

6. Compassion and wrath of God

September 18, 2008

The majority of people, even unbelievers, don't mind talking about the love, compassion, grace and kindness of God. However, they don't want to hear, talk even think about the wrath of God. Is He not the same God who has love for all the people, but at the same time He has wrath toward those who disobey Him? Yes, He is the same God. Yet, people only want to see what they want to see. Somehow they think that if they ignore this fact of the wrath of God, He would say, "OK, you won. Let's just be one big happy family," and get by with their sinful lives. Guess what, it doesn't work that way.

God does not look the other way when it comes to depravity. He takes sin into account with fine-point accuracy. One day He will open His ledger of human conduct for a day of reconciliation, and the bankrupted lives will come due.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

In 2 Peter 2:4-11, these two sides of God, compassion and wrath, come together in a composite picture.

A. GOD'S WRATH TO FALLEN ANGELS

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

As a part of our own curiosity and for the sake of study, I wish that we knew more about the creation, ranks, duties even appearance of heavenly angels as well as demons including satan – a.k.a. the devil or Lucifer. But we don't. Actually, it is a good thing, because if we know a lot about angels, people would worship angels rather than God Himself.

Many Bible scholars believe that Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 and Revelation 12 talk about the fall of satan and his demons from heaven. Lucifer was in charge of worshiping the Lord in heaven, but his pride got into his head and that caused him to fall from God's presence.

Where are these fallen angels now? We know that satan is free and at work in the world and he has a vast demonic force which has assisted him throughout world history. At the same time, apostle Peter tells us that God cast some demons who sinned down to hell and locked them into chains of darkness.

I am going to be careful here, because what I am about to say is nothing more than my own speculation. The word 'hell' in this verse is "Tartarus" which is underworld in ancient Greek. In other words, they were locked up in a joint for fallen angels somewhere. In Luke 8:31, the demons, which possessed a man, begged Jesus not to send them to the Abyss. Also in Revelation 20, an angel was sent to throw satan himself to the Bottomless Pit or Abyss for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the

thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

I get a feeling that this hell Peter mentioned is the same one as 'Abyss' and 'Bottomless Pit'. So am I going to make a doctrine out of that? I think not.

It is not necessary to debate the hidden mysteries of this verse in order to get the main message: God judges rebellion and will not spare those who reject His will. If God judged the angels, who in many respects are higher than men, then certainly He will judge rebellious men.

B. GOD'S WRATH AGAINST THE WORLD AND DELIVERANCE FOR NOAH

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;

According to Genesis 6, God gave 120 years to the people on earth to repent from their wickedness and violence. All during that time, Noah ministered as a "herald" of God's righteousness.

While Noah and his family were building an ark, everybody else was laughing at him and continuing in their carnal lives up to the very day that Noah and his family entered the ark.

When we compare our world with Noah's world, we see some frightening parallels. The population was multiplying, and the world was filled with wickedness and violence. Lawlessness abounded. True believers were a minority, and nobody paid any attention to them. But the Flood came and the entire population of the world was destroyed. God does indeed judge those who reject His truth.

For 120 years, God did not protect Noah and his family by isolating them from the world, but by enabling them to remain pure in the midst of corruption with spiritual insulation.

The flood waters that brought condemnation to the world lifted Noah and his household up above the judgment. They were secure in the ark of safety. The ark is a type of our salvation in Jesus Christ. The world, as it were, was "buried" in the baptism of the Flood, but Noah was lifted up, a picture of resurrection and salvation.

C. GOD'S WRATH AGAINST SODOM AND GOMORRAH

2 Peter 2:6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;

The hearts of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah can be summed up in one sentence from Genesis 13:13.

Genesis 13:13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

According to Genesis 19, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was perversion at its worst – rampant homosexuality without any shame much like in North America and Europe.

Again, up to the very minute that Lot left the city, the people were confident that everything was safe. But then the fire and brimstone fell. God did not spare them, nor will He spare sinners today who willfully reject His truth and deny His Son.

Homosexuality is gaining ground like no other with the exception of muslims around the world. It is almost against the law to talk against homosexuality. Just about every single nationwide company is mandated to exercise pluralism which is nothing more than a stepping stone of homosexuality. They are not interested in having equal opportunity, but they want to have a special privileged treatment over man and woman marriage, especially against Christianity.

Many of you may remember Ray Boltz who wrote and sang "Watch the Lamb" and "Thank you" and sold more than 4.5 million copies of his albums. He decided that he no longer can hide his homosexuality. In his interview with "Blade" magazine, he said, "This is what it really comes down to," [Boltz] says. "If this is the way God made me, then this is the way I'm going to live. It's not like God made me this way and he'll send me to hell if I am who he created me to be... I really feel closer to God because I no longer hate myself." What a deception he is into!

Yes, God is going to judge everyone who defile and deny His Word.

D. GOD'S DELIVERANCE FOR LOT

2 Peter 2:7-8 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

When Abraham, in a lapse of faith, went down to Egypt, Lot went with him and got a taste of "the world". As Lot became richer, he had to separate from Abraham, and this removed him from his uncle's godly influence. What a privilege Lot had to walk with Abraham who walked with God! And yet, how Lot wasted his privileges.

When Lot had an opportunity to choose his land, he did it according to what he had learned from Egypt. Abraham took Lot out of Egypt, but he could not take Egypt out of Lot.

Even though apostle Peter called Lot 'righteous', it is difficult to understand how a righteous man can live in such a moral cesspool? Peter says it oppressed and tormented him. But hints in the biblical narrative indicate a few calluses on the otherwise sensitive surface of Lot's soul.

Apostle Peter was not pointing to Lot as an example of separated living, but rather as an example of one whom God rescued from pollution and condemnation. In a sense, Lot was even rescued against his will, because the angels had to grasp him by the hand and pull him out of the city. Lot had entered Sodom, and then Sodom had entered Lot, and he found it difficult to leave.

The same God who delivers the godly also reserves the ungodly for judgment. Ruth Bell Graham said, "If God spares San Francisco from judgment, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." Why is God's judgment lingering?

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

E. THEIR REVILING

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

Man's fallen nature encourages pride. When the ego is at stake, these apostates will stop at nothing in order to promote and protect themselves.

I am sure that you've noticed 2 Peter 2:4-11 is strikingly resembled with Jude v6-11. It is very much understandable since John Mark was closely associated with Peter and he was Peter's apprentice.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) God's compassion will result in the rescue of all believers.

His heart goes out to us as He stoops in compassion to extricate us from whatever moral morass we find ourselves trapped in.

2) God's judgment will result in the punishment of all unbelievers.

Those who die without Christ as their Savior will face not the loving embrace of a heavenly Father but the judicial impartiality of a righteous judge. For Christians, eternal condemnation is behind them, but for non-Christians, it looms before them.