

2 Peter
Divine Judgment
2 Peter 2:3-10

9-15-24

HDBC

Last time we looked at false teachers. Packed into the first three verses of 2 Peter 2, we found 8 things true of false teachers. In the verses that follow, Peter continues this theme. The Bible makes it clear that God hates all lying (Prov. 6:16-17; 12:22). This is especially true when it comes to lying about His nature, His plan and His Word.

James 3:1 warns that all spiritual teachers are subject to a ***stricter judgment*** (a higher level of accountability before God). This is because of the influence that they have. So, when false teachers lead people to believe spiritual tales and heresies, they are increasing the severity of their own punishment. Peter's words are both an assurance to true believers and a warning to those who would lead others astray.

Read the Text. 2 Peter 3:3-10 Note three things

1. The Promise of Judgment (3b)

False teachers will not face ultimate judgment until they die. However, the sentence was decreed by God ***from long ago***. This is a subtle reminder that God knows all things & has known all things even before they happened. He knows past, present and future.

Is not idle – It implies a growing judgment. As they continue to teach and their influence expands, the judgement of God is expanding with it.

Destruction is not asleep – Peter is personifying eternal judgment. He pictures it as an executioner who is awake and ready to exact the judgment due to those who purposefully and willfully mislead others.

Peter then offers examples of God's judgment in the past. His past actions are reminders of His future actions.

2. The Examples of Judgment (4-8) Three examples.

The point is to show that judgment on false teachers is consistent with what He has done in the past and with His nature.

1) Sinful angels (4)

Angels, like all of creation, including people, were created to bring glory to God. Some angels sinned against God. **How the angels** sinned remains somewhat of a mystery. We know that Adam and Eve were given a clear opportunity to choose to obey or not to obey. Apparently angels had some kind of option as well.

We know that **1/3 followed Lucifer in a rebellion against God**. He was in a lofty position and tried to exalt himself to a position of equality with God. (Rev. 12:3-9). Peter is probably not referring to the angels who originally rebelled. They were not immediately incarcerated in hell nor confined to pits of darkness. They are the demons who have been loose in the world seeking to destroy all that is good and pure. Jesus encountered them often during his time on earth. Peter's description of what God did with this group offers a few hints as to their identity and specific sin. Notice that God . . .

Cast them into hell – tartarus (4). Used in **Greek mythology of a subterranean abyss that was even lower than hell**. It was thought to be the abode of the most wicked spirits, where the worst rebels and criminals received the severest punishment. **Peter is not buying into the mythology**, but is using a word that they were familiar with to describe the horror of hell & divine punishment. Peter further describes the place of their imprisonment as **pits of darkness**.

Committed – was used of committing someone to prison. Unlike most fallen angels (demons) these particular ones would not be allowed freedom on the earth. They would be held in a particular place to await final judgment. Like guilty prisoners on death row.

A couple of questions. Who were these fallen angels and what did they do? Jude offers a possible answer. Jude 6-7

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

The first clue is that these demons **did not keep their own domain**. Many scholars believe this is a reference to the events recorded in Genesis 6:1-4. (Read that text)

Fallen angels (demons) inhabited (possessed) mortal men and committed sexual immorality with women. This was a clear violation of the boundaries which God had set for them. Jude compares their action to the actions of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. The primary sin associated with Sodom & Gomorrah was homosexuality. Note Jude's uses of the phrase **strange flesh**. Peter's readers know the history, so there was no need for him to go into great detail.

2) Sinful, unbelieving people (5)

He also judged wicked people during the time of Noah. In fact he judged all except Noah and his family. Genesis 6:5-7 summarizes.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

God spared Noah, who had rejected the wickedness of his culture. He resisted the evil that surrounded him. So, he and his family were preserved in the Ark. **While constructing the ark**, Noah was also a *preacher of righteousness*. In other words he was proclaiming the truth of the judgment to come along with a call to repentance.

Flood translates the word *kataklusmos*. Our word *cataclysm* comes from this word. The flood covered the entire earth, as geological evidence demonstrates. Every person and every land animal on the earth were destroyed, except those in the ark.

Ungodly – refers to a complete lack of reverence for God. Unwilling to worship God. No fear of God. Peter then adds a third illustration.

3) **Sodom and Gomorrah** (6-8)

At one time these were the main cities of the Jordan plain, located near the Dead Sea. Before the destruction of these two cities, this area was described as a fertile area that was ideal for agriculture.

Because of their extreme sin, God condemned these cities to destruction. On a much smaller scale, this was a **reminder of the worldwide flood that had occurred almost five centuries earlier**. Like Noah and his family during the flood, Lot and his daughters were the only ones who survived this judgment.

Destruction – *katastrophe*. It indicates a complete overthrow, resulting in total ruin. The cities were reduced to ashes. So thorough was this judgment that the exact location of the cities remains a mystery even today. **This judgment** had a two-fold purpose.

First, it was a judgment on the people of these cities who neglected to learn from the flood during Noah's day and had failed to learn from the righteous life of Lot.

Second, it was to send a message to those who would live evil lives in the future. They should expect a similar response from the Lord. They were to be an example to future generations. That is Peter's point. **There is a consistency with God.** Unrepentant, unforgiven sinners cannot expect to escape the judgment of a holy God.

We learn something about Lot that is not easily seen in the Old Testament account alone. Just one more reason we need the New Testament to offer commentary and testimony on the O.T. Here, Lot is described as righteous and as one whose soul was tormented by the sins of the people. This is a contrast to what we find in O.T. where he is seen as **superficial, selfish and spiritually immature.** At every stage in the narrative there, we are unimpressed.

So, what can we discern from the N.T. description of Lot?

- 1- He was a true believer and was saved, like Abraham.
- 2- **He was sensitive to the angel visitors when they came to his city.**
- 3- He hesitated to leave the city, but ultimately did obey God.
- 4- **He refused to look back, unlike his wife.**
- 5- He was righteous, and grieved by the sins of the people.

He was not a bastion of virtue, but he also refused to engage in the sins that were accepted by the people of those cities. The men of his cities were **sensual** (outrageous behavior) and **unprincipled** (without restraint). Yet, he refused to buy in. Peter's point is that **his readers, also living in a very sinful and corrupt culture, could identify.**

3. The Pattern of Judgment (9-10a)

Peter now makes the application. What God did then, He will do now and in the future. Simply put, God knows how to judge unrepentant sinners. He has not forgotten that the unrighteous deserve judgment. He also knows how to preserve the righteous. Both would be an encouragement to Peter's readers.

Takeaways:

1. **Judgment may be delayed but will not be cancelled.**

When a 94 year old man living on a quiet street in Oak Ridge, TN was arrested it shocked his neighbors. They said they could not have imagined that he was an active collaborator the extermination of Jews during WWII.

At age 94 he must have imagined that he had gotten away with it, and that he would die in peace. But something happened that he could not have envisioned. The SS cards identifying him, along with other prison camp guards, had been on a boat that was sunk by the Allies. These cards were discovered in 1950 but had disintegrated. Years later modern technology enabled them to be reassembled, and thus the names and all the information could now be fully understood. This led to a 94-year-old man living in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. His neighbors could not know his actions, but God did.

2. **God can sustain His people even in a wicked culture.**

Just because the culture around is disintegrating into a wickedness that previous generations could not have even imagined, does not mean we have to be influenced by it. God can sustain you and me. Trust Him. Stay strong. Stay true. Stay on the right path. Make good decisions.

3. **Grace is the only antidote for unrestrained sin and judgment.**

Grace is offered but must be received through confession, repentance and faith. When we respond in faith, we receive **a divine pardon**.

What does it mean when the Bible says that we have been pardoned by God? Here are two classic definitions from American legal history:

First, in 1833, Chief Justice John Marshall, in a landmark decision, described a pardon as ***an act of grace ... which exempts the individual on whom it is bestowed from the punishment the law inflicts for a crime he has committed.***

Second, in 1866, the Supreme Court gave another famous definition of a pardon: ***a pardon releases the punishment and blots out of existence the guilt, so that in the eye of the law the offender is as innocent as if he had never committed the offense ... A pardon removes the penalties and disabilities and restores him to all his civil rights; it makes him, as it were, a new man, and gives him a new credit and capacity.***