

Know the Judgment

2 Peter 2:4-10

When I was about 6 years old, I came to believe that I could run faster than my mom. (Ask the children if this is true of them.) One day after willfully disobeying my mom, she told me that I was going to receive discipline to help me turn away from wrong. She went to the kitchen drawer where she kept the paddle and then called me to come to her. I looked at her and shook my head. She then approached me and I took off. Our house had an interior circle where the living room, bathroom, bedrooms, and dining room were connected. Mom walked toward me and I ran. I made it about three times around the circle when my mom calmly said, ***“Ritchie, the spanking is only going to get harder.”***

At first, I ignored this warning and kept running. But in the fourth lap I started thinking about that. Then I started thinking about my end game. I knew that dad was going to come home at some point. I knew that my mom was not going to give up doing what needed to be done. I knew that the spanking WAS INDEED GOING TO BECOME MORE PAINFUL. Finally, after four laps of confident running, I began to tremble inside. I knew that the time of reckoning could not be avoided. And on the fifth lap I fell down on the floor and cried out, “I am sorry mommy. I am so sorry!”

The unescapable discipline of my mom humbled me to repentance.

Peter reminds us of the **unescapable nature of God’s judgment**. Yet Peter’s topic is Peter’s topic is much much more severe than my story. Peter does not speak to us about the loving discipline of the LORD toward His own children. Peter points us to the terrifying eternal judgment of the LORD upon those who oppose Him.

God’s eternal judgment is a subject that few entertain in our age. . . for many it causes too much discomfort . . . for many it feels unworthy of God . . . for many it is archaic and irrelevant to our modern sensibilities . . . for many it contradicts the sweetness of Jesus.

Yet no one spent more time with Jesus and listened to more of His sermons than Peter. Peter knows Jesus and Peter tells us plainly and powerfully of the certainty and severity of God’s judgment upon sin. Peter knows something about Jesus that many modern believers choose to deny.

Keep in mind that Peter is writing at the point in his life when his time on earth is running very short. As Peter is about to die, he sees that life is very short

and that eternity is very long. So he speaks about the matters of life that are most urgent . . . most important. He writes with a heart yearning for his readers to be ready for the future day when each of us will stand before the LORD to give an account of our lives.

Main Idea: Jesus is the Judge of all the earth. Every sin will receive its full punishment. Our only hope to escape eternal judgment is humbly repentance and believe in Jesus and His Jesus' sacrifice for our sin to justify us before God.

All through Peter's ministry, he has kept the Gospel at the center of His preaching. Here Peter reminds us of Two Gospel Big Ideas. These are not minor points but vital truths of the Gospel. These Big Ideas are central to the story of God's Book. To remove either is to lose the Gospel itself. **Peter's second Big Idea is not so controversial, but the first Big Idea is so controversial that many churches have abandoned it.** And without the first, the second becomes a sugary sweet without providing nutrition for life.

What are these two Gospel Big Ideas?

Two Gospel Big Ideas:

Big Idea #1: God is able to judge those who oppose Him.

Big Idea #2: God is able to save those who trust in Him.

Two Gospel Big Ideas:

Big Idea #1: God is able to judge those who oppose Him. No one escapes the judgment that God pronounces.

One of the teachings of the false teachers is that the coming of Jesus in judgment is a fairy tale . . . a crafty fable. They teach that very few have to worry about their eternal future . . . that most everyone will escape eternal punishment.

"Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep." (2 Peter 2:3 [ESV](#)).

Here in verse 3 Peter says, “That is simply not true! God’s condemnation of sin is not “idle” or permanently on hold. The destruction that Jesus places on those who oppose him is not “asleep” never to awaken.” These false teachers may make light of God’s future judgment, but their doom will chase them down and one day they will wake up to the horror of their own fate.

Satan deceives with a number of Big Lies. Here is one of them . . .

Big Lie: I do not have to worry about my eternal future . . . one way or another I will escape God’s judgment.

Remember that this is one of Satan’s first lies to man.

“And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.” (Genesis 3:2-4 [ESV](#))

Peter points us to three Bible stories to help us see that Satan is lying to us when he convinces us that God is not serious about judging our sin.

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;” (2 Peter 2:4-6 [ESV](#)).

If you place your Greek glasses on for a moment, you would see that verses 4-9 are one long unbroken sentence. **Peter pulls from the OT to give three pieces of evidence that prove the unescapable nature of God’s judgment. Yet these three all go together . . . not as separate ideas, but as one.**

Peter is incredulous that people inside God’s church would believe the lie that God will not ultimately bring judgment upon those who disobey him. Peter is asking, **“What Bible are you reading?”** Look to what God has already done to show us what God will ultimately do in His righteousness! God’s Word shows us that no one from the beginning of time has escaped God’s judgment and no one ever will!

Exhibit A: The fallen angels.

Exhibit B: The rebels in Noah's day.

Exhibit C: Sodom and Gomorrah

Each of these exhibits describe a pattern: Someone sins, they think they won't get caught, they continue in sin, God sees everything and severely judges them.

Principle: Just because today is not the Day of Judgment does not mean that there never will be one. Man's ability to ignore the fact of judicial accountability is nearly measureless.

The fallen angels thought that they could get away with rebelling against God's authority, so did the people of Noah's day and so did the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In each case, there was a season when it seemed to EVERYONE that God either did not see the sin OR He did not care about the sin. The LORD was so patient in each of these stories that people likely thought that God would never judge. Until . . . until He did.

Exhibit A: The fallen angels.

"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;" (2 Peter 2:4 [ESV](#))

Peter takes us to the story in Genesis 6:1-4 where we are told a kind of story that is hard for us to imagine. By this time, one third of the angels had been cast down out of heaven with Satan for trying to push God off of His kingly throne. These angels were not immediately judged, but were confined to the earth with very specific limitations. It seems that some of the angels disobeyed God's set limitations.

"When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever," (Genesis 6:1-3 [ESV](#)).

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them." (Genesis 6:4 [ESV](#))

My purpose this morning is NOT to defend my interpretation, but to present it for the sake of emphasizing the truth about the judgment of God. I believe that the sons of God in Genesis 6 refers to fallen angels who have been told NOT to co-habit with women who have been created in the image of God. Yet in the face of God's clear command, they disobey God in this exact way.

What is produced by these sexual unions are a race of "Nephilim" . . . a mixture of demon and human . . . a race that would have perverted the human race and so cutting off the "seed of the woman" who is prophesied by God in Genesis 3 to be the One who will crush Satan's head.

Think of the first demon who in lust stepped over the boundary that God gave to them about sexual relations with women. The act was done . . . and wait for it . . . nothing bad happened! No lightning strike from heaven. No thunder of condemnation. All was quiet and peaceful.

He tells in his demon friends about the experience and says, *"You have to try it! You won't believe how wonderful it is!"* They then also co-habit with women and they also experience NO IMMEDIATE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCE! Nine months go by and the children conceived through these forbidden unions are amazing! **They not grotesque and deformed, but magnificent babies.** It seems that their disobedience brings life and joy, not disaster to them! The babies grow and are the strongest in the neighborhood. They excel as hunters, fighters, winners!! The college recruiters seek out the Nephilim for their sports teams. Everything seems to be great! Until . . .

Truth: Judgment is rarely immediate. For a time, it may seem like God overlooks sin without righteously responding to it.

"And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—" (Jude 1:6 [ESV](#))

One day, God's judgment fell upon these demons. They were sent by God to a holding place . . . a demon jail as it were . . . where they are kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—"

Do you remember Jesus freeing the man in the country of the Gerasense from the many demons who possessed him?

“Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.”(Luke 8:30-33 [ESV](#))

While those demons who DID NOT disobey God by co-habiting with women are still under the sentence of eternal judgment . . . they did not have judgment fall upon them immediately. But these angels in Genesis 6 are already in torment because of their sin.

If any creature could escape God’s judgment, we would think the rebellious angels could have. No creature is faster, more powerful, more intelligent, more crafty, more knowledgeable than the angels. Peter reminds us

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;” (2 Peter 2:4 [ESV](#))

Truth: No one is beyond the reach of God in bringing judgment.

Exhibit B: The rebels in Noah’s day.

“if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;” (2 Peter 2:5 [ESV](#))

God not only judges the angels when they sin, but He judges humankind too!

The story of Noah is set early in God’s Book to remind us of the universality of God’s judgment on man’s sin. Far from being a child’s story about cute animals quietly walking into a big boat, this is a fearful story of God’s decision to bring universal death upon every person on the earth . . . saving only 8 people.

When I read children’s Bibles, one of the first stories I turn to is the story of Noah to see how the authors handle it. So few actually teach children the central message this story teaches us. Do we think that the subject of judgment is too severe for little ears? How old should a child be before their parents teach them that God is righteous and that the wages of sin is death?

“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Genesis 6:11-13 [ESV](#))

Then God tells Noah to build a boat. And by faith Noah believes God and begins to build a boat.

Here Peter calls Noah a “herald of righteousness”. This means that while Noah and his sons are building this massive ark, he is telling people about God’s judgment. No one is listening to him. I have no doubt that the people are mocking Noah’s faith.

While the Bible does not say exactly how long it took Noah to complete the ark, it seems like it took 75 years or more. For that entire time, Noah is communicating the righteousness of God and no one responds. Not one person.

Truth: Man naturally hardens his heart against the truth of God’s judgment. We do not WANT to believe it, so we don’t believe it.

Think how horrible that day would have been when the sky first dripped rain and then poured down in torrential sheets and the earth opened up with water gushing from every crevice. They had not seen rain before and its downpour likely terrified them. We are not told that they beat upon the door of the ark to be let in, but we are told that the door was shut by God. And once the door was shut by God, it would not be opened again.

Truth: God opens a window of time in which to repent and be delivered from judgment. When He closes that window, it is too late.

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.” (Matthew 24:36-40 [ESV](#))

Judgment delayed is not judgment avoided.

Exhibit C: Sodom and Gomorrah

“if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;” (2 Peter 2:6 [ESV](#))

Peter now takes us to Genesis 18-19. Here God tells the story of two angels that visit Abraham and together they travel to the city Sodom. Now Sodom and Gomorrah are exceedingly wicked places as the story will reveal. The sins of these cities are gross immorality . . . sexual violence and homosexuality . . . along with cold-heartedness to the plight of the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:48-49)

“Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Genesis 18:16-18 [ESV](#))

God does tell Abraham that He has decided to judge these cities and Abraham falls on his knees in humble petition to God on their behalf. He knows his nephew Lot and his family live there.

“So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” And the LORD said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”” (Genesis 18:22-26 [ESV](#))

Truth: When we think of the justice of God against sin, let us know that God is moved by its severity. In wrath, God is willing to have mercy.

45. 40. 30. 20. 10.

“Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.”” (Genesis 18:32 [ESV](#))

But there were not 10 righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah. Only Lot and his two daughters.

Genesis 19:12 Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. Genesis 19:13 For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.” Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, “Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.” (Genesis 19:12-14 [ESV](#))

Truth: God does not keep the truth of his coming judgment secret. He openly tells us over and over and over! Yet inexplicably, man thinks God is not serious.

“Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. . . . And Abraham . . . looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.” (Genesis 19:24-28 [ESV](#)).

Think of that day for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. They went to bed thinking tomorrow will be just like today. If you asked the citizens of S and G, **“Are you happy?” YES!!!!**

But in the morning . . . fire fell from the sky! Hard to fathom how terrifying that is! Houses burned. Sky ablaze. Nowhere to run. Heat burning feet as they ran for cover. People screaming in agony as they are hit by blobs of fire. Not one spared. Not one.

Truth: It is the most common response to have no fear of judgment prior to the arrival of judgment.

“just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” (Jude 1:7 [ESV](#))

Peter is following Jesus in using these two cities to awaken our sense of the fear of the LORD.

“Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” (Luke 17:28-30 [ESV](#))

Principle: We must not mistake the patience of God for the carelessness of God.

Big Idea #2: God is able to save those who trust in Him. Everyone is offered the path to forgiveness and deliverance.

Of the three stories highlighted, two of them point us to God's ability to rescue His people from the judgment that falls upon mankind.

"5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 2Peter 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials," (2 Peter 2:5-9 [ESV](#))

Question: Who are the "righteous"? Who are the "godly"?

The Bible teaches us that all of sinned and fallen short of God's glory. No one is righteous in their own right.

Think of the two men that are mentioned here:

After Noah steps off the ark he gets drunk and gets naked in his tent.

Hardly the actions of a godly man!

And Lot . . . if Peter did not mention him as being "righteous", we would not have used that word to describe his life. In greed, he took the best land from Abraham. Then after escaping judgment in Sodom, he too gets drunk not once but twice and he lays with his daughters and both conceive children from him. What an ugly story!

How can we say that Noah and Lot are "righteous"?

Before we are told of Noah's walking with God and living an obedient life, we are told that . . .

But Noah found favor (KJV "grace") in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8 [ESV](#))

Only by God's grace is anyone declared righteous!

"What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,” (Romans 4:1-5 [ESV](#))

Truth: God declares sinners to be righteous on the basis of faith in Him. If we believe in His provision for mercy, then God will treat us as though we are not worthy of His judgment.

The first quality that is different about Noah and Lot is that they listened to the LORD and believed the LORD when everyone else turned away from Him.

“By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” (Hebrews 11:7 [ESV](#))

By faith, Lot too listened to God’s warning and fled from His wrath.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1 [ESV](#))

We need a righteousness that only can be obtained by faith in Jesus. Jesus came into the world so that sinners might possess this righteousness as a gift from God.

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21 [ESV](#))

Truth: Though God’s righteous judgment is universal, His offer of mercy is too!

Question: I know that I have done things that deserve God’s judgment. Is there any hope for me?

7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, . . . 2Peter 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,” (2 Peter 2:7-9 [ESV](#))

I love that phrasing . . . “the LORD knows HOW TO RESCUE THE GODLY FROM TRIALS.”

On the day when you stand before the LORD to give an account of your life . . . every word, thought, action, relationship . . . it is right to tremble. Because the LORD is righteous and just. He gives no one a pass. But it is also right to be

confident if you have placed your life under Jesus' care. Because HE KNOWS HOW!!

"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." (Romans 10:9-10 [ESV](#))

I know that many scholarly men and women study the Bible and still deny the judgment of God upon sin. They have sophisticated ways of re-defining words and re-interpreting Bible stories to erase the idea of God's righteousness. **Yet read the plain words for yourselves! What else could Peter be saying to us?**

Big Idea #1: God is able to judge those who oppose Him.

Big Idea #2: God is able to save those who trust in Him.

Conclusion:

Main Idea: Jesus is the Judge of all the earth. Every sin will receive its full punishment. Our only hope to escape eternal judgment is humbly repentance and believe in Jesus and His Jesus' sacrifice for our sin to justify us before God.

To be willing to come to Jesus as helpless, lost sinners, and commit our souls into His hands is a mighty privilege. Let us ever bless God if this willingness is ours, for it is His gift. Such faith is better than all other gifts and knowledge in the world. Many a poor converted heathen, who knows nothing but that he is sick of sin, and trusts in Jesus, shall sit down in heaven, while many learned English scholars are rejected for evermore. Blessed indeed are those who believe! J.C. Ryle in "Expository Thoughts on Matthew"

Two Gospel Big Ideas:

Big Idea #1: God is able to judge those who oppose Him.

Big Idea #2: God is able to save those who trust in Him.