2. As we approach the end of this age we need two things: accurate knowledge from the Bible and the ability to keep our mind focused on the end result.

a. In the context of the Lord's return Paul wrote to Christians: Brothers and sisters, stand firm. Hold on to what we taught you. We passed our teachings on to you by what we preached and wrote (II Thess 2:15, NIV). Remember, the men who wrote the Bible were eyewitnesses of Jesus.

b. In the face of increasing chaos and the effects of reprobate decisions, remind yourself of the glorious future ahead of us and the fact that God will get us through until He gets us out! More next week!