

## **God's Faithful Judgment**

### **II Peter 2:4-10**

The first three verses of this epistle warn us that we will certainly face false teachers. They give us a short description of false teachers that we might recognize them. And he tells us that false teachers are on a path of destruction and judgment.

In the next few verses, verses 4-10, we are given several examples of God's judgment. These examples show God's faithful judgment and assure us that the truth will prevail and that false teachers will not, they cannot, escape the judgment of God.

#### **I. God Judges the World**

First, we see that God judges the wicked. Look back at the first three verses of this chapter. We are told twice in those verses that false teachers face judgment. The end of verse 1 says that false teachers, "bring upon themselves swift destruction." The end of verse 3 says of false teachers: "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

Who is going to execute this judgment against false teachers? The first three verses of chapter don't specifically say, but the beginning of verse 4 leaves no

doubt. The first three words of II Peter 2:4 say, “For if God.” These three words introduce three historical examples of God’s judgment.

This passage takes for granted that we understand God is the Judge of the whole world. Man’s heart is a factory for idols, and one of the idols we are most prone to make is a god who does not judge. A god who does not judge is not the God of Scripture. There is not a single person who will escape the judgment of God.

In Genesis 18:25 Abraham addressed God as the “Judge of all the earth.”

I Peter 4:5 says that God will judge the living and the dead. Revelation 20:11-15 tells us what the final judgment will be like: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

“But how strict will this judgment be?” you may ask. “Surely God will judge on a curve. I’m not perfect, but I’m not a terrible person.” If God were to judge us

against each other, then there may be hope that some might escape by their own merit. But God will judge us against Himself, the perfect, holy standard, and against that standard, we are all sinners.

Romans 3:23 says, “For *some* have sinned and come short of *the standards of man?*” No. “For *some* have sinned and come short of *the cultural standards?*” No. “For *some* have sinned and come short of *the goodness of others?*” No. “For **all** have sinned and come short of **the glory of God.**”

Jesus taught that we would be judged on even the smallest details. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” The Holy God who created us will judge us against a perfect standard, and not a single person will escape that judgment. God is the judge of the whole world.

This should place a fear of God in our hearts. If you do not fear God, it is because you do not know God. God is described in Scripture as a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29). God is unapproachable in His majesty. God is thrice holy and He hates the wicked. And one day, you will have to stand before Him and give an account for your life. This is an inescapable judgment, and unless you are absolutely perfect you will be damned for eternity. There is no escape from the Judge of all the earth.

Heaven forbid that we ever forget that God is the judge of the world. God judges the wicked.

We also see in this passage that God Delivers the righteous. We see this illustrated in all three examples this passage gives. Not all the angels were cast down, but only those who sinned. God delivered the righteous. Noah found favor in the sight of God, and God delivered him and his family from the flood. God delivered just Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We will look at all of these in more detail in just a few moments, but the point here is that God delivers the righteous. All of this is being brought up in the context of teaching against false teachers. False teachers are wicked. They are under the inescapable judgment of God. Those who teach the truth, those who oppose false teachers, they will be delivered by God. Thus we are encouraged to press on in the struggle for truth. The contest has already been decided. The truth will prevail. The victory has already been won. Do not grow weary in well-doing, but press on. God delivers the righteous. This passage goes on to give three examples of God's judgment.

## **II. Three Examples of God's Judgment**

These examples are arranged in order from greatest to least. The first example is God's judgment on the angels. Verse 4 says, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

Who or what are angels? Angels are spirits created by God. All that exists was created by God, and that includes angels. Genesis 1 and John 1:3 are examples of passages that teach God in the Creator of everything. Angels are specifically mentioned as created beings in Psalm 148. Psalm 148:2 and 5 say, "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts . . . Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created." As was everything that God created, the angels were good and perfect in the day of their creation.

The Bible also speaks of angels as positionally superior to man. Psalm 8:4-5 say, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."

Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Jesus was made lower than the angels. How was this so? Because he became a man, that he might suffer death.

The angels occupy a position superior to man. However, a portion of the angels fell from their perfection.

Now consider the sin of fallen angels. Look at all the details given to us in this verse about the sin of the angels. Again, this verse simply says, "The angels that sinned." The details are rather sparse, aren't they? This verse simply tells us that they sinned.

We are not told the time of their sin. No mention is made here about the manner of their sin. No other details are given to us here, and only a very few details can be found in other places in Scripture.

There is no end of interest in angels, in the fall of angels, in the nature of angels, in the relation to God, and we could go on and on in speculation. But the simple reality is that the Bible gives us very few details about the angels, and even more specific to our text, very few details are given about the sin of the fallen angels. We must be careful that when it comes to angels, or any other topic, that we don't waste our time with vain speculation that does not serve to edify.

All the details that are useful to us, God has revealed to us in His Word. The angels were created perfect, to serve and obey God. Some of the angels rebelled against God's authority and fell from their perfect state. They are now under the just judgment of God, and their time is short before their final judgment will come. There is no need for further speculation.

This verse goes on to reveal the judgment of God against fallen angels. First, God did not spare them. There was no mercy shown to the angels. There was no second chance for the angels. There was no redemption. There was no messiah. "God spared not the angels that sinned."

Never be so proud or so blind or so arrogant as to say, "God won't judge me!" Are you better than the angels? God did not spare them. Why would he spare you?

God cast the angels down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. Immediately those angels that sinned were cast out of heaven. This is a powerful illustration of the deceitful nature of sin. Before these angels sinned, they were perfect. They were in heaven, in the presence of God. They were drawn away by some enticement into sin. Whatever they thought they might gain in this rebellion was immediately shown to be a mirage. They were cast down from their excellent position in heaven. They lost all their glory and dignity.

Sin never delivers on its promises to make things better. Sin always debases and degrades. Sin is a corruption. Just as sin ruined these angels, so sin ruins us.

Now, this verse tells us that angels were cast down to hell, delivered into chains of darkness, and reserved unto judgment. However, we know that at certain times and for certain purposes demons have been released and allowed to roam upon the earth. I don't claim to understand this, but this is simply what we see revealed in the Bible.

But we do know the ultimate end of all the fallen angels. They will be hell for eternity. Hell is not the domain of the devil and his demons. Hell is their prison, where they will suffer the eternal wrath of God.

There is no place between the heights of glory in heaven and depths of misery in hell where fallen angels or fallen man will find a place to rest on the day

of judgment. If you are not in heaven on that day, then you will be in hell. There is no middle ground where you might land.

Don't make light of or ignore this example of the judgment of God. God did not spare the angels that sinned. Their sin brought them to hell, a place of eternal torment. Your sin will bring you to that same place.

But unlike the fallen angels who have no hope, God did something incredible for humanity. Something that the angels look into and marvel at. (I Peter 1:12). God sent us a redeemer, His own Son Jesus Christ. He came to earth as a man, made a little lower than the angels. He lived a perfect and holy life. A life that pleased God the Father. Death had no claim on Jesus because He had never sinned. But Jesus willingly went to the cross and laid down His life to satisfy the wrath of God for the sins of His people.

If you call upon the name of Jesus Christ, you will be saved. All the merit of Jesus Christ will be added your account. All your guilt for sin will be taken away.

If you are listening to me this morning and you are not a Christian, don't ignore this example of God's judgment. Don't think that somehow you will escape the wrath of God. There is nowhere you can go to escape the wrath of God except Jesus Christ, God's appointed messiah. Turn from your sin. Turn to Christ. Flee from the wrath to come.

God doesn't ask us to believe in Him. He doesn't beg us to repent. He doesn't plead with us to worship Him. God commands these things. He demands

them of us. And He is worthy of them, because He is God. How dare we refuse the demands of the one who created us?

There is one more thing I want to point out in verse 4 before we move on. Only the angels who sinned were punished. “God spared not the angels.” Which angels? “The angels that sinned.” The angels who did not sin were spared.

God’s justice is a perfect justice. He will not let the guilty go free. He will not punish the innocent. We see God’s perfect justice demonstrated in the judgment of the fallen angels.

The next example this text gives us is God’s judgment on the antediluvian world (v. 5). I don’t know why I put the word “antediluvian” in my notes. It simply means “before the flood.” This is God’s judgment on the old world in the time of Noah.

Verse 5 says, “And [God] spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.” God “spared not the old world.”

What was destroyed in the Flood? We know the answer in the general sense. The verse tells us: “the old world.” The world, as it was when God created it, was destroyed. There were massive changes in geography. An entire world full of plants and animals was wiped out. And lest we forget, the entire human race, most likely several million people or more, died. Only Noah and his family were saved.

What was human civilization before the flood like? The only description we have comes from the first few chapters of Genesis and other scattered references throughout the Bible. In some ways they were just like any other civilization. Jesus said in Matthew 24:38 that before the flood people were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” We also know that it was a violent society. There was murder (Genesis 4:32). We know that it was a wicked society. Every imagination of man’s heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). That’s really all the detail the Bible gives us.

The point of this example, in this text, is that God drowned the entire human race. That should shock us. That should drive us away from apathy. That should make us uncomfortable with the cavalier attitude we often adopt toward God and God’s judgment.

The example of God’s judgment against the fallen angels shows that the *quality* of the sinner will not stay the hand of God’s judgment.

The example of the old world destroyed in the flood shows that the *quantity* of sinners will not stay the hand of God’s judgment. A sin that puts you on the side of the majority receives no protection from the judgment of God. If the sin is universal, the punishment will be universal. The wicked cannot escape the flood of God’s wrath.

Notice, in this example, who was spared from the wrath of God: “Noah . . . a preacher of righteousness.” This is the only place in Scripture where Noah is

described as a preacher of righteousness. Of all the places in Scripture where Noah is talked about, why are we told here that he was a preacher of righteousness?

Noah lived in a wicked time. He was surrounded by wicked people. He was surrounded by unbelief. He wasn't in the minority, he was the minority. Only he and his family were walking with God. No one listened to Noah's sermons on righteousness. No one believed that God's judgment would come. They believed lies. They listened to people who told them what they wanted to hear. That God's judgment wouldn't come. That they could go on living in sin, the way they had always lived. False teachers had all world behind them, and Noah, the lone preacher of righteousness had no-one. But when the flood of God's judgment came, the wicked perished and the preacher of righteousness was saved.

We have looked at two illustrations of God's judgment as they are presented to us in this text. First, God's judgment on the fallen angels. Next, God's judgment on the old world in the time of Noah. The third and final example of God's judgment in this text is God's judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verses 6, 7, and 8 say, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)."

God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes. This is how we most often think of Sodom and Gomorrah. And rightly so. They were wicked cities that God destroyed as an example. Because of this, we rarely think of all the goodness, mercy, and grace that God had shown to Sodom and Gomorrah.

These cities had the benefit of fruitfulness and prosperity. Genesis 13:10 tells us that the land around these two cities was like the garden of Eden. It was a fertile land. It was a well-watered land. It was rich land. But instead of using the prosperity of their land in God-honoring ways, they used their prosperity to feed their corruption.

These cities had the benefit of a righteous witness in their midst. These verses tell us that Lot was a righteous man. Lot lived among these people for years. They knew Lot. They knew Lot was different from them. But they hated Lot when he spoke against their wicked deeds (Genesis 19:9). They mocked Lot when he tried to warn them of the judgment of God (Genesis 19:14). They had the witness of a righteous man among them, and they did not heed what he had to say.

The inhabitants of these cities had been miraculously delivered by God from their enemies. In Genesis 14 we read of Sodom and Gomorrah's ill-fated attempt to free themselves from paying tribute to another king. That king came with his allies and beat the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah in battle. Their armies were scattered. Sodom and Gomorrah were looted. Their goods, their food, and their people were all taken as the spoils of war.

Lot was among the people who were taken. When Abraham heard about this he armed his servants and went after this group. God gave Abraham the victory and he captured everything that this other king had carried off. When Abraham brought all this spoil back the king of Sodom said, “Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself” (Genesis 14:21). But of course, Abraham wouldn’t take anything from this wicked king. He gave it all back.

These cities had been taken all the way to the brink of destruction, and they were given a second chance by the miraculous deliverance of God through Abraham, and they squandered it. They continued on in their sin, just as they always had. This serves to illustrate for us that there is no advantage that secures the wicked from the judgment of God.

And yet again, in the midst of God’s judgment we see an example of His deliverance. Lot lived in Sodom. He was surrounded by great wickedness. This wickedness grieved him. His soul was vexed by the evil that was done around him.

Keep in mind, Lot lived in Sodom by choice. Lot gradually moved into this wicked environment. He travelled with Abraham. Then he pitched his tent in the Jordan plain. And then he moved into the city of Sodom itself.

Why did Lot do this? If we didn’t have this passage that told us Lot was a righteous man, we would be hard pressed to come to that conclusion from everything else Scripture says about him. Did he just enjoy the comfort of the city? Did he love the wealth and prosperity he enjoyed in that area? Did he have family

ties that influenced him to stay in a place where his “righteous soul” was troubled by the wickedness around him. Whatever the case may have been, Lot seemed unwilling or unable to break away from and leave this wicked environment.

But when God brought His judgment upon those wicked cities, He did not leave Lot. God, who has a perfect knowledge of the human heart, counted Lot as among the righteous. God delivered Lot while all his wicked neighbors perished.

This morning we have first considered that God is the judge of the world. He judges the wicked and He delivers the righteous. We then studied the three examples of God’s judgment presented in this text. His judgment of the fallen angels, and antediluvian world, and Sodom and Gomorrah. In all those examples we saw that God did not let any who were guilty escape His wrath, nor did He punish any who were innocent. He has shown Himself to be perfect and faithful in His judgment. Our final point this morning is the application that this text makes from these examples: God will judge the wicked.

### **III. God Will Judge the Wicked**

A general application to the wicked is made in v. 9 Verse 9 begins with the words, “The Lord knoweth . . .” For the Christian, these are immensely comforting words. That verse goes on to say, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”

If you know the Lord then you can rest in the perfect knowledge of God. God knows how to deliver the godly. He knows what is best for you. He has the ability, the strength, the power to accomplish exactly what He desires to accomplish in and through your life.

Hardship may come. Trials may come. Suffering may come. Prayers may seem to go unheard and unanswered. The wicked may seem to prosper while the righteous perish. But rest assured, God knows how to deliver the godly. He has a track record to prove it. God never punishes unjustly. If you are in Christ, then you possess Christ's righteousness and you will be spared the judgment of God. You will be delivered according to the perfect knowledge of God.

But these same words, which are so comforting for Christians, are terrifying to the wicked. Verse 9 says, "The Lord knoweth how . . . to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The same knowledge of God that works to the perfect preservation of the godly works to the perfect punishment of the unjust.

God knows how to punish the wicked. He has the track record to prove it. The wicked never escape His judgment. They are reserved unto the day of judgment by the perfect knowledge of God.

A specific application to false teachers is made in verse 10. Verse 10 begins with the words, "But chiefly them." The general teaching of the last few verses is here specifically applied. False teachers are the topic of this passage. Here we are assured that the judgment of God will be brought to bear on false teachers.

In the rest of verse 10 and the following verses, false teachers are further described and shown to be the worthy recipients of the special judgment of God which has been reserved for them. It is sufficient for our topic this morning to just focus on those first three words of verse 10. The apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit leaves no question about the judgment of false teachers. False teachers will face the faithful judgment of God.

To false teachers, this serves as a warning. There is no escape. Judgment is stored up against you. Judgment day is coming, and on that day God will hold you responsible for the false teaching you have spread.

To faithful believers, this is encouraging. Don't grow weary in well-doing. Don't be discouraged by the multitude of false teachers. Press on in the truth. God is a faithful judge. He will punish the wicked and he will deliver the righteous.