

It Is Written

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JUDGMENT AND GOD'S COMPASSION

By Doy Moyer

When Abraham was told about the destruction of cities known for unrepentant wickedness, he didn't rejoice in that, but begged for them to be spared. When Jonah confronted a city of wickedness (and repentance), he pined for their destruction. Who are we more like?

Common to both accounts is 1) the absolute right of God to be the Judge, and 2) the compassion and lovingkindness of God to save. God judged Sodom because "their outcry has become so great before the Lord" (Gen 19:13), and it was clear there would be no repentance. Yet, though Lot hesitated, the angels took the hands of Lot and his family and led them out, "for the compassion of the Lord was upon him" (v. 16). Lot recognized that this magnified the lovingkindness of God because his life was saved (v. 19). In the midst of judgment, God showed mercy and compassion. He has the right to both.

Jonah, on the other hand, was angry that God spared Nineveh, and his reasoning is interesting: "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (4:2).

Again, God has the absolute right to judge, and sometimes because of unrepentant hearts He judges. That will always be His right, and His alone. Yet through His compassion and lovingkindness, He offers opportunities to repent and be saved. "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Rom 2:4)

This is the gospel message. Judgment is coming, but salvation is offered by God's grace.

Paul preached, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man who He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Peter taught, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Why repent? Because there is yet judgment coming due to wickedness. Failure to repent means being caught up in the judgment: "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom 2:5).

Yet why repent? Because of God's compassion and lovingkindness offering salvation. In His wrath, He remembers mercy (Hab 3:1). In His mercy, He provides hope (Rom 5:1-2).

Some have great difficulty reconciling these two facets of God, but Paul brings both together in Romans 2. To deny that God has the absolute right to judge is to fail to recognize the unfathomable glory and holiness of God on the one hand, and the horrific nature of sin on the other. God does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:3-4), but evil is so horrific that it cannot go unpunished. Many unbelievers will speak of "the problem of evil" and ask, "Why doesn't God do anything about all the evil?" They do not realize that He has and He will. That is why God brings judgment. Yet this is also why God offers salvation through Christ. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

People want evil to be duly punished, but many never accept the fact all have participated in evil (Rom 3:23) and repentance is God's compassionate prescription for averting that judgment. No one has to suffer eternally for it, and this is wonderful news. Sadly, many have come to expect mercy without repentance. It does not work that way. Still others get angry at God because He would dare judge at all, as if God has no such right. What they do not get is that whether or not they like what God does or who God is has absolutely no bearing on whether or not God exists. Failing to repent because of anger about God does not wipe away that failure to repent. God still judges, and God still offers salvation to the repentant. Why fight that? "Therefore repent and

return...”

We began by asking, “Who are we more like?” Jonah is not held up as an icon of faith in Scripture. Abraham, on the other hand, is. This is not to say that Abraham was perfect, but his faith, even in the judgment events, is well seen: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

Yes, He has, He does, and He will. Only God can determine the timing of judgment. Ours is to hold out the hope of the gospel so that as many as will may repent and follow the Lord. By granting repentance, God shows His mercy and grace. Let us never think lightly of this offer.

“The Bible’s Unwritten History”

By Jarrod M. Jacobs

What was Noah’s wife’s name (Gen. 7:13)? Did Noah and his wife have any other children besides the three sons we read about in Genesis? Why do we not read about Adam and Eve’s other children (Gen. 5:4)? Why are we only told of incidents happening to Moses as a baby, at age 40, and then we only know the most details about Moses’ life starting at age 80? Why are we not told about Jesus’ youth? Why do we not know about Jesus as a baby, or what Jesus did in Nazareth from age 12 through age 30?

Many other unanswered questions might be added to our list above, but the point is made with these few questions. Why is it that we are not told the answers to these and other similar questions? It seems that the answers to these questions might satisfy curious minds. The only satisfactory answer I can think of, however, is that information pertaining to the above (and countless other) questions do not pertain to the subject and theme of the Bible, namely, the redemption of man! When I come across questions such as these, I am reminded of Moses’ words, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

When we read the Scriptures, we must be impressed with the fact that God condensed some 4000+ years of history into a mere 66 books! Several of these books have only one chapter, and the longest of the books can be read in 3 hours (on average). Thirty-three books can be read in an hour or less (on average). Is this not amazing? When we read and study the Scriptures, we see that the writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:20-21), had a specific theme or purpose in mind. These people wrote about those things which pertained to man’s salvation, and how God went about to bring His plan of salvation into reality through Christ (Gal. 4:4).

When we understand this fact, we can understand why God has chosen to leave various facts out of the Bible record. Put simply, it is because such things as who Noah’s wife was, the particulars of Adam and Eve’s other children, Moses’ life history before age 80, etc., do not pertain to His purpose for writing this Book!

The next time folks try to “stump” us, asking why are possums not mentioned in the Bible, or asking why it is that we are not told about each of the Patriarch’s children, or any of a myriad of other curiosities, remember this article and let folks know that the Bible is not intended to be the “unabridged history of the world”! The Bible is a true book (Jn. 17:17) whose purpose or theme is to reveal God’s plan for salvation.

Then, tell them what God’s plan of salvation is (Mk. 16:15-16; II Tim. 2:2, 3:16-17)! We have been given “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (II Pet. 1:3). Therefore, let us be active in using the Bible for its intended purpose. Let us show folks God’s plan for salvation, and lead them to Christ before it is too late (II Cor. 6:2).