

NO FEAR OF WRATH

- A. Introduction: We are working on a series about the second coming of Jesus. Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan for a family—His plan to have sons and daughters He can live with forever on this earth. At His coming He will cleanse the earth of corruption and death and restore it to pre-sin conditions.
1. The name second coming is a broad term for a number of events that take place over a period of time in connection with Jesus' return. Some of the events include wrath and judgment. Because people don't understand what is going to happen and why, the idea of coming wrath and judgment frightens them.
 2. Last week we began to talk about why there will be wrath and judgment when Jesus returns and what it will mean for people on earth. We have more to say tonight. Let's review a few points about wrath.
 - a. The word wrath is used as a figure of speech in the Bible to mean the penalty for breaking the law. God's wrath is not an emotional outburst at sin. Wrath is His righteous and just response to sin.
 - b. All human beings have broken God's moral Law and deserve wrath or punishment (Rom 3:23). The just and right penalty for sin is death or separation from God who is Life. However, if God enforces this penalty, His plan for a family will not come to pass.
 1. The Lord devised a way to carry out justice (do what is right) and still have a family. At the Cross Jesus took the wrath (the just and righteous punishment) that should have come to us for our sin. Through His death, Jesus satisfied Divine Justice on our behalf.
 - A. Through His death, Jesus paid the penalty for sin at the Cross. Therefore, all who believe on Him are justified. To justify means to render, show, or regard as just or innocent.
 - B. Rom 5:8-9—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. If you have accepted Jesus and His sacrifice then there is no more punishment (wrath) for your sin. If you reject Jesus and His sacrifice then the wrath of God awaits you when you die. You will be eternally separated from Him and His family. John 3:36
 3. The term wrath of God is also used for events just prior to Jesus' return when Satan will offer the world (and they will accept) a false Christ as he attempts to hold on to his kingdom on earth. II Thess 2:3-10
 - a. This Satan inspired and empowered man will rule over a global system of government, economy, and religion. His actions and the responses of the world to him will produce a period of tribulation and horror of unlike anything the world has ever seen. Rev 13
 1. 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.
 2. Remember what we said in earlier lessons. When God judges people (expresses displeasure) in this life He gives them over to the destructive effects of their sin. Rom 1:24; 26; 28
 - b. Also in connection with Jesus' return, there will be a final reckoning with all humanity (a day or period of judgment) when Jesus administers final justice (lessons for another day). At that time:
 1. All who throughout history 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 through Jesus will be consigned to a place of eternal separation from God and His family (the second death). Rev 20:11-15
- Removing wickedness is part of restoring the world. John made this statement about what will happen when Jesus controls of this world's kingdoms: It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants... and you will destroy those who have caused destruction on (corrupted) the earth (Rev 11:18, NLT).
- a. Destroy does not mean annihilation. It is eternal separation from God (II Thess 1:7-9). The Greek word that is translated destroy means to ruin. There is no greater ruin than to be lost forever to you

created purpose—sonship and relationship with God.

b. Without the wrath of God being expressed, without the administration of justice to remove all that hurts and harms, there will never be peace or freedom from chaos and pain in this world.

B. To fully appreciate what wrath and judgment will mean for humanity when Jesus returns we need to consider what the wrath of God meant to the first people Jesus interacted with when He was here the first time.

1. Jesus was born into 1st century AD Israel, and His first followers were Jewish. Based on the writings of their prophets they understood that the Lord is coming to administer justice (mete out punishment and reward) as part of His plan to establish His kingdom on earth and restore the world to pre-sin conditions.

a. Peter (an original apostle) gives us insight when he preached that Jesus will remain in Heaven “until the time for the complete restoration of all that God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets for ages past—from the most ancient time in the memory of man” (Acts 3:21, Amp).

b. Jude (converted after the resurrection) cited one of these ancient prophets in an epistle he wrote to urge believers to contend for the faith because false teachers were infiltrating the church. Jude 14-15

1. In his epistle Jude focused on the judgment these people will face and quoted a man named Enoch, who prophesied that the Lord will come with His saints to carry out justice on the ungodly. The word judgment means a decision for or against; by implication it means justice.

2. Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam (Gen 5:21-24). He lived for 365 years and then was translated (taken to Heaven without dying, Heb 11:5). Adam was actually alive during the first 308 years of Enoch’s life. No doubt they talked about Eden and the world before sin and the curse of corruption and death damaged everything.

c. Before continuing I need to make some comments about Enoch and his prophecies. There is a lot of talk today about the Book of Enoch, and this emphasis distracts from and undermines the Bible.

1. References to Enoch and his book are found in several books from antiquity, including the Book of Jasher (Josh 10:13; II Sam 1:18) and some church fathers (Tertullian, AD 165-225).

A. Legend says Enoch gave his book (his writings) to Noah, who gave it to his son Shem, and that the book was kept in the city of Salem in Israel.

B. The book survived down to the time of the Essenes (100 BC) who preserved it in what we now call the Dead Sea Scrolls. Fragments of Enoch’s book, in both Hebrew and Greek, were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, along with the entire book written Aramaic.

2. Although the book has some interesting information, it was never considered to be inspired Scripture. People are drawn to it because they mistakenly think it has some secret message or special revelation that will help them more than the Bible.

2. Paul the apostle was thoroughly schooled in the Old Testament prophets. Wrath and judgment was part of the message he preached throughout the Roman world. Consider an example.

a. In AD 51 Paul established a community of believers at Thessalonica, a city in northern Greece. He was only there for a few weeks when persecution broke out and he was forced to leave the city.

b. Over the next few months Paul wrote two epistles to these people to encourage and further instruct them. Among other topics, he wrote to clarify points he made while he was with them.

1. In his first letter we find that the second coming was one of the first things Paul taught them: Everyone knows how wonderfully you turned from idols to serve the true and living God. And now you eagerly expect his Son from heaven—Jesus, the deliverer, whom he raised from the dead and who rescues us from the coming wrath (I Thess 1:8-10, TPT).

2. Because Paul taught the same message everywhere he preached we know that he taught them Thessalonians that they were justified (acquitted, made righteous) through the blood of Christ and delivered from the punishment of sin (wrath) when they die. I Cor 4:17; Rom 5:9; John 3:36

c. I Thess 5:2—But there is more to it. We also see that Paul taught them about the Day of the Lord.

1. Half of the prophets whose books are in the Old Testament wrote about the Day of the Lord. Joel 1:15; Isa 13:6; Obadiah 15; Amos 5:8; 20; Zeph 1:7; 14; Ezek 30:3; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:5
 - A. Day of the Lord refers to a time of wrath and judgment (administering of justice) that will precede the Lord's coming to set up His kingdom and restore the earth. In that day God will come to deal with the ungodly, deliver His people from all harm and live among them.
 - B. The term second coming was not used in the first century the way we use it now. Some of the New Testament authors referred to what we now call the second coming as the Day of the Lord or the Day of Christ, including Peter and Paul. II Pet 3:10; I Thess 5:2
2. The books of the prophets also have a lot of information about world conditions at the time of the Day of the Lord—including the rise of a world leader who will bring great destruction.
3. The Book of Revelation is not new information, but rather more details about the prophets' descriptions of the Day of the Lord, this period of wrath and judgment (lessons for another day).
3. In the context of the coming Day of the Lord, Paul made a second reference to the Thessalonians that Christians are delivered from the wrath to come. I Thess 5:9
 - a. Paul reminded his readers that people in darkness will be surprised by the Day of the Lord. They will be saying: Peace and safety when sudden destruction comes, but Christians won't be caught off guard. I Thess 5:1-5
 1. In his letters, Paul often referred to unbelievers as darkness or being in darkness, and referred to believers as children of light who are in the light. II Cor 6:14; Eph 5:6-11; Col 1:13; etc.
 2. The Greek word translated destruction is the same word used to describe the punishment (destruction) awaiting those who reject the Lord—eternal separation. II Thess 2:9
 3. Paul exhorted them to be alert and live as children of the light (I Thess 5:6-8). He reminded them that “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess 5:9, NIV).
 - b. The clear implication is that you will escape the Day of the Lord (the judgment and wrath associated with the second coming).
4. Notice the next statement Paul made. We'll escape wrath so that, whether we are alive on earth when Jesus returns or with Him in Heaven at that time, we will live together with Him. I Thess 5:10
 - a. Hold that thought. Just before Paul made these statements about the coming Day of the Lord, he addressed a concern the Thessalonians had about loved ones who died.
 1. At some point during this period when Paul was separated from the Thessalonians (before he wrote his epistle) Paul sent Timothy, a co-worker, back to the city to check on the new converts.
 2. Timothy came back with a report that the believers were standing strong, but that they had some questions and issues that needed to be addressed.
 - b. One of those questions had to do with the fate of those who die before the second coming of Jesus. Paul answered that question just before he talked about the Day of the Lord. I Thess 4:13-18
 1. Paul told his readers that those who have died are with the Lord Jesus, and He will bring them with Him when He returns. Then, we who are alive on earth will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.
 - A. The Greek word translated caught up (*harpazo*) means to snatch or catch away. It has the idea of force suddenly exercised. The word is used four times in the New Testament, here and in Acts 8:39, II Cor 12:4, and Rev 12:5.
 - B. When the Greek New Testament was later translated into Latin the Greek word *harpazo* was translated into the Latin word *raptus*. We get the word rapture from this Latin word.
 2. When this event occurs, the bodies of those who have died and are with the Lord will be raised raised from the grave, made immortal and incorruptible, and reunited with the original owners. (Remember, full salvation includes resurrection of the dead.)

- c. Paul reminded them that there will be a generation of believers who do not experience physical death. Their bodies will be changed (made immortal and incorruptible) just after the bodies of those who come from Heaven with the Lord are raised and changed. I Cor 15:51-53
1. As Paul explained this to the Thessalonians he reminded them that he got his information from Jesus Himself: I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves (I Thess 4:15, NLT).
 - A. All these believers will then temporarily return with the Lord to Heaven. This is the context of Paul's statements about the Day of the Lord, coming destruction, and escaping wrath.
 - B. When Jesus comes to administer justice after the final world ruler takes control of the world resulting in great tribulation, believers will return with Him from Heaven to live on earth with the Lord forever. Heaven will be on earth.
 2. Paul knew from the prophets and from what Jesus told him that the coming Day of the Lord will be a good thing for believers, but not for unbelievers.
- C. Conclusion: Perhaps you've noticed that the way I approach the topic of the second coming is different from the way many teachers and preachers approach it. I'm trying to show you the big picture—how the second coming fits into the overall plan of God for man and end result.
1. Too many people focus on individual events that are connected to the second coming without considering them in terms of God's plan of redemption or without considering what the first Christians thought about the Lord's return.
 - a. We live two thousand years after Jesus' first coming and all kinds of ideas have developed about the second coming. We have preconceived and sometimes inaccurate ideas about what's ahead.
 1. It's very hard to hear verses about what we now call the rapture without immediately jumping to everything you've already heard about who is and isn't going and when it will occur in connect to the tribulation.
 2. Some end time teaching can make it seem as if the most important topic is the identity of the Antichrist, the mark of the beast, and when Armageddon will take place.
 - b. Paul, who knew the Old Testament prophets and who received the message that he preached directly from Jesus, taught that believers will escape the Day of the Lord, the wrath and judgment associated with the second coming.
 1. Remember Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, who prophesied that the Lord will come with His saints to administer justice. Remember what justice means—reward those who belong to Him and remove those who do not—and then renew and restore the earth.
 - A. Enoch named his firstborn son Methuselah, a name that comes from two Hebrew words meaning: When he is dead, it will be sent. Methuselah died the same year as the Flood of Noah. The Flood was judgment (lessons for another time; see lesson TCC—1100).
 - B. The Book of Jasher (Josh 10:13; II Sam 1:18) states that Methuselah died one week before the Flood occurred—the same day that Noah entered the Ark (Gen 7:1-4).
 2. The point is that both men missed the coming judgment by leaving this earth. Enoch left as the generation Paul wrote about—caught up to Heaven without seeing physical death.
 2. What would we hear about the second coming if the apostles came to our town—men who were familiar with the writings of the prophets and walked and talked with Jesus?
 - a. Would they be telling us what the latest prophet on the internet is saying? No, they would be telling us what the word of God says. That's what we should be talking about too!
 - b. After Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they will be caught up to be with the Lord, this is what he wrote this words: So comfort and encourage each other with these words (I Thess 4:18, NLT).