

SECOND PETER

Lesson 6

Doom and Deliverance

2 Peter 2-4-10a

Anyone who is at all alert to what is happening in our day would be able to conclude that we live in a very permissive society, one that is running rampant with open and blatant sin of every kind. While it was never Christian, from its beginnings our society has been heavily influenced by Christian principles. Yet today, as Frances Schaeffer has said, we are living in the post-Christian era of the western world and are rapidly moving into an anti-Christian world.

This anti-Christian spirit of humanism, worldliness, materialism, immorality and naturalism has also bombarded the so-called Christian church and has very subtly affected our Bible-believing churches. Christianity is so weak that it is no longer making an impact upon many cultures, rather, culture is making an impact upon the church.

The major reason the church is weak is that so much false teaching is being propagated in so-called Christian circles. The Bible is compromised, rationalized, or disregarded altogether.

It seems as though judgment upon the professing church is inevitable. Why hasn't it come already? What is holding judgment back? One reason is that a sovereign God is holding it in check for purposes relating to the return of Jesus Christ in His second advent. Another reason is that there are still many true Christians in this world and God is holding it back for their sakes. Lastly, God is holding back judgment because He is still giving men the opportunity to repent and turn to Christ before the judgment does come.

Yes, we can expect judgment for all ungodliness. The scoffer may say, "I don't see any judgment. We are powerful, rich, prestigious. People may be more promiscuous, but this is the scientific twenty-first century, not the ancient biblical world. Where is this judgment you Christians talk about?" But the judgment is coming, and it is as certain as the holiness, justice and sovereignty of Almighty God. Remember, God's ways are not our ways, and while the mill of God grinds slowly, it grinds surely.

JUDGMENT OF ANGELS WHO SINNED (2:4)

“ For”

The “for” leads to an explanation of what has been said in the preceding context. Peter has been contrasting the orthodoxy of the Apostles, based on the inspired and infallible Word of God, with the heterodoxy of the false teachers who had crept into the churches of Asia Minor. These false teachers had been, or were even then, professing Christians who, if not in outward form at least in inward conviction, had apostatized from the Christian faith. They were rebellious in that they had denied the Master (Lord) who they said had bought them. Their false teaching had led then, to all kinds of sensual immorality which maligned the Christian religion. They were wrong in that they did not believe God had designed the Christian life so men might lead holy lives.

“For God wants you to be holy and pure, and to keep clear of all sex sin so that each of you will marry in holiness and honor ... For God has not called us to be dirty minded and full of lust, but to be holy and clean” (1 Thess. 4:3, 7, Living Letters).

These false teachers were introducing destructive heresies (heresies of perdition); that is, their false teachings were leading them and their followers to eternal judgment because it is impossible to be saved without the true gospel. The judgment of all false teachers is certain, and Peter concluded by saying, *“Their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep” (2 Pet. 2:3).*

With this introduction, Peter goes on in 2:4-10a to give three great illustrations from the Old Testament showing God judges evil and false teachers. These are: (1) the angels who sinned; (2) the ancient world which was destroyed by the Flood, and (3) the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which were reduced to ashes. While it may appear that God is overlooking evil, that He has shut His eyes to false teaching, that He is asleep in heaven while men are living disgracefully on earth, He is very much in control of the situation, and He is able to reserve the wicked unto the day of judgment to be punished.

“If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment”

The point of this illustration is that if angels who sinned were not spared from judgment, then certainly false teachers and evil men who follow their teachings will not escape. If God judged angels who are higher created beings than men, surely He will judge men. If angels with superior rank, dignity and holiness were cast into hell for their revolt against God, then false teachers and their followers cannot hope to escape.

This judgment of angels most likely refers to time before the flood when a particular group of angels rebelled against God, came to earth as demons, and so possessed evil men that they, through men, were able to cohabit with humans to introduce a race of giants, literally Nephilim (fallen ones) who were half angel and half man. These fallen angels infiltrated the human race (Gen. 6:1-8). This was a great Satanic plot to destroy the human race so that God could not keep His promise to bring the seed of woman, Jesus Christ, into the world by means of the virgin birth. If humanity could be corrupted by being half angelic, then the Savior, who had to be true humanity as well as true deity, could not qualify to be the Redeemer for the world of lost men.

So awful was this sin that God had to bring the cataclysmic judgment of a universal flood upon mankind in order to preserve the humanness of the race.

These angels who sinned were cast into Tartarus, which is the temporary place of punishment for this particular group of angels, and at the final judgment, these angels, along with all demons, Satan and all unbelieving men who followed the devil’s lie that Jesus was not the Savior, will be cast into the Lake of Fire forever (Rev. 20:10-15).

These angels who sinned were guilty of pride and rebellion. So, too, false teachers and all who follow them are guilty of pride, for they think they know more than God and that they can run their lives apart from Him. They are also guilty of rebellion. They want no authority of God over them. They hate the concept of submission to authority, especially to Christ and the God-ordained leadership He has set up in His church. These wicked angels

thought they had pulled a fast one on God, but God had the last word. He destroyed them for all eternity. They thought God would not judge them for their evil, but He did because He never overlooks sin, big or small.

JUDGMENT OF THE UNGODLY ANTEDILUVIAN WORLD (2:5)

“and did not spare the ancient world ... when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”

The pre-diluvian society was very advanced educationally, economically, culturally, materially, and even scientifically. Many scholars today feel the pre-flood world was made up of people of high intellect. Yet it was a materialistic society that had forgotten all about God. The result was great wickedness.

“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. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Gen. 6:5-6).

The Bible uses the word “ungodly” to explain this old world.

“And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”’ (Jude 14-15).

The word “ungodly” suggests that they had no time for God and that everything they did was against His law and will. It was a world filled with violence, sexual perversion, libertinism and hatred. Yet, it was an advanced society, perhaps more advanced than our own.

The point is obvious that the antediluvian society went right on with life, denying God and thinking that He was a myth and judgment was a fairy tale, but judgment came in God’s own timing. If the entire ancient world was destroyed, most certainly Christendom’s false teachers and their followers will not escape judgment. The antediluvian society was guilty of rank unbelief and gross disobedience and so are all false teachers of the gospel.

Have you ever heard people say, “If I had lived back in the days of Enoch and Noah, it would have been easier to live for God. It would have been easier to believe then because people were thinking about and talking about God.” Not so, for that world was more wicked, more rebellious and more ungodly than this present world we live in. It was more difficult to believe then than it is today. Yet, some men did believe, because we are told that Enoch and Noah both walked with God. It is possible for men to walk with God in a godless society. Are you walking with God?

“but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others”

Noah was a true believer in the one, true God and the Messiah to come. Because he believed God he was justified by faith (Gen. 6:9 cf. Heb. 11:7). He believed God and became an heir of righteousness. Out of the whole pre-flood world of multiple millions, only Noah and seven others were preserved in this judgment. Eight people survived the flood. Peter wants to impress upon his readers the fact that only a few people, true believers in God and the Messiah, survive judgment. In the Bible we see that it is only a remnant of people in any age who are truly saved.

We should not be surprised in our generation if only a small number of the world's four billion people are saved. While God is going to save many, the true flock of God will be only a small remnant of mankind. Our Lord Jesus taught that the way of salvation is a narrow and strait way.

Are you part of the true church? Are you among God's remnant? Are you numbered among the elect? This is just another way of asking whether you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you believed in Him or have you only given intellectual assent to Christ or only had an emotional experience of religion? Do you have possession or profession of Christ? The Bible says to examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith.

We are told that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." Genesis does not tell us that he preached with words, although he surely must have done some of this. But since it does not say that he preached with words we may assume that he primarily preached by the things he did. His godly life was his message. This message was primarily that of judgment to come. For 120 years he preached that judgment was coming. As he built the ark, he announced to the world that the flood was coming and warned those who would listen to him to repent and flee from the judgment to come. Every time an axe hit a tree, every time one of his boys yelled "timber," every time a hammer hit a nail, every time a plant was placed on the ark, a message of judgment was given to the lost world.

That world thought Noah was crazy. He was building an ark on dry land; there was no rain in those days; there was no lake or ocean nearby. There was simply no place to float a large ship. They mocked Noah, jeered at him, laughed at his outdated belief in God, but he and God had the last laugh.

Noah preached 120 years without one convert outside his immediate family, but he was faithful. He preached God's truth. He did not compromise the message or give false teaching. When the judgment came, God delivered Noah and his family. The ungodly refused to believe and they were judged. Yes, the mill of God grinds slowly but surely.

JUDGMENT OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH (2:6)

"and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes"

This may be the most striking judgment in the whole Bible. Sodom and Gomorrah were two of the greatest trade centers of that day. Incidentally, for the first time we now have documentation outside the Bible that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah actually existed. Some tablets have been found in Tell-Mardikh in Syria which say that the Eblaites were trading with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were vast and powerful cities. The biblical account does say that they were reduced to ashes. Archeological discoveries have confirmed all that is found in Genesis concerning the destruction of these

two cities. We know the area was very fertile land and was located on the southern end of the Dead Sea. On the present site of where these proud cities once stood is a burnt out region of oil and asphalt. This is exactly what we would expect to happen if the Lord rained brimstone and fire from heaven on these cities (Gen. 19:24).

Notice that it is said God condemned the cities. Why did He do this? We are told in Genesis 13:13, *“Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.”* The exceeding wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah was homosexuality and lesbianism, the lifestyle for most of the inhabitants of those cities (Gen. 19:1-8). These cities were famous for their affluence and softness and, above all, for their gross immorality. Materialism made them soft, and they thought they had outgrown the idea of God. They attempted to fill the void in their lives with all kinds of sinful pleasure, but pleasure never satisfies the human heart. This led to sexual immorality (fornication and adultery) which really never satisfies. Then they went further down the scale of evil and became involved in homosexuality, which always comes about on a mass scale when a nation moves away from God. It is no wonder these cities were destroyed.

One of the vilest words in our English language is “sodomy” which speaks of breaking God’s natural order of sex and going after unnatural sexual relationships. We also know that the Canaanites, who were descendants of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, were guilty of child sacrifice, so it is logical to conclude that these cities were also guilty of this sin. Children were put in jars and passed through the fire as a human sacrifice to their gods. There was absolutely no respect for human life among these people. It is not hard to understand this judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah in light of these facts.

The United States today is much like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Homosexuality is being accepted as an alternative lifestyle and the human sacrifice of children through abortion to the god of science is rampant. Someone has said, “God does not pay at the end of every day, but at the end He pays!” Sodom had to pay and our modern society in America will pay. If we disregard the Scriptures, we will face judgment. Homosexuality, lesbianism and abortion are not only being accepted in society in general but in many of our churches. Why? Because of the message being propagated by false teachers whose end is destruction.

Billy Graham said, “If God does not judge America, then He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Homosexuality is sin, and abortion is murder, but neither is unforgivable, and men can be delivered from both by the power of Jesus Christ. We must seek to win homosexuals and those who are guilty of murder through abortion to Christ. After all, the early church was filled with people who had been converted out of the worst kinds of lifestyles.

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

“having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter”

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are established as an everlasting example of God's way of dealing with injustice and with false teaching. If we stood by the Dead Sea today, we would see no cities. They are gone. Peter is saying that if these great cities were destroyed, we can expect the same for all false teachers and their followers.

It is rather frightening to be a teacher of God's Word. To teach the Bible, we should be knowledgeable and skilled lest we teach error and lead the flock of Christ astray. *"Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment"* (James 3:1).

JUST DELIVERANCE OF LOT (2:7-8)

"and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men"

This verse tells us that Lot, a righteous man, a man justified by faith, a saved man, who lived in Sodom by choice, was vexed in his soul by the ungodly living of people in that city. He is called righteous here but the Genesis account gives us a much different picture. He was a worldly man who had materialistic goals—he took the best land when he separated from Abraham (Gen. 13:10-14). He strayed a long way from the God of his fathers when he pitched his tent towards Sodom (Gen. 13:12). He was a weak man spiritually and was willing to sacrifice his daughters to immoral men (Gen. 19:7-8). He got drunk on occasion (Gen. 19:33, 35). His heart was so deeply embedded in Sodom that he had to literally be dragged out (Gen. 19:16). He chose to live in Sodom, and this wicked society affected his own thinking and happiness.

Yet, in the New Testament, Lot's failures are overlooked, and he is described as a righteous man who was greatly distressed over what was happening in that city even though he was at times involved in sin.

We are not told that Lot was a happy person. He was probably miserable in his own soul, for no believer living a worldly, fleshy kind of life can be truly happy. In New Testament terms, Lot was a "carnal Christian." There is such a thing (1 Cor. 3:1-3) but this condition cannot be a permanent state. Carnality (rebellion against God) can only be temporary.

The Bible says that the Christian born of God cannot habitually and consistently persist in sin. If a professing Christian has a life characterized by sin, he is not a Christian at all. It is true that a Christian can fall into sin, even into gross and grievous sin, but when he does he opens himself to the divine discipline of his Heavenly Father. The Christian in sin and out of fellowship with God is a miserable person because he is constantly experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Through divine discipline, Lot lost every material possession he owned and he also lost his wife who looked back for just a brief moment to Sodom where her heart really was. God, seeing her heart, knew she was not a believer and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

"(for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds)"

Lot was continually tormented by the godless culture in Sodom.

Christians, are we tortured in soul by our wicked culture? Because of our secular society, are we no longer shocked by sinful things which we see and hear? Can we sit through movies and TV programs that are filled with immoral sex, violence and anti-Christian principles and not be affected? Have our consciences become dull to sin and apathetic about God's law? Even righteous Lot, as carnal as he was at times, became burdened about the sin of his society. Do we about ours? If not, we may be far worse off than Lot was!

JUST DELIVERANCE OF THE GODLY (2:9a)

“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation (testings)”

God knows who the true believers really are, and He is able to deliver His people when they are tested by the unbelief, disobedience and immoral lives of the unbelievers around them. God has a way to deliver His own, although it is often a way we would not have thought of ourselves.

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

God does not take the Christian away from trials, for we all have them, but He takes His children out of trials when we do have them.

Noah and Lot were both believers, but they were so different in personality, temperament, zeal and love for God. However, both are instructive of the fact that God delivers His people from tests. Neither Noah nor Lot had an immediate deliverance. Noah had to help himself by building an ark for 120 years in obedience to God's instruction, despite the jeering of his neighbors. Lot had to endure long years of self-recrimination for his foolish decision to go and live in Sodom. What does this teach us? God may allow us to face long years of waiting before He intervenes to rescue us, but He will deliver the godly in His timing.

JUDGMENT OF THE FALSE TEACHERS (2:9b-10a)

“and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment”

Unrighteous unbelievers who have died are being punished right now in a temporary place called Hades, and they will be finally judged at that Great White Throne Judgment and cast into the Lake of Fire forever (Rev. 20). Why? Because they did not believe in Christ. They followed some false teaching, not the teaching of Christ and the Apostles.

“and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires”

False teachers go after the things of the flesh. They live for sensual things, and they have no concern for spiritual issues. They cause many to follow their sensuality (2 Pet. 2:2) and in so doing they are heaping destruction upon themselves.

“and despise authority.”

False teachers and their followers despise authority of any kind, but they especially will not subject themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1). It may be that they also despise any church leadership, which Christ has ordained to get His work done on this earth. False teachers and their followers hate subjection, and when asked to be in submission, they decline to do it or they somehow rationalize around it.

CONCLUSION

What can Christians learn from this passage? First, we must not teach evil. Even with the best intentions, most of us do at times, because we do not know our Bibles well or we choose not to obey. When we unconsciously teach evil, if our intentions are right, the grace of God covers it, but we need to be so careful to teach the truth rather than error.

Second, we must never place ourselves under false teaching. Sometimes we cannot help being exposed to evil because it is all around us, but we must learn, through a knowledge of the Bible, to screen out error and to recognize it when we see it. Do not reject the teacher, but reject the error, and lovingly, but forthrightly, challenge error whenever you see it.

Third, subject yourself to the Bible as God’s inspired and infallible Word. How much time do you spend reading books or the newspaper or watching TV in comparison to the time you spend in the Bible? You will make time in your busy schedule to read, meditate on and memorize Scripture if you think this is a priority, otherwise you will grow cold in your spiritual life and will open yourself to false teaching. God wants us to make a choice between Apostolic orthodoxy, as found in the Bible, and the heterodoxy found in the false teaching of Modernism, Liberalism and the cults of our day.

What is the true teaching of Christ on how to become a Christian? You must see yourself as a sinner and under God’s wrath and headed for eternal judgment. Then you must turn to Jesus Christ who died for sinners and was raised from the dead to declare men righteous, bowing to Him as your Lord as well as your Savior. You must trust Christ alone to save you from sin and judgment. You must change your mind about Christ and your sinful life and receive Him by faith. This is the true gospel; follow it and you shall have eternal life. Any other teaching is false and leads to eternal destruction. Christ said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”*