



LESSON 21

The Certainty of Judgment

“When we merely say that we are bad, the ‘wrath’ of God seems a barbarous doctrine; as soon as we perceive our badness, it appears inevitable, a mere corollary from God’s goodness...”

C. S. LEWIS

Kirk’s Comment

Just as human beings value the virtue of justice and demand that justice be served when someone has been wronged, so does God value justice and promise to execute judgment upon mankind according to His perfect standards. All of creation will rejoice when the Judge of the Universe comes to bring truth and justice upon a sin-loving world.

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“Why does the Old Testament show a God of wrath and the New Testament a God of mercy?”

The God of the New Testament is the same as the God of the Old Testament. The Bible says that He *never* changes. He is just as merciful in the Old Testament as He is in the New Testament. Read Nehemiah 9 for a summary of how God mercifully forgave Israel, again and again, after they repeatedly sinned and turned their backs on Him. The psalms often speak of God’s mercy poured out on sinners.



He is also just as wrath-filled in the New Testament as He is in the Old. The Book of Acts records that He killed a husband and wife simply because they told one lie. Jesus warned that He was to be feared because He has the power to cast the body and soul into hell. The apostle Paul said that he persuaded men to come to the Savior because he knew the “terror of the Lord.” Read the dreadful judgments of the New Testament’s Book of Revelation. That will put the “fear of God” in you, which incidentally is “the beginning of wisdom.”

Perhaps the most fearful display of God’s wrath is seen in the cross of Jesus Christ. His fury so came upon the Messiah that it seems God enshrouded the face of Jesus in darkness so that creation couldn’t gaze upon His unspeakable agony. Whether we like it or not, our God is a consuming fire of holiness (Hebrews 12:29). He isn’t going to change, so we had better—before the Day of Judgment. If we repent, God, in His mercy, will forgive us and grant us eternal life in heaven with Him.

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The prophet Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah repeatedly of the coming judgment of God upon the tribe of Judah. At times the king appeared to actually believe the prophet, then in the next moment he had him shut up in prison.

The world at times seems to believe the gospel. They enjoy gospel music, they will listen to popular prosperity and positive-principle preachers—but they seek to shut us up the moment we speak of a coming judgment. John the Baptist preached judgment for sin. He told Herod that he had transgressed God’s Law in taking his brother’s wife, and that cost John his life (Mark 6:18). In the eyes of the world, there is nothing popular or positive about preaching the reality of Judgment Day.

Jeremiah’s message also put his life in jeopardy. He openly preached that Judah had strayed from the Moral Law. He even expounded the Law to reveal their specific sins (Jeremiah 7:9). They had transgressed the First and Second Commandments by going after other gods. They broke the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Commandments, and then walked in



hypocrisy (v. 10). And still they continued in sin by following after their own counsels and the imagination of their hearts.

The prophet also had to contend with those who preached a life-improvement message rather than one of judgment (Jeremiah 28:1–17). The Bible tells us that such a message was in truth “rebellion against the LORD” (v. 16). It still is. When the preaching of Judgment Day is neglected, people don’t see a need to repent. Why should they, if they are not warned that there is a fearful consequence for sin? (See Jeremiah 23:14.)

When Jeremiah spoke of God’s judgment upon the nation, he described it as total and absolute. His message left no room for doubt:

For thus says the LORD, Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself, and to all your friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labors thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon (Jeremiah 20:4,5).

In these two verses, the word “all” is mentioned six times, “will” four times, and “shall” five times. *This was going to happen.*

So this is the setting in which the king of Judah questions Jeremiah about why he preaches the judgment of God:

For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Why do you prophesy, and say, Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, says the LORD: though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not prosper (Jeremiah 32:3–5).



Jeremiah's answer to the king's question about why he so adamantly preached judgment is a strange one. He gives a parable that seems totally unrelated to the question. This is what he says:

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum your uncle shall come to you saying, Buy my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. So Hanameel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said to me, Buy my field, I pray you, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD (Jeremiah 32:6–8).

The story seems unrelated to the question, until one understands the meanings of the names he used. The name Hanameel means "God has compassion." Shallum means "retribution." Hanameel and Shallum were father and son; they were related to each other. The compassion of God should never be separated from the retribution of God; they are related. Because He is a just God of retribution and must punish sin, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself because of His great compassion. There would be no cross unless there was wrath against sin.

When the world asks us why we preach that there will be a fearful Day of Judgment, we could simply say that it will come to pass because the Bible says so. While this is true, that isn't the only reason we are sure Judgment Day will take place. Our assurance comes from the fact that God has revealed His retribution and His compassion in the gospel, and now offers humanity forgiveness in the Savior. It is through the power of the gospel that we gain assurance that Judgment Day will surely happen.

Those who are seeking safety will find it in the Savior. One who repents and trusts the Savior becomes a new creature; he is born again. Nothing can convince a sinner of the reality of Holy Scripture and its great warning of the coming wrath like a new life with a new heart and new desires.

How then do we best drive men to the Savior? By preaching that the God of compassion is also the God of retribution. It is by opening up the



spirituality of the Moral Law that men are made to realize their guilt and see their need of refuge from the coming wrath.

Scripture then gives us additional details of what happened after the purchase of the field:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days (Jeremiah 32:14).

We are “evidence of the purchase.” We stand as a testimony of a transaction of Almighty God. We have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28), have been sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30), and now have the unspeakable riches of this treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7).

If we are faithful witnesses, our testimony will consist of both God’s compassion and His retribution, and we will warn others of the coming Day of Judgment.

QUESTIONS

- 1. Why was John the Baptist imprisoned?**

- 2. According to Jeremiah 28:1–9, what did the false prophet say?**



vehicle wouldn't roll back with his weight. He then went around to the back of the house, climbed onto the roof, and tied the rope tightly around his waist. Then he leaned back, impressed by his ingenuity.

A short time later his wife, not knowing what her inventive husband had done, came out of the house with her car keys in hand. She got into the vehicle and drove off, pulling her husband over the roof and down the other side. The man was seriously injured.

The moral of this true story is that you are only as secure as that to which you secure yourself. If you entrust yourself to the belief that good works will save you on Judgment Day, it will bring about your tragic and eternal downfall.

Last Words

Cardinal Cesare Borgia (1476–1507):

"I have provided in the course of my life for everything except death, and now, alas, I am to die unprepared."

Memory Verse

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

JOHN 3:5