

When Mankind Meets Its Maker

Study 2—God Gets It Right

There cannot be anything more important than to know that we live in God's world and that he always does what is right. Without this, our life is meaningless, chaotic and hopeless.

The death of Jesus on a cross has revealed how desperately wrong we are when we imagine we are in control. But the same event happens precisely according to God's purposes (Acts 2:23; 4:27f). It shows how wonderfully right God is—in justifying himself, and us.

God is very concerned for the honouring of his name in the earth—both in judging and in saving us (Ezek. 36:16-21).

The miracle of God getting everything right is continuing as the church announces this gospel. God is revealing his righteousness—not just his, but for us. It's how he is exerting his power (Romans 1:16).

If we ask the question, 'What is God doing about all the evil in the world?' here's the answer. He's looked at it, summed it up and dealt with it. All of it. Including what we have done. And he's made the decisive move that changes the future.

It's misleading to look at the cross from a human point of view (2 Cor. 5:16). We are accustomed to reactions of outrage or pity when tragic things happen. But neither of these reactions suit what happens to Jesus.

We'll look at what the Gospels say about this, and then, the apostles.

Jesus will save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

- ▣ This must mean more than him just teaching us better ways to live.
- ▣ There's a weight we carry that needs to be lifted from us (John 8:32-34).

Jesus teaches and heals, but everything leads up to his great work.

- ▣ He talks about going to Jerusalem and being killed there (Luke 9:51).
- ▣ His life will be a 'ransom for many'—a price paid to redeem slaves (Mark 10:45).
- ▣ He will do what is impossible—redeem the soul of another person (Psa. 49:7-9).
- ▣ If we don't let him pay what we owe, we'll die (Mark 8:36-38).
- ▣ Offending God is fatal. Who can stand if his anger is roused (Psa. 76:7; Nahum 1:6)?

Jesus knows he is God's suffering Servant.

- ▣ He is bearing the griefs of others (Matt. 8:16-17).
- ▣ He will be numbered with transgressors (Luke 22:37).
- ▣ '...the Lord makes his life a guilt offering' (Isa. 53:10).

When the time comes, Jesus asks to be spared drinking 'this cup' (Luke 22:42-44).

- ▣ This term describes judgements from God on sin (Psa. 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15).
- ▣ The terror of it makes him sweat blood. He asks if there is another way.

- ❑ He doesn't flinch from his task but reveals the horror of what is going to happen.

On his way to the cross, Jesus says, 'Don't weep for me. Weep for yourselves...' (Luke 23:28-31). This is an astonishing statement in the circumstances. He has in mind how awful it is going to be for anyone who doesn't believe in what he is doing for the world.

From his cross, Jesus cries, 'Why have you forsaken me (Matt. 27:46)?'

- ❑ 'The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all', and he is 'wounded for our transgressions' (Isa. 53:4-6).
- ❑ As he dies, Jesus says, 'It is finished' (John 19:30)! Jesus is no victim. He has done what he was given to do, what he wanted to do, and what we need.
- ❑ Through him, God has done what is right—for him, and for us.

Now, Paul shows us what is meant by God's righteousness, or being right—particularly in his letter to the Romans. The word is used to convey a range of meanings.

- ❑ God judges what is wrong (2:2). He wouldn't be God if he didn't! And he certainly wouldn't be right. His righteousness is *against* us. But this is just the beginning.
- ❑ God's made a world and still loves it. He has plans for it, loves it and has made promises to it (Jer. 23:5-6). And he's keeping them. He's not a legalist who's only interested in him being right. He reveals his rightness by doing something *for* us.

God doesn't call black white, or bad good.

- ❑ His Son owns us as his own. Our wrong becomes his (2 Cor. 5:21). All of it.
- ❑ God pours out all the rightful distain and condemnation on him. All of it.
- ❑ It's apparent that, until this moment, much has been left unjudged. But not now.
- ❑ Christ bears sin in our place and its penalty. God 's wrath has been averted (Rom. 3:25: 5:9). All of it.

God approves and accepts what Jesus does and raises him from the dead.

- ❑ He is vindicated or declared to be what he is—righteous (1 Tim. 3:16). This passage is describing the mystery of godliness—the way in which we relate to God.
- ❑ When Jesus is declared to be righteous, so are we (1:16-17; 4:1-25; 5:17; 8:4). God's righteousness is revealed as a gift *to* us.
- ❑ If we do not trust our righteousness, and do trust in Christ's, we are credited with the righteousness Jesus showed in his life and in his death (2 Cor. 5:21). All of it.

There's nothing as exhilarating as this (Romans 5:1-5). It's then we realise how unconvincing our self-justification has been.

- ❑ We readily agree with Paul: 'Let God be true, and every human being a liar' (Rom. 3:4). (Cf. 1 John 1:5—2:2).

God's righteousness is now revealed *in* us.

- ❑ We who are grateful recipients of God's gift in Christ, are eager to do what is right because we have been made right with God (6:16-18).

People who don't have this gift of righteousness are hobbled and can't live truly. They remain self-focused and self-justifying. They call 'right' whatever life-style they have chosen.

But God shows he can get things right by pointing us to what his Son does on the cross. Here's something that's true, and works. It comes straight from God. It takes us to God. And it sends us out into life with delight, and with an eye for what others need from us.