

DELIVERED FROM THE WRATH TO COME

- A. Introduction: We're working on a series about the soon return of Jesus to earth. We're considering His return in terms of the overall plan of God. Our goal is to remove fear and also stir hope in God's people.
1. This world is not as it should be or as it was created it to be. Both mankind and the earth have been damaged by sin. It is not God's intention that the world go on forever as it is.
 - a. God's aim is not to fix up this fallen world but to transform it by removing the root problem -- sin.
 1. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay the price for sin so it can be removed from men and women and they can become holy, righteous sons and daughters of God through faith in Him.
 2. Jesus will come again to loose the entire material creation from bondage to corruption and death and make the earth a fit forever home for God's family.
 - b. The answer to the world's ills is not a political candidate or an election outcome. It is the removal of sin and the return of the Rightful King to the earth He created.
 - c. We are only passing through this life as it is. The greater and better part of our existence is ahead, first in Heaven and then on the new earth. Heb 11:13-16; I Pet 1:17; I Pet 2:11; etc.
 1. Our primary duty is not to make this world a better place. We are here to bring knowledge of salvation through Jesus to a lost and dying world so they can have a share in the life to come.
 2. That doesn't mean we don't help people along the way or live regular lives. It means we keep our priorities straight. We aren't all called to be Billy Graham. But we're all called to bring glory to God and represent Him in our little corner of the world.
 3. Col 3:22-24--Paul exhorted slaves to live with the consciousness that they serve the Lord and He will reward. The losses of this life will be rectified in the life to come.
 2. Times will grow increasingly challenging as Jesus' return draws closer. But scripture is clear that we have no reason to fear. God will protect and provide for His people until He comes. I Pet 1:5
 - a. Part of God's provision for us is knowledge from His Word about what will happen and why. We have spent our time discussing God's overall plan of redemption to build our faith in Him.
 - b. We need to address one more topic as we close this short series. One reason people fear Jesus' return is that there will be a time of wrath associated with His coming. Jesus' first followers knew this but were not afraid. Why? Because they understood wrath had nothing to do with them.
- B. The Old Testament prophets wrote much about the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom on earth. They did not see clearly that there would be two separate comings of the Lord. Sometimes they unknowingly referred to both comings of Jesus in the same verse. Isa 9:6
1. The Old Testament prophets frequently referred to the Lord's coming as "the day of the Lord". And all who wrote of it described it as a time of wrath. Isa 13:6-13
 - a. Notice that the language in Isaiah is similar to what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse when He answered questions about His Second Coming and similar to what John described in his vision of the events immediately preceding the Lord's return. Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12
 - b. Jesus' first disciples weren't frightened by this information because they knew God is going to remove the wicked from the earth, not His own people.
 - c. Although they didn't have specific details, they knew from the prophets that the Redeemer was going to provide His people with the righteousness necessary to qualify them for His kingdom on earth. Jer 23:5,6; Jer 33:15,16
 2. Let's fast forward six hundred years. Jesus has come to earth. He's been rejected by Israel's leaders who are plotting to destroy Him (Matt 12:14). Jesus began to prepare His disciples for the fact that He was not, at that time, going to establish His visible kingdom on earth.
 - a. The kingdom was going to take a different form not clearly seen by the old Testament prophets -- the kingdom within or the reign of God in the hearts of men through the new birth. The disciples will later learn that the new birth produces the transformation that turns sinful men and women

into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. Luke 17:20,21; John 1:12; I John 5:1; etc.

- b. Matt 13:24-30; 36-43--Through a parable about wheat (children of God) and tares (children of the devil) Jesus explained that the wicked weren't going to be removed from the earth at this time. They will be removed at the end of this world (lit: age). Then the kingdom will be established.
 1. That agreed with what the prophet Joel wrote about the wicked being cut out of the earth but God's people being preserved (Joel 3:12-17). Valley of decision is literally valley of threshing (separating seed from a harvested plant). But God will be the hope of His people.
 2. None of Jesus' followers were scared when John wrote in Revelation that, at the Lord's coming, the angels will harvest men out of the earth and put them in the winepress of God's wrath. They knew from the Bible -- that's not us. Rev 14:15-19
3. The night before Jesus went to the Cross He celebrated a Passover meal with His disciples. By His day four cups of wine were presented during the meal as part of the ritual recalling the Passover in Egypt.
 - a. Matt 26:27-29--After dinner Jesus took the third cup which represented redemption and said: This is My blood which will be shed for the remission or wiping out of sin.
 1. The disciples don't realize it yet, but the Redeemer is about shed His blood to redeem or deliver men from bondage to sin, corruption and death by wiping it out through the Cross.
 2. The next time He drinks wine with them, sin will have been dealt with, opening the way for the kingdom of God to be established in their hearts through the new birth. Acts 10:41
 - b. When Jesus appeared to His disciples on Resurrection Day, He went through the scriptures and showed them how He had fulfilled what was prophesied and dealt with men's sins as promised.
1. Now they could go out to preach: Turn to Jesus and have your sins blotted out. Luke 24:44-48
 2. The apostle Paul was given even more revelation about how the righteousness necessary to qualify for God's kingdom comes to men and women: Through the new birth we are united to Jesus and become partakers of His righteousness.
 3. II Cor 5:21--So that we through union with him might become the Righteousness of God (20th Cent); be changed into the righteousness of God (Conybeare); turned into the holiness of God (Knox); made good with the goodness of God (Phillips).
- c. Through His sacrifice, Jesus paid for sin so it could be removed. He opened the way for God to indwell people, making them literal sons and daughters by second birth, transforming them from sinners into holy, righteous men and women qualified for His kingdom in Heaven and on earth.
4. Rev 6:15-17--Wrath is associated with the Second Coming of Jesus. Wrath is God's righteous and just response to man's sin and rebellion.
 - a. God dealt with our sin at Jesus' first coming. Jesus went to the Cross as our Substitute and God poured out His wrath against the sin and rebellion of men on Jesus. Isa 53
 - b. God's wrath toward our sin has been expressed, but we must receive that expression in order for His wrath to be removed from us. We receive it by receiving Jesus, by acknowledging Him as Savior and Lord. For all who have not received Christ and His sacrifice, the wrath of God abides on them. John 3:36
 1. That doesn't mean God now deals with unsaved people in wrath. He deals with them in mercy, giving men a witness of Himself and a lifetime to repent. II Pet 3:9; Luke 6:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:16,17; Rom 1:20
 2. However, if a person never believes on Jesus, he does face the wrath of God when he leaves this earth. The righteous penalty of or punishment for sin is eternal separation from God, first in hell, and then, ultimately, in the lake of fire or the second death (Rev 20:14,15). That is the fate of all who reject Jesus Christ. That is the wrath of God.
 - c. The phrase "wrath of God" is never used in connection with Christians or with daily Christian living. We have been delivered from the wrath to come. Rom 5:9; I Thess 1:10; 5:9
 1. The Old Testament prophets referred to God's wrath as a cup that must be drunk (Jer 25:15; Isa 51:17). Jesus drank from the cup of God's wrath so that we don't have to (Matt 26:39-42).

There is no wrath for those who have received Jesus Christ.

2. The phrase “wrath of God” is used in connection with the future fate of all who reject Jesus and with the Second Coming of Jesus. John 3:36; Rev 6:16,17; II Thess 1:7-9

A. At Jesus’ Second Coming all men who, since the fall of man in the Garden, have rejected His offer of salvation and chosen to live independent of God will be confined to a place of eternal separation from God in a place called the lake of fire or the second death.

B. The Lord will cleanse the earth of the curse of sin and death and establish His visible, eternal kingdom on this earth -- a kingdom of righteousness, peace and perfection. It is God’s desire that the sinner come to Him and be transformed so he can participate in this kingdom. But if he refuses he will be removed.

5. The Second Coming involves a period of judgment. One of the titles given to Jesus is that of Judge (Acts 10:42). This is a huge topic with many aspects. But consider several brief points.

a. At His coming Jesus will carry out justice or do what is right in regard to all men. He will reward those who have believed on Him with everlasting life in His kingdom and will punish those who have refused Him by removing them from all contact with His kingdom. Rev 11:18

1. This will be right and just. Believers don’t merit or earn the reward. It was given to us in Christ when we believed on Him. Those who have refused God’s salvation through Jesus will receive the just penalty of their choice -- eternal separation from God.

2. Believers will stand before the Lord in union with Jesus, partaking of His righteousness.

I John 4:17--In this [union and communion with Him] love is brought to completion and attains perfection with us, that 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. (Amp)

b. The Book of Revelation describes a series of horrific judgments that will come on the earth in the final seven years immediately preceding Jesus’ return. Rev 6:1-17; 8:1-13; 9:1-21; 15:1-8

1. The primary way God judges men in this life is to give them over to their sinful choices and the ensuing consequences of those choices.

2. In Rom 1 Paul described the downward spiral men undergo when they reject God as their Creator and Lord. Note that God gives them over to the choice and consequences. v24,26,28

c. In those final seven years Satan will offer the world his counterfeit of Jesus. The actions of this man and the responses of the people of the world to him will produce the calamity of these years.

1. All restraint on evil will be removed when believers are removed (II Thess 2:6,7). Not only will Satan’s wickedness be demonstrated as never before but also wickedness in men’s hearts.

2. These years will see the greatest devastation man has ever brought upon himself. Only Jesus’ coming will prevent people from completely annihilating themselves. Matt 24:21,22

d. Rev 6:1-17 describes Jesus in Heaven opening seals on a scroll just before His coming. When the first seal is opened the final leader is revealed and goes forth to begin his work.

1. Satan, not God, brings this man to power and through him, the devil deceives men who are willing be deceived. God will let them believe the lie that this man is God and reap the consequences thereof. These people love unrighteousness, not the truth. II Thess 2:9-12

2. The opening of the seals is connected to God because He wants it clearly understood that the calamity that men experience, the ruin they reap in this life and the life to come, is a direct result of their rejection of Him.

D. Conclusion: Obviously, we could say much more about every subject we’ve addressed in this short series. But consider some thoughts as we bring it to a close.

1. The circumstances in place in those final seven years before the Lord’s return will not come out of a vacuum. They are setting up right now, bringing the world to the point where they will welcome and embrace the final world ruler. This will increasingly affect our lives.

a. As threats to peace continue to grow, particularly through terrorism, people will become more and

more desperate to do whatever is necessary to secure peace and safety. But instead of crying out to Almighty God they will more and more turn to: We can do it if we band together.

1. A mindset is already well developed that we must unite globally to solve our problems: terrorism, climate change, etc. People's decisions will become more reprobate as their minds are increasingly darkened through sin and unwillingness to surrender to their Creator.
2. Dan 8:25 says that through peace Satan's final ruler will destroy many. He will offer the world a false peace and they will accept it rather than turn to the Prince of Peace. Isa 9:7
- b. How bad will it get before believers in Jesus are taken off the earth? I don't know. Jesus compared the years just prior to His return to the days of Noah and Lot. Matt 24:38; Luke 17:28
 1. His point was that in each period those not surrendered to God weren't expecting judgment and did not escape it. But as Jesus made His point He revealed that the normal activities of life continued right up until judgment came.
 2. Society as we know it will not collapse. The final ruler must have something to rule over and because there will be only seven years left after he comes on the scene, there won't be time to completely rebuild civilization.
2. Our standard of living may change. But we'll adjust to it. Scripture is clear that God will take care of His people. You need to build your faith in His care for you. That kind of trust comes through knowledge of God's Word not from feeding on the daily headlines.
 - a. The greatest gift you can give yourself is to become a regular reader of the New Testament. Read it through, beginning to end. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Just keep reading. Understanding comes with familiarity.
 - b. In the context of conditions produced by the behavior of people at the end, Paul told Timothy to continue in the scriptures which make us wise unto salvation. II Tim 3:1-5; 13-15
3. One of the hallmarks of these years is and will be religious deception (Matt 24:4,11,24; II Tim 3:5). Regular reading of the New Testament will give you a framework with which to assess what you hear.
 - a. Both Peter and Paul wrote that there will false teachers in the Church just before the Lord's return. II Pet 2:3--Motivated by greed, they will exploit you with their counterfeit arguments (Berkeley); In their covetousness they will try to make you a source of profit by their fabrications (20th Cent).
 - b. Be aware of this fact. This is the test for any teaching you hear on any subject: If your only source of information was the New Testament, would you conclude that what you just heard is accurate?
4. Develop an eternal perspective. This life is not all there is. The best is yet to come. Life's challenges don't begin to compare with what is ahead for those who know the Lord. Rom 8:18; II Cor 4:17,18
 - a. The apostle Peter faced a martyr's death secure in the knowledge that the best is ahead. He died looking forward to the new heavens and new earth. II Pet 3:13
 - b. Don't allow lack of knowledge and misinformation to rob you of the joy of Christ's soon return. If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, and the teaching you're getting about any aspect of His return is making you afraid, you're not getting good teaching. Jesus is coming to complete His plan!!