

Judgment: a difficult subject. God's punishment, actively, of His enemies is fearsome. It's heavy not because of justice in general, but because of its *eternal* aspect, its *finality*, its *ultimate* nature. When God condemns, there is no more opportunity for salvation, no plan B, no escape. And this bothers us. It should. It's devastating and uncomfortable, frightening and horrific. In response to this, many today have simply tried to reimage God into one who wouldn't do such a thing. I'd be more comfortable with that, but I would be wrong...deathly wrong. You see, when it comes to the revelation of God's nature and actions that make us uncomfortable we must never begin at the point of our wisdom, how we would do it, but rather with God's revelation of Himself, for His ways are higher than our ways and His judgments are righteous. Though it makes us uncomfortable, we must submit to His view of Truth, and this Truth includes the reality that God is infinitely Holy and Just and His response to rebellion and usurping His authority is wrath, the destruction of those who continue to take their stand against Him and His rule. So, while this message is uncomfortable for us to hear, please know that it is also uncomfortable for me to proclaim.

Summary of Judgment (2:30-31) - Summary of Redemption (2:32)  
Explanation of Judgment (3:1-14) - Explanation of Redemption (3:15-16)

#### Summary of Judgment (2:30-31)

1. Some sense in which Peter applies this judgment to Pentecost (already, not yet), yet also a sense in which it is still future
2. Wondrous signs of God's power
  - a. blood, fire and smoke
  - b. sun darkened and moon turns blood red
3. BEFORE the awesome day of the LORD
4. Matthew 24:29/Mark 13:24 Jesus applies these signs to His return in judgment
  - a. Acts 17:31
  - b. 2 Timothy 4:1 – Jesus is the judge in the last days

#### Summary of Salvation (2:32)

1. Salvation comes by calling on the name of the Lord
    - a. see Judges 3:9; 3:15; 4:3, etc.
    - b. crying out to the Lord for salvation is a sign of repentance
    - c. Judges 10:10ff
  2. The Lord will preserve a remnant of believers who call upon Him
    - a. He calls some and they are saved
    - b. They live because of the promise of God (as the LORD said) and the calling of God
    - c. God is the gracious Redeemer of His people
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### There is a Warning: Explanation of Judgment on the Nations (3:1-16a)

1. God Will Gather the Nations for Judgment
  - a. Who are "the nations"?
    - i. We must not think of this category geo-politically, as somehow bound by somewhat arbitrary lines of demarcation on a map
    - ii. The word simply means "peoples"
      1. Sometimes used of Israel/Judah, but most often used of those people outside of the covenant and opposed to God and His people
      2. This is how it used here
  - b. This language differentiates the people belonging to God in a covenant relationship of grace (as shown by their humble submissiveness to His gospel) and the peoples opposed to God who desire to overthrow Him and eliminate Him (as shown by their resistance to humbly submit to His gospel)
  - c. The "nations", then, are those whose hearts, will, and purposes are bent upon ruling themselves and therefore rebel against God and His Anointed One, whom they see as "oppressive", in an effort to "throw off their chains"
    - i. Isn't this just like humanity?

1. "I can't believe in a God who would..."
2. "God wouldn't do that..."
3. Both of these statements exhibit a resistance to submit to God's revelation of Himself and instead place ourselves in the place of judgment, of being God, and we therefore commit the highest blasphemy
  - a. And don't get cocky, Church, for we still fail and commit this same sin because it is the root under every other sin
    - i. Every angry outburst proclaims "I will not wait for God, I will judge for myself"
    - ii. Every "little white lie" proclaims "God will not keep His promise, I will take what I want for myself"
    - iii. Every anxious attempt to protect ourselves from getting hurt proclaims: "God will not take care of me, I will do it better myself"
  - b. Now, there is hope for us in the will and purpose of God in Christ, for we are not secured by our ability to perfect ourselves but solely upon the gracious work of God in Christ on the cross and from the grave
    - i. My point is merely that this attitude of resistance to God's rule is the root of humanity's problem and therefore ours as well
    - ii. We still struggle with it, though no longer condemned because we are in Christ, and He is daily working in us through His Spirit to transform us to a deeper humility that accepts God as God and entrusts our lives to Him
- ii. All of mankind's reasons for not humbling ourselves and submitting to God in repentant faith is based upon this arrogance: "I know better than God, so I will not submit to Him"
  1. In fact, to come to the Lord in faith, we first must admit that He is right and that we are in the wrong...about everything!
  2. The Law of God is meant to do just that: show us that we are weak creatures and that He is the Holy Creator, the Just King, the Righteous One
    - a. God is God and we are not!
    - b. This is the purpose of the Law (not to save, but to reveal our helplessness before Him, because arrogance is our primary issue as it was with Adam)
      - i. Side Note: This is still the purpose of the Law and therefore the Law is still righteous, holy, good, and useful for the believer in Jesus
- d. When is this judgment?
  - i. It is both present and future: what?!
  - ii. Timing words "when I 'restore the fortunes'" of Judah and Jerusalem
    1. The phrase "restore the fortunes" is literally "take back the captivity"
    2. When does God set His people free?
      - a. Is it not at the death and resurrection of Jesus AND the reception of Him by those who believe?
      - b. It is an already (Jesus accomplished our redemption) and a not yet (for many are still believing)
    3. How is God gathering the nations now and then?
      - a. His judgment begins with resurrection of Jesus: the nations have no power over the risen Lord
        - i. He is given the right to judge (Acts 17:31) because of His resurrection
        - ii. God is currently gathering the nations, exhibiting His enemies' hatred and rejection of Him
          1. There is a fragmentation of the world occurring now, a taking up of sides regarding the righteous rule and authority of God.
          2. The humble find grace, the proud find opposition (James 4:6)
      - b. His judgment is continuing and will be consummated with extreme prejudice in the day that Jesus returns as a King with a sword and a bloody robe (Rev 19:11-21) to wage war on the nations.

- e. God says that HE will gather the nations together before Him
    - i. Note that He does not initially “call” them to present themselves, but indicates that He is sovereign to bring them before Himself
    - ii. His purpose is sovereign judgment of the nations for what they have done TO HIM
      - 1. Note the repetitive use of the word “my”
      - 2. “my people”, “my inheritance”, “my land”, “my silver and my gold”, “my rich treasures”
2. God Will Not Be Merciful to His Enemies:
- a. BRING IT ON!!
    - i. We don’t usually picture God as having this kind of attitude, but it is here, so we must deal with it
    - ii. God is not some kind of cuckolded pansy in the sky who begs people to change their ways
      - 1. The very fact that He calls many to Himself to redeem them is powerful only in the light of His just vengeance
      - 2. Not only this, but our salvation is from what, exactly? Not merely sin, for without God’s wrath against sin what would be the issue?
        - a. God’s wrath is a secondary response of His Holiness to sin
        - b. In other words, if there was no sin, God would not be wrathful
        - c. Or, if God was not just, then God would not be wrathful
          - i. Which is the road the world takes? Deny one or the other in order to alleviate guilt and dethrone God.
  - b. Irony of mankind marching against God:
    - i. Irony of Peaceful Weapons:
      - 1. God calling them out to do the opposite of what He calls His people to do in peace, “beating plows into swords and pruning hooks into spears” instead of “they shall beat their swords into plows and their spears into pruning hooks” that comes in the final peace for God’s people after judgment (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3)
    - ii. Irony of the Creature waging war on the Creator
      - 1. see Psalm 2:1-6 and God response of laughter
      - 2. Mankind trying to overthrow God is as laughable as a child attempting to overthrow the US military with a mud pie
  - c. Irony of the winepress:
    - i. Usually winemaking was a celebration of joy b/c the harvest was complete
    - ii. The wrath of God, however, contains no joy for mankind, only the infinitely heavy feet of the destructive power of God’s holiness unleashed
3. God Will Decide: The Valley of God's Decision
- a. Jehoshaphat means "The Lord judges"
    - i. The decision here is not an evangelistic decision to submit or not submit to Jesus, they have already marched out in war.
    - ii. The decision is God's, it is the decision of separating the wheat from the chaff, the elect from the condemned, the redeemed from the rebellious.
  - b. Jesus quotes Joel in Matthew 24:29ff and tells of three parables (ten virgins, talents, and sheep/goats), each involving the separation of the elect from the condemned. In each circumstance the condemned are **surprised** at their condemnation. They do not see their insult toward God.
  - c. God's judgment in the valley of decision will be one in which people who have despised the very grace of God that was meant to lead them repentance will be judged as enemies of God. And they do not even realize the travesty of what they are doing. Sin is a deceiver.

## There is Hope Now: Explanation of Redemption (3:16b-17)

- 1. To those who turn to God in humble faith He is a REFUGE and STRONGHOLD

- a. There is no room for pride, for what does a person do in a refuge? He HIDES!!
    - i. The people of God are hiders, clingers, weakened of their own strength, running away with no weapons and no power
    - ii. It is dishonorable to the world, but deeply honoring to God to run and hide in Him
    - iii. It is not something to boast in, but to call out to the world that you have found a refuge from the despair of sin and the fury of God
  - b. There is hope even for enemies of God b/c God accepts those who trust in His grace and submit to His Kingship through the cross of Christ (Eph 2:16; Col 1:21-23)
  - c. So we see that "those who call upon the name of the LORD" are those who run to Him for REFUGE
2. There is hope in the face of God's holy wrath against our sinful rebellion:
- a. Lay down your weapons of war against God and submit to His rightful rule
    - i. Lay down your wisdom and receive His Word as Truth
    - ii. Lay down your strength and receive His mercy humbly
    - iii. Lay down your righteousness and receive His provision for your acceptance: Jesus in your place.
  - b. Humbly enter His Kingdom by faith in His Son, Jesus:
    - i. He is a refuge, not a self-help plan
    - ii. He is a refuge to protect you from God's righteous wrath
    - iii. He is a stronghold to keep you in the present midst of your struggle with sin and sin's effects (disease, violence, poverty, disaster, etc.)
  - c. Come to Him as your gracious Savior, not only as the Judge
    - i. Jesus secures our peace by becoming the curse for us (Gal 3:10-13)
      1. God's wrathful judgment was poured out to satisfy His holy justice (Rom 3:21-25)
      2. God's merciful love was fulfilled to satisfy His holy love (Eph 1:7; 2:4-7; John 3:16)
      3. The Great Exchange
    - ii. We come to God completely cleared of our charge of rebellion because Jesus became the curse for us in His death, bearing up the righteous wrath of God in our place
    - iii. Jesus, our Captain, holds those who close to Him as those who belong to God, now "my people" who therefore find refuge and a strong tower in God.
  - d. Donald Grey Barnhouse: Farmer, fire, and the chicken
3. If these things are true, what are we doing about it?
- a. Are we *proclaiming* the coming judgment and the necessity of laying down our arms?
  - b. Are we *submitting* to God and to His revelation of Himself?
  - c. Are we *proclaiming* the hope of God's provision in Christ so that laying down arms is not only possible, but wise and worthwhile?
  - d. Are we *taking the reality of judgment seriously* as we look around at the world? Are we *taking the reality of hope/redemption seriously* as we live among the world?
  - e. Are we *proclaiming* the glories of our Captain and living our lives for Him and in light of this glorious work, looking to the values of the Kingdom of Heaven rather than the values of this rebel dying world?

God's consuming wrath is poured out twice in history: at the end of history in the final judgment, where people wage war against the LORD and where the LORD roars out in vengeance from His throne and consumes all His enemies; and at the Cross of Christ, where Jesus the Son of God stepped in and bore the consuming fire of God in the place of those who put their trust in Him so that we can lay down our arms and trust in God.

So now, in which camp will you be? Marching with the enemies of God, trying to throw off His "chains" of authority and rule, convincing yourself and others that God doesn't care that much about His throne or His glory? Or will you be hiding under the refuge of His wings trusting Jesus and His payment for your sins to hide you from the wrath of God and marching behind your Savior-King in loving adoration and humble grateful submission?

**In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us  
and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)**