

THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE JUDGMENT – PART 1

2 Peter 2:4-9

INTRODUCTION

- The message of divine judgment is not popular in the world, and man seeks to avoid contemplating it
- God made man in his image – and ever since, man has been making god in his own image, creating a god to fit in with our proud, sinful and selfish ways
- That is what these false teachers in 2 Peter were doing – creeping into the church in the guise of true Christian preachers, but teaching lies to deceive the people and to bring gain to themselves
- Peter does not so much go into the specifics of the false doctrines they taught, but focusses on the wicked character of these men, the havoc they wreak in the beguiling of souls, and of the awful condemnation they and their followers will ultimately face from God
- Already, in vv.1-3, Peter has clearly stated the judgment that is upon them, using the words, “damnable”, “destruction”, “pernicious”, “judgment” and “damnation”
- Then from vv.4-9, he expands on this theme of judgment, using three examples of God’s judgment of the ungodly in the past, while also showing his deliverance of the righteous
- Verses 4-10a form one long, complex, conditional sentence, with the dependent clause (the *protasis*) in vv.4-8 and the independent clause (the *apodosis*) in v.9

- Note that the “if” in v.4 is a “first class conditional”, where what follows is accepted as true statements, and can be understood as “since” or “because”
- That is, “Since God judged the angels that sinned, and since God flooded the ungodly world, and since God burned to ashes Sodom and Gomorrah, then God will certainly judge the ungodly, especially these apostates”
- The three examples of divine judgment are all taken from the book of Genesis, confirming to us that Genesis is an accurate record of historical events that we can trust as facts
- Our three chief enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, are all represented in these three judgments, showing that we can be confident that in due time these enemies will be judged and condemned by God
 - ✓ The angels that sinned represent the devil
 - ✓ The corrupt world of Noah’s day represents the world
 - ✓ Sodom and Gomorrah represent the flesh
- There are many striking similarities between this chapter and the Epistle of Jude – there is debate over who wrote first, and who depended on who, but ultimately they were both inspired by the Holy Spirit, and when God repeats himself, we ought to pay especially close attention

I. GOD’S JUDGMENT OF THE DISOBEDIENT SPIRITS (4)

A. Angels that sinned

1. The holy angels were created to dwell, serve and worship in the presence of God (Matthew 18:10)

2. Some of these angels rebelled against God, they “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 6)
- B. There is disagreement as to precisely which incident Peter refers to here
1. It may refer to the fall of Lucifer and the angels that fell with him (Isaiah 14:12ff.)
 - a. The problem with this is that the angels Peter refers to are presently in chains, while the fallen angels (or devils/demons) are presently in active warfare against the Lord and his people – they are not yet bound
 2. It may refer to the incident in Genesis 6:1-4
 - a. While some understand the “sons of God” to be humans, it is more likely they were angelic beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7)
 - b. These angels took wives (women), not by procreating with them, but by possessing of them, energizing them to engage in promiscuous immorality, and through genetic manipulation, produce a race of “giants” (*nephilim*) which corrupted the whole world
- C. God cast them into hell
1. These angels are presently bound in a part of hell called Tartarus

- a. The word for “cast them down to hell” (*tartarosas*) is one word in the Greek, which is the verb form of *Tartarus*
 - b. Peter borrowed this word from Greek mythology, in which Tartarus was the lowest place of the underworld, where Zeus imprisoned the Titans after they were defeated in war
2. This place is not their final abode, but a “holding cell” where they are held by chains of darkness, “everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6)
 3. Ultimately all the devil’s angels will be cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10-15)
 4. This is an argument of the greater to the lesser – if the high and glorious angelic beings that sinned did not escape God’s judgment, how much more shall sinning mortals suffer his wrath?
- D. The sin of the angels parallels that of the apostate
1. They reject God’s lordship over them
 2. Their attempt at “liberty” brings them only to bondage
 3. They exchange light for darkness
 4. Their latter end is worse with them than the beginning (2 Peter 2:20; cf. Mark 14:21)

II. GOD’S JUDGMENT OF THE DROWNED SINNERS (5)

- A. God sent the flood on the old world of the ungodly

1. Man had so corrupted the world with sin that it repented the LORD that he had made them, and so he destroyed both man and every living thing upon the earth (Genesis 6:5-7)
2. The one word that describes the state of that world is “ungodly” (*asebes*) – people who have no reverence for God, living with no regard for him
3. Christ has made provision for the ungodly if they will but repent and believe (Romans 5:6)
4. The word for “flood” is *kataklysmos*, and describes the complete destruction of the former world along with its inhabitants, and leaving us with a wholly transformed world as a result
5. Note that Peter affirms the truth that this was a worldwide, global flood, not a local flood as liberal theologians claim
6. The wicked should have no comfort in the thought that there is “safety in numbers”
7. Peter makes reference to the flood again in chapter 3, showing that even as God destroyed the world by water, so he will again destroy this world by fire, condemning the ungodly, and making a new heavens and earth (3:3-13)
8. This is an argument of the more to the less – if God did not spare a whole world of people for their sins, will he not also destroy those apostates who falsely speak in his name?

B. Noah was saved

1. “Saved” (*phulasso*) is “kept”, “preserved”, “guarded” – as the rest of humanity drowned in the flood, God preserved Noah and his family in the ark
2. In contrast to the world that was not spared, Noah and his family were spared, because “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8)
3. Noah believed God, feared God and obeyed God’s command (Hebrews 11:7)
4. The ark represents Christ, the only place of refuge and protection from God’s wrath against sin
5. He is the “eighth person” – eight being the number of newness and resurrection, Noah was carried by God’s grace from an old sinful world into a new world, and pictures the believer who will be preserved from this wicked world into the world, wherein dwelleth righteousness

C. Noah was a preacher of righteousness

1. He preached by the power of Christ (1 Peter 3:19-20) for some 120 years (Genesis 6:3) both with his mouth, and by his actions (Hebrews 11:7)
2. Through his Spirit-filled preaching, the Spirit strove in the hearts of men (Genesis 6:3)
3. Even as Noah preached righteousness, condemning the unrighteousness of the world, and calling them to repentance, so are we to preach righteousness to the wicked generation of our day

- a. It is to show mankind God's standard of perfect righteousness revealed in his law
 - b. This exposes man's utter sinfulness and inability to attain to God's righteousness by our works
 - c. It then shows that God's righteousness is offered to us as a gift through Jesus Christ, received by faith alone
5. No doubt there were countless other preachers in those days, assuring the world that God was not concerned with their sin, he would not judge them, and that Noah's warning of an impending flood was the scaremongering of a religious nutcase
 6. God killed them all, as well as their followers, while the one true preacher was delivered, with those who followed him

III. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE DEPRAVED SODOMITES (6-8)

IV. GOD'S JUSTICE IN DAMNATION AND SALVATION (9)

CONCLUSION

1. Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it
2. Many people choose to be "willingly ignorant" (3:5) of God's former judgments upon the wicked, and foolishly think that they can escape it
3. Those who teach error and lead others into falsehood can be certain that God will bring them to account for their evil deeds

4. As God has judged the ungodly in the past, he surely will in the near future
5. This ought to comfort us and caution us
6. We are presently in a period of grace
7. The door of the ark is now open – Christ invites all to come unto him, to seek him while he may be found
8. But very soon the door will close and all opportunity for mercy will be gone and, as with Bunyan's *Man in the Iron Cage*, only eternal judgment awaits:

“I have crucified him afresh; I have scorned his person; I have despised his righteousness; I have counted his blood as an unholy thing; I have insulted and disdained the Spirit of grace. Therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains nothing for me but threatenings—dreadful threatenings, fearful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as God's adversary!”