

EARTH MADE RIGHT

- A. Introduction: We have been discussing the wrath of God. Many Christians are afraid of the wrath of God when they have no reason to be afraid. The wrath of God is His judicial response to the sins of men.
1. The wrath of God for our sin, His judicial response to our sin, was poured out on Jesus at the Cross. Jesus took our place at the Cross and was punished for our sin. Isa 53:4-6
 - a. Justice has been carried out in regard to our sin. There is no more wrath for those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Rom 5:9; I Thess 1:10; 5:9
 - b. In the New Testament the phrase “wrath of God” is never used in connection with Christians or with daily Christian living.
 2. The phrase “the wrath of God” is used in connection with the future fate of all who reject Jesus Christ and with the Second Coming of Jesus. John 3:36; II Thess 1:7-9
 - a. The wrath of God is going to be expressed at the return of Jesus to this earth. In fact, in the Book of Revelation, it is called the wrath of the Lamb. Rev 6:16,17; etc.
 - b. Jesus came to earth the first time to offer salvation to all men through the Cross. He will come the second time to deal with all who throughout history have rejected that gift.
 1. At that time Jesus will execute the righteous penalty for sin on all who have not received the work of the Cross and He will cleanse creation of all corruption. Matt 13:36-43
 2. The righteous penalty 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.
 3. There is coming a day of judgment in the earth. It will not be a literal twenty-four hour Judgment Day, but rather a time of judgment associated with the Second Coming of Jesus. God has been warning men about this coming judgment since the fall of man. Jude 14,15
 - a. The Lord will come to execute or carry out judgment. Judgment comes from a word that means justice. Jesus is coming back to carry out justice.
 - b. Justice is about doing what is right and making things right. Rev 11:18
 1. It is right to punish evil doers and it is right to reward those who do works of righteousness.
 2. There is no punishment for those who have received Jesus Christ. We will stand before God to be rewarded for having done the work of God. We have believed on Jesus. John 6:29
 4. This process of making things right will begin with a seven year period of time just prior to the return of Jesus to this earth. It is commonly known as the tribulation. The Old Testament prophets called it the “day of the Lord” or the “day of wrath”. Zeph 1:14,15; etc.
 - a. The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented suffering, with the last three and a half years being particularly bad. The Book of Revelation describes a series of three increasingly severe events on the earth in these years. (See Chart)
 1. There are a number of unanswered questions about these destructive events of the tribulation.
 2. At what point in the tribulation does each series begin? How long do they last? What, exactly, are some of them? Because we have a 1st century man describing warfare and technology in the 21st century it’s not clear if some of these events consist of nuclear, chemical, or biological warfare, or something else. It will all be clear when it happens.
 - b. In response to this information we might ask these questions: How could a good, loving God allow all of that? Are all those horrible events expressions of the wrath of God? If so, how can I be sure He’s not going to do something like that to me? In this lesson we want to continue our discussion of the wrath of God and the Second Coming of Jesus.

- B. The catastrophe and calamity of the final seven years of human history does not come from God.
1. When God “judges” people or “expresses His wrath” in this life He does not send down lightning bolts. He allows people to reap the consequences of their actions (Rom 1:18-32; Num 14:28,29; Ps 81:8-12; Isa 3:9,10; Jer 2:17,19; 4:18;etc.). The tribulation will be a time of horror and suffering because all restraints on evil will be removed.
 - a. Just prior to the tribulation God will take the church off the earth (I Thess 1:10; 4:13-18; etc.) and the restraint that God exercised on evil through the Church will cease.
 - b. II Thess 2:7,8a--For the mystery of lawlessness -- that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority -- is already at work in the world, [but it is] restrained only until he who restrains is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one (the Antichrist) will be revealed. (Amp)
 2. God will allow Satan’s wickedness and the wickedness in human hearts to be demonstrated as never before.
 - a. Satan knows his time is short and he will act in with great wrath which will produce great suffering on the earth. Rev 12:12
 1. Satan will offer his counterfeit of Jesus, Antichrist, in an effort to persuade the whole world to worship him. He will try to wipe out the Jews and he will try to stop the return of Jesus.
 2. Satan has tried numerous times through the centuries to work through a man to take over the world, set up a world government, a world religion -- Hitler, Napoleon, Stalin, etc. But he has been restrained until the time of the end.
 - b. Dan 8:23-25 tells us that the satanically inspired activities of the Antichrist will cause great suffering on this earth. The actions of the Antichrist and the responses of the people of this earth to him will bring the heartache and suffering of the tribulation.
 3. According to II Thess 2:3 the Day of the Lord, the hour of His wrath, will not begin until the church is taken off the earth and the man of sin, the Antichrist, is revealed. II Thess 2:3,4
 - a. In the Book of Revelation John was shown what will happen after the church is taken off the earth. He was caught up into heaven (Rev 4:1; etc.) and he saw the throne of God and God holding a book (scroll) with seven seals (Rev 5:1).
 - b. Jesus is pronounced as the one who is worthy to open the book because of His redemptive work at the Cross. Rev 5:5-10
 1. It is fitting that Jesus open the scroll because, according to Acts 17:31, God will judge the world according to righteousness by Jesus. Jesus, the Living Word, is the standard.
 2. All human beings will be judged based on their response to Jesus and His sacrifice.
 4. As Jesus opens each seal events occur on the earth (Rev 6). When the first seal is opened Antichrist is revealed and goes forth to begin his work (v1). Does God “make it happen”? Does God “bring the Antichrist to power”? Of course not.
 - a. II Thess 2:9-11--It is through the cunning of Satan that this man of sin will come, and Satan will furnish him with every sort of power and with pretended signs and miracles. He will be equipped with all kinds of wicked deceptions so as to make men perish, all because they refused to love the truth by means of which they could be saved. It is because of this refusal that God will send powerful heresies among them and let them believe lies. (Norlie)
 - b. Satan will deceive men through the Antichrist and they will willingly be deceived. God will allow them to believe the lie that the Antichrist is God and reap the consequences thereof. Notice, these are people who do not love the truth but love unrighteousness (v12).
 5. Yes, but doesn’t it say that God is going to deceive them? Think about it. How can God deceive anyone? He is truth! All He has is truth!

- a. God wants it clearly understood that the calamity the people of earth will experience, the ruin they will reap, is a direct result of their rejection of Him.
 - b. Remember, during the tribulation God will be “bending over backwards” to show Himself to men.
 1. There will be more supernatural signs of the reality of God given during the tribulation than ever before in the history of man.
 2. They will be like the plagues of Egypt, demonstrations of God’s power designed to draw men to Him: signs in the heavens and on earth (Matt 24:29; Rev 6:12; etc.), two witnesses with supernatural powers who oppose the Antichrist (Rev 11:3-12), an angel will preach the gospel (Rev 14:6,7).
6. Why is the appearing of the Antichrist connected to something happening in heaven (Jesus opening the seals) if God is not behind all the suffering of the tribulation?
- a. It is to show John, to show the people who will live through the tribulation, and to show us that nothing is out of control in the sense that it took God by surprise. The first mention of Antichrist is in the Book of Daniel written 2500 years ago.
 - b. It is to show people that this is the culmination of the plan of God, a plan conceived in eternity past -- His plan to have a family of sons and daughters in a kingdom of righteousness on a perfect earth.
 - c. The Hebrew people would have been familiar with Zechariah 5:1-4. Zechariah is sometimes called the Book of Revelation of the Old Testament because it has more references to the Second Coming than any other Old Testament book.
 1. Zechariah sees a flying scroll. v3--“This scroll”, he told me, “represents the words of God’s curse going out over the entire land. It says that all who steal and lie have been judged and sentenced to death.” (Living)
 2. The Hebrew people knew that judgment would precede the establishment of the kingdom of God, but that they would make it through the judgment because of their faith in Messiah. The opening of the scroll is about meting out justice -- and that’s a good thing.
- C. The tribulation will be unlike any other period in history. Time as we know it will end in seven years.
1. Billions of people living on the earth will not have a lifetime to repent. They must make a definitive choice for God or the devil before the end of this age.
 - a. The tribulation will be an “attention getter” for mankind showing both the goodness of God and the wickedness of Satan.
 - b. But, something else will be happening. The earth itself will be prepared for the establishment of God’s visible kingdom on this earth.
 1. Sin had a cataclysmic effect on creation. The natural laws in effect now are the result of changes in the earth because of sin. That’s why there are earthquakes, famines, killer storms, etc. Gen 3:17,18; Rom 8:20
 2. All of that will be undone when Jesus returns. The earth itself will be cleansed from the death and corruption that has been at work since the fall of man. II Pet 3:10-12; Rev 22:3; Rom 8:21
 2. The topography of the earth itself will change and be restored to the conditions that existed before sin entered in. Those changes will begin during the tribulation.
 - a. In the original creation there were no uninhabitable areas -- the oceans, the polar ice caps, the deserts, the high mountains. That must be restored.
 - b. In the original creation there were waters about the firmament (Gen 1:7), a vast canopy of water vapor surrounding the earth in its upper atmosphere. It would have produced a strong greenhouse effect which would have provided a pleasant, warm climate, with none of the air mass movements

that produce rainfall and storms. There were great reservoirs of water beneath the earth.

3. In addition, the flood of Noah brought great changes to earth's landscape which must be undone.
 - a. At the time of the flood the water vapor above the earth condensed and fell to earth and the waters from below the earth burst forth. Gen 7:11
 - b. High mountain ranges were the result of volcanic activity connected with the flood. Ocean valleys opened up after the flood to allow the flood waters to drain off the earth. Ps 104:5-9 (Living Bible)
4. Much of what happens during the tribulation will undo these effects and restore the earth.
 - a. The mountains must be "cut down" and valleys raised up. Isa 40:3-5 says every valley will be exalted and every hill made low when the Messiah comes.
 - b. The two witnesses in Rev 11 will have power to stop the rain for 3 ½ years. That means famine, falling water levels in rivers, lakes, and oceans, and ground water, brown and barren lands where fires will easily burn (Rev 8:7). Even great rivers will dry up (Rev 16:12).
 1. Water will evaporate from the oceans. Currently that water is moved by winds inland to produce rain. But during the tribulation four angels will keep the winds from blowing on the earth or the sea (Rev 7:1). The evaporated water won't move inland and produce rain.
 2. It will be stored up in the upper atmosphere gradually restoring the waters about the firmament. Ps 148:4-6 implies that the water above will be restored.
 - c. Rev 6:12-14--The opening of the sixth seal signals earthquakes and volcanoes. It will seem to those on earth like "the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together". Isa 34:4; Zech 14:8
 1. All mountains and islands (ocean floor mountains) will be shaken, breaking them down. The debris will help fill up the ocean valleys.
 2. Cracks in the earth's surface will fill with water and falling mountains will cover them, recreating subterranean water reservoirs (the great deep).
 3. This last quake will destroy many cities (Rev 16:18-20; 11:13), but Jerusalem will survive and the quake will open up a fountain. Zech 14:4,8,9,11; Ezek 47:1-9
 - d. Isa 35:1-6--As a result of all of this activity the whole world will be habitable once more.
 1. Mountains will become gentle hills. Polar ice caps will be fertile plains. Oceans will be shallow, narrow sea. Deserts will have springs from the fountains of the deep. The water vapor blanket in the sky will be restored.
 2. The earth will be ready for the establishment of the millennial kingdom, the visible reign of Jesus Christ on this earth.
5. Some might say: Yes, this is wonderful. But look at the cost in terms of human lost and suffering. Consider these points.
 - a. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, famines, killer storms, etc, (the natural laws in effect in the earth) are the result of the change in the earth because of sin. It is the nature of sin and the corruption it brings to get worse and worse (I Cor 5:7; Rom 1:21-32). Remember, Jesus compared these events to birth pangs when He was giving signs that point to His soon return (Matt 24:7,8).
 - b. No one has to be on earth when this renovation takes place. Those who put faith in Christ prior to the start of the tribulation will be removed from the earth. They'll be in the ark of safety.
 - c. The destruction of the tribulation is progressive (from lesser to greater) with space given in between each judgment for people to repent. Yet people refuse to repent. Rev 6:15-17; 9:20-21

D. Conclusion: The wrath of God is the remedy for sin. The wrath of God removes sin and the corruption it produces -- in us and in the earth itself. And, that is a good thing!! More next week!!