

The Bible Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison

10. God's Judgment

This series of studies is based on the
Comprehensive Edition of The Bible Unpacked.

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*.
These aim to address the needs of
NON-CHRISTIANS through to MATURE CHRISTIANS,
from TEENAGERS to ADULTS.

For more information and free downloads go to:
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An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

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It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

Christian Faith and Freedom – www.cffreedom.org

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity International – www.csi-int.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Compass Direct – www.compassdirect.org

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

Open Doors – sb.od.org; www.opendoors.org.au

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Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/; www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to join-rpb@hub.xc.org.

The Bible League – www.bibleleague.org/persecuted; www.bibleleague.com

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com; www.persecution.com.au

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

The Bible Unpacked™

Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers established in the faith

10. God's Judgment

Composed by Paul Mallison

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Overview of *The Bible Unpacked*


There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to www.thebibleunpacked.net.

 **Two-Minute Edition:** Key Bible teachings for people “on the run”
For giving to non-Christians.


 **Pocket Edition:** Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth
Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or young new Christians.

 **Concise Edition:** A look at the Bible's teaching for new and young believers. For either new or young Christians. Suitable to give to non-Christian friends. Has study series based on it.




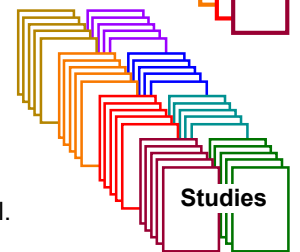
 **Foundations Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers consolidating their faith. For newer Christians. Study series is ideal for studies with newer believers.




 **Intermediate Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers growing in the faith. For developing a sound understanding of the faith. Studies are excellent for Bible study groups.



 **Comprehensive Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers established in the faith. For a comprehensive knowledge of the faith. Useful as a study or a devotional tool - and preparing talks. Studies are ideal for studying topics in detail.



 **In-Depth Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for teachers and students of the Bible. For Christians keen to gain a deep understanding of their faith. Useful for speakers preparing talks, study groups leaders, Bible students and Bible colleges. It is also in an electronic version, which is a PDF file.

Electronic Version

Section II. What to Do

Part E. Relating to God

21. Being Right with God

- I. Getting Right with God
- II. Staying Right with God

22. Having Faith in God

- I. Faith and Hope
- II. What Not to Do

23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

- I. Loving and Fearing God
- II. Obeying God

24. Connecting with God

- I. Being Close to God
- II. Praying to God

25. Exalting God

- I. Instructions
- II. Reasons to Exalt God

Part F. Church Life

26. Being One Body

- I. General
- II. Caring for the Body

27. Worshiping God

- I. General
- II. Offerings

28. Serving God

- I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights
- II. Doing God's Work

29. Significant Practices

- I. Symbolic Rites
- II. Other Significant Practices

30. Church Leadership

- I. General
- II. Teaching in the Church

Part G. Relating to People

31. Love

- I. Loving Qualities
- II. Antitheses of Love

32. Justice

- I. Justice in Action
- II. Being True

33. Wisdom

- I. Being Wise
- II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

34. Common Relationships

- I. Family Relationships
- II. Civil Relationships

35. Spreading the Gospel

- I. Instructions
- II. Insights

Part H. Persevering

36. Standing Firm

- I. General
- II. Spiritual Warfare

37. Rejecting Sin

- I. Encountering Sin
- II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

38. Major Pitfalls

- I. Pride
- II. Riches and Sex

39. Hard Times

- I. General
- II. Praying in Hard Times

40. Persecution

- I. The Persecution of God's People
- II. What to Do in Persecution

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net

Paul Mallison

Topics in This Series

Section I: What to Know

Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

1. God's Being

- I. Basics
- II. God's Pre-Eminence

2. God's Character

- I. Holy Characteristics
- II. Loving Characteristics

3. Jesus Christ

- I. General
- II. Jesus Christ and God

4. The Holy Spirit

- I. General
- II. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as One

5. Angels, Satan and Demons

- I. Angels
- II. Satan and Demons

Part B. God and the World: Basics

6. God's Creation

- I. General
- II. God's Creation of People

7. God's Sovereignty

- I. God's Supreme Authority
- II. God's Control over the World

8. God's Word

- I. General
- II. Key Old Testament Covenants

9. The Problem of Sin

- I. General
- II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

10. God's Judgment

- I. Basics
- II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

11. God's Promised Messiah

- I. The Messiah's Identity
- II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

12. Jesus Christ's Mission

- I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ
- II. Jesus Christ's Ministry, Death and Resurrection

13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

- I. Salvation from Sin
- II. Salvation for the World

14. The New Order

- I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role
- II. Key Elements of the New Order

15. 'The Last Things'

- I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Final Judgment
- II. The Afterlife

Part D. God and His Own People

16. The Standing of God's People

- I. Belonging to God
- II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ

17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People

- I. Basics
- II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

18. God's Transformation of His People

- I. General
- II. Spiritual Attributes

19. God's Care of His People

- I. God's Saving of His People
- II. God's Preservation of His People

20. God's Plans for His People

- I. General
- II. God's Plans for Israel

Notes

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

a) God Is the Judge of the World

God is judge . . .

Ps 50:6 The heavens declare his fairness, for *God is judge*. (Selah)

. . . God is the judge of the whole earth

GEN 18:25B [ABRAHAM, TO GOD:] *You are the judge of all the earth, and you do what is right.* CEV

As such, God makes judgments in the world

1CHR 16:14 He is the LORD our God; *he carries out judgment throughout the earth.*

God judges nations

JOEL 3:12 [GOD:] Let the nations be roused and let them go up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for *there I will sit in judgment on all the surrounding nations.*

God judges individuals

EZEK 33:20B [GOD:] *I will judge each of you according to his behavior.*

God judges his own people

HEB 10:30B *“The Lord will judge his people.”*

God judges evil spiritual powers

1TIM 3:6 [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TIMOTHY:] But an elder must not be a new believer, or he might be too proud of himself and be *judged guilty just as the devil was.* NCV™

2PET 2:4 *God didn't spare angels who sinned. He threw them into hell, where he has secured them with chains of darkness and is holding them for judgment.* GW

Note: Because God remembers his covenant with Abraham, God is merciful to Israel

2KI 13:22–23A Now King Hazael of Syria oppressed Israel throughout Jehoahaz's reign. ²³But *the LORD had mercy on them and felt pity for them. He extended his favor to them because of the promise he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

What did the destruction of the temple and the exile of the Israelites from the promised land signify about the Israelites' relationship with God?

Why did God show mercy to sinful Israel?

What lessons and encouragement can we take from Israel's experience of God's judgment and mercy?

prophets. Israel was deported from its land to Assyria and remains there to this very day.

1CHR 9:1B *The people of Judah were carried away to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.*

Note that the two Israelite kingdoms were conquered at different times. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, who captured the main city of Samaria in 722 B.C. Later the Babylonians destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah, with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. On both occasions the conquering nations exiled the Israelite people.

But, God promised to spare a remnant of Israel

2KI 19:30–31 [ISAIAH, SPEAKING A MESSAGE FROM GOD:] *Those who remain in Judah will take root in the ground and bear fruit. ³¹For a remnant will leave Jerusalem; survivors will come out of Mount Zion. The intense devotion of the sovereign LORD to his people will accomplish this.*

God also promised to return people of Israel to the land

EZEK 20:41–42 [GOD, TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL:] *When I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, I will accept you along with your soothing aroma. I will display my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. ⁴²Then you will know that I am the LORD when I bring you to the land of Israel, to the land I swore to give to your fathers.*

Accordingly, Jews did return to the land

EZRA 2:1 *Here is a list of descendants of the province of Judah who returned from the captivity, from those who had been exiled. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken them to Babylon. They came back to Jerusalem and Judah, each one to his town, ... ISV*

After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, descendants of the southern Israelite kingdom of Judah did return to the land – and rebuilt the temple and Jerusalem’s walls. They were known as “Jews”, the term coming from the name “Judah”.

What gives God the right to judge us?

If God did not judge us, would there have been any point to Jesus’ death?

Should believers be mindful of God’s judgment? Explain your answer.

b) Reasons for God's Judgment

To punish sin and unfaithfulness . . .

DAN 9:11 [DANIEL, TO GOD:] *All Israel has broken your law and turned away by not obeying you. Therefore you have poured out on us the judgment solemnly threatened in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against you.*

EZEK 17:20 [GOD, PRONOUNCING JUDGMENT ON KING ZEDEKIAH:] *I will throw my net over him and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylon and judge him there because of the unfaithfulness he committed against me.*

. . . as well as to discipline and cleanse God's people

1COR 11:32 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world.*

ISA 4:4 [ISAIAH, SPEAKING OF GOD:] *At that time the sovereign master will wash the excrement from Zion's women, he will rinse the bloodstains from Jerusalem's midst, as he comes to judge and to bring devastation.*

To punish the ungodly . . .

2PET 3:7 *But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, by being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

. . . and to exact just vengeance

REV 19:2B *For he has judged the great prostitute ["Babylon"] who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and has avenged the blood of his servants poured out by her own hands!*

The reference is to the symbolic Babylon, representative of a world power/s opposed to God and his people.

e) Epilogue: God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

Many times God warned his wayward people, through his prophets

2KI 17:13 *The LORD solemnly warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and all the seers, "Turn back from your evil ways; obey my commandments and rules that are recorded in the law. I ordered your ancestors to keep this law and sent my servants the prophets to remind you of its demands."*

Eventually God determined to bring destruction on unresponsive Israel

JER 15:6–7 [GOD:] *My people, you abandoned me and walked away. I am tired of showing mercy; that's why I'll destroy you⁷ by scattering you like straw blown by the wind. I will punish you with sorrow and death, because you refuse to change your ways.* CEV

The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed

2KI 25:8–10 *On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the royal guard who served the king of Babylon, arrived in Jerusalem.⁹ He burned down the LORD's temple, the royal palace, and all the houses in Jerusalem, including every large house.¹⁰ The whole Babylonian army that came with the captain of the royal guard tore down the walls that surrounded Jerusalem.*

DAN 9:12 [DANIEL, TO GOD:] *You said these things would happen to us and our leaders, and you made them happen; you brought on us a great disaster. Nothing has ever been done on earth like what was done to Jerusalem.* NCV™

God's judgment on unfaithful Israel culminated in exile from the promised land

2KI 17:22–23 *The Israelites followed in the sinful ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and did not repudiate them.²³ Finally the LORD rejected Israel just as he had warned he would do through all his servants the*

righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not.

MATT 13:40–43 *As the weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everything that causes sin as well as all lawbreakers. ⁴²They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears had better listen!*

Explain the concept of “reaping” what one “sows”.

Why should a righteous person “not fear bad news” (Ps 112:7)?

Why does God execute some judgments in the present age and leave others till judgment day and the afterlife?

To save God’s people . . .

EX 6:6 [GOD, TO MOSES:] Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and *I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.*

ESV

. . . and to vindicate God’s people

JER 51:9B–10 *God has punished Babylonia with all his might and has destroyed it completely.’” ¹⁰The LORD says, “My people shout, ‘The LORD has shown that we are in the right. Let’s go and tell the people in Jerusalem what the LORD our God has done.’”* GNT

To reward God’s people

REV 11:18 [ELDERS IN HEAVEN, TO GOD:] The nations were enraged, but your wrath has come, and *the time has come for the dead to be judged, and the time has come to give to your servants, the prophets, their reward, as well as to the saints and to those who revere your name, both small and great, and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth.*

As well as punishment for wrongdoing, God’s judgment includes reward for godliness.

Note: God’s judgments serve as examples and warnings to others

1COR 10:11A [PAUL, SPEAKING OF JUDGMENTS ON ISRAEL:] *All these things happened to them as examples for others, and they were written down as a warning for us.* GNT

Does God judge believers if they sin?

In what ways do God's judgments benefit believers?

State a reason for God's judgment that either you had not previously considered or that you need to remember.

God blesses the righteous . . .

Ps 5:12 For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield. ESV

. . . and God takes care of the righteous, in contrast to the wicked

Ps 1:6 The righteous are guided and protected by the LORD, but the evil are on the way to their doom. GNT

MATT 6:31–33 So then, don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³²For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The future of the righteous contrasts with the end of the wicked . . .

Ps 112:6–10 For he [a righteous person] will never be upended; others will always remember one who is just. ⁷He does not fear bad news. He is confident; he trusts in the LORD. ⁸His resolve is firm; he will not succumb to fear before he looks in triumph on his enemies. ⁹He generously gives to the needy; his integrity endures. He will be vindicated and honored. ¹⁰When the wicked see this, they will worry; they will grind their teeth in frustration and melt away; the desire of the wicked will perish.

PROV 24:16 Although a righteous person may fall seven times, he gets up again, but the wicked will be brought down by calamity.

. . . This will be most evident in the afterlife

MAL 3:16–18 Then those [in Israel] who respected the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD took notice. A scroll was prepared before him in which were recorded the names of those who respected the LORD and honored his name. ¹⁷"They will belong to me," says the LORD who rules over all, "in the day when I prepare my own special property. I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you will see that I make a distinction between the

d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous

In the Bible, the term “the righteous” basically denotes God’s people, those who live in accordance with God’s laws and will. The OT particularly often contrasts the wicked and their circumstances with the righteous and their circumstances.

Some of the following contrasting repayments for the wicked and the righteous are natural or intrinsic outcomes of their actions. Other outcomes are spoken of as being directly due to God’s intervention and judgment.

Bear in mind that OT verses often speak of what were ramifications of wickedness/disobedience and blessings of righteousness/obedience under the first covenant. Generally these have a spiritual application under the new covenant and also an application to the afterlife. Also note that verses from OT wisdom literature speaking of outcomes of wickedness and righteousness often contain what are considered to be generalizations.

The wicked reap what they sow, brought down by their own evil . . .

JOB 4:8 [ELIPHAZ:] Even as I have seen, *those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble reap the same.*

PROV 21:7 *The violence done by the wicked will drag them away because they refuse to do what is right.*

. . . In contrast to the wicked, the righteous reap what is good

PROV 11:18, 30 *The wicked person earns deceitful wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a genuine reward. . . .³⁰The fruit of the righteous is like a tree producing life, and the one who wins souls is wise.*

The wicked person’s wages are probably described as “deceitful” (v. 18) because although they at first seem fine, they can bring trouble (cf. 15:6) and do not last. “The fruit of the righteous” (v. 30) refers to what their lives produce.

c) God’s Judgment Is Just

God judges righteously . . .

PS 9:4 [DAVID, TO GOD:] For you have brought about justice for me and my cause; *you sit on the throne judging righteously.* ISV

2THES 1:5 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] All of this shows that *God judges fairly* and that he is making you fit to share in his kingdom for which you are suffering. CEV

. . . and God judges with justice

REV 16:5, 7 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “*Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. . . .*”⁷ And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and *just are your judgments!*” ESV

God does not show favoritism in his judgment

1PET 1:17 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] And if you address as Father *the one who impartially judges* according to each one’s work, live out the time of your temporary residence here in reverence.

God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds

JER 32:19B [JEREMIAH, TO GOD:] *You see everything people do. You reward each of them for the way they live and for the things they do.*

A key factor as to why God’s judgment is just is that he judges and rewards people with knowledge of all their deeds – as well as of all their thoughts and motives (as per the following subsection). As such he can make judgments with knowledge of all the relevant information.

God takes into account thoughts and motives

JER 11:20A [JEREMIAH:] So I said to the LORD, “O LORD who rules over all, *you are a just judge! You examine people’s hearts and minds.*”

God's judgments are correct

REV 16:7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” ESV

God judges and repays people according to what they have done

ROM 2:5–8 [PAUL:] But because of your stubborn and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, *when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* ⁶For he will repay everyone according to what that person has done: ⁷eternal life to those who strive for glory, honor, and immortality by patiently doing good; ⁸but wrath and fury for those who in their selfish pride refuse to believe the truth and practice wickedness instead. ISV

God gives fair warning of punishment for not obeying him . . .

JER 6:7–8 [GOD, SPEAKING OF JERUSALEM:] As a well continually pours out fresh water so it continually pours out wicked deeds. Sounds of violence and destruction echo throughout it. All I see are sick and wounded people.’ ⁸So *take warning, Jerusalem, or I will abandon you in disgust and make you desolate, a place where no one can live.*

JER 11:7 [GOD, TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH:] For *I solemnly warned your ancestors to obey me. I warned them again and again, ever since I delivered them out of Egypt until this very day.*

. . . Thus God allows for repentance and for punishment to be averted

JER 18:7–8 [GOD:] *There are times, Jeremiah, when I threaten to uproot, tear down, and destroy a nation or kingdom.* ⁸*But if that nation I threatened stops doing wrong, I will cancel the destruction I intended to do to it.*

What is said here regarding nations is also applicable to individuals.

heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger. ESV

Passages such as this that refer to “the day of the LORD” largely speak of a time of God’s intervention and judgment – usually in what was then the near future or at the end of the age, or with links to both. It is generally understood by Christians that prophecies of “the day of the LORD” – or of such a “day” of God’s reckoning – will be consummately fulfilled at the end of the age.

Is it right to question God over such things as an apparent lack of judgment for the wicked?

Why do you think that God’s judgment of the wicked is not more immediate?

Bearing in mind the teaching in this section, how should we react when wicked people prosper?

... God does not leave the guilty unpunished

NAH 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; *the LORD will certainly not allow the wicked to go unpunished.* He marches out in the whirlwind and the raging storm; dark storm clouds billow like dust under his feet.

In due time God does take action ...

DEUT 32:35 [GOD:] *To me belong vengeance and recompense. In due time their feet will slip, because their time of calamity is near and the things prepared for them draw near.* ISV

... God's silence in the face of wickedness is followed by his judgment

ISA 42:13–14 *The LORD will march out like a strong soldier; he will be excited like a man ready to fight a war. He will shout out the battle cry and defeat his enemies.* ¹⁴*The LORD says, "For a long time I have said nothing; I have been quiet and held myself back. But now I will cry out and strain like a woman giving birth to a child.* NCV™

God destroys the wicked

Ps 94:23 *He will pay them back for their sin. He will destroy them because of their evil; the LORD our God will destroy them.*

Note: "The day of the Lord" will bring God's judgment, with its destruction of the wicked

ISA 13:6, 9–13 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! ...* ⁹*Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.* ¹⁰*For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.* ¹¹*I [God] will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.* ¹²*I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir.* ¹³*Therefore I will make the*

Is God's judgment just? Explain.

What are some factors that contribute to God's judgments being correct?

How does the knowledge that you will be judged and repayed according to what you have done influence you?

d) God's Judgment Reveals God

Note that in addition to the attributes of God that are revealed by his judgment discussed in this section, earlier subsections show that God's judgment reveals his righteousness, justice and complete knowledge.

God makes himself known by his judgment

EZEK 35:11B [GOD, TO THE PEOPLE OF EDOM:] I will deal with you according to your anger, and according to your envy, by which you acted spitefully against them. *I will reveal myself to them when I judge you.*

God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .

JER 16:21A The LORD said, "So I will now let this wicked people know – *I will let them know my mighty power in judgment.*

Ps 83:17–18 [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *May they be humiliated and continually terrified! May they die in shame!* ¹⁸*Then they will know that you alone are the LORD, the sovereign king over all the earth.*

The psalmist asks that God would enact his judgment on wicked nations (v. 17), showing his sovereignty over all the earth (v. 18).

. . . God's judgment makes known that he is the Lord

EZEK 7:4 [GOD, TO SINFUL ISRAEL:] My eye will not pity you; I will not spare you. *For I will hold you responsible for your behavior, and you will suffer the consequences of your abominable practices. Then you will know that I am the LORD!*

God's judgment makes known that he is the LORD – the only true God, the supreme being who has power over all people and all creation.

God's judgment evidences his glory

EZEK 39:21 [GOD:] *I will show my glory among the nations. All the nations will see my power when I punish them.* NCV™

c) The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

The wicked prosper . . .

Ps 73:3–5, 12 [A PSALMIST:] For I envied those who are proud, as *I observed the prosperity of the wicked.* ⁴*For they suffer no pain; their bodies are strong and well-fed.* ⁵*They are immune to the trouble common to men; they do not suffer as other men do. . . .* ¹²*Take a good look! This is what the wicked are like, those who always have it so easy and get richer and richer.*

. . . In fact, God shows goodness to the wicked – even their prosperity ultimately comes from him

LUKE 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, *because he is kind to ungrateful and evil people.*

JOB 22:18 But *it was he* [God] *who filled their houses with good things* – yet the counsel of the wicked was far from me.

Questioning of God's apparent lack of judgment regarding the wicked

JER 12:1 [JEREMIAH:] LORD, you have always been fair whenever I have complained to you. However, *I would like to speak with you about the disposition of justice. Why are wicked people successful? Why do all dishonest people have such easy lives?*

JOB 24:1A, 12 *Why are times* [for judgment] *not appointed by the Almighty?* . . . ¹²*From the city the dying groan, and the wounded cry out for help, but God charges no one with wrongdoing.*

However, the situation of the wicked is precarious . . .

JOB 24:22B–23 *These people* [the wicked] *may prosper, but they will never feel secure about life.* ²³*God may let them feel confident and self-reliant, but his eyes are on their ways.* GW

Choose a phrase or verse that you think pointedly depicts the severity of God's judgment.

What do you think about God's judgment at times involving horrendous consequences? Do you think it is fair?

How should the horrendous consequences that God's judgment can bring, influence us and what we do (for example in respect to our own destiny and the destiny of others)?

God's judgment reveals his holiness

ISA 5:16 But the LORD Almighty shows his greatness by doing what is right, and *he reveals his holiness by judging his people.* GNT

God would show himself to be holy by his righteous judgment on evildoers amongst his people.

God's judgment displays his anger

MIC 5:15 [GOD:] *And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.* ESV

Note: God's restraint of his judgment shows his mercy and love

JONAH 3:10, 4:2B *When God saw that the people had stopped doing evil things, he had pity and did not destroy them as he had planned..* ...^{4:2}...[JONAH, TO GOD:] *You are a kind and merciful God, and you are very patient. You always show love, and you don't like to punish anyone, not even foreigners.* CEV

How does God's judgment reveal his holiness?

In addition to his compassion and mercy, what else does God's restraint of his judgment show about him?

Is there a characteristic of God that you had not previously thought of as being revealed in his judgment?

HEB 10:26–27 For if we choose to go on sinning after we have received the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but only *a terrifying prospect of judgment and a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.* ISV

. . . causing great grief and anguish

JER 4:8, 19 [JEREMIAH, TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH:] So *put on sackcloth! Mourn and wail, saying, 'The fierce anger of the LORD has not turned away from us!'*" . . . ¹⁹*I said, "Oh, the feeling in the pit of my stomach! I writhe in anguish. Oh, the pain in my heart! My heart pounds within me. I cannot keep silent. For I hear the sound of the trumpet; the sound of the battle cry pierces my soul!*

Horrific consequences, . . .

EZEK 32:4–6 [GOD, CONCERNING PHARAOH:] *I will leave you on the ground, I will fling you on the open field, I will allow all the birds of the sky to settle on you, and I will permit all the wild animals to gorge themselves on you. ⁵I will put your flesh on the mountains, and fill the valleys with your maggot–infested carcass. ⁶I will drench the land with the flow of your blood up to the mountains, and the ravines will be full of your blood.*

. . . even complete devastation

JER 4:23–26 [JEREMIAH:] *I looked at the land and saw that it was an empty wasteland. I looked up at the sky, and its light had vanished. ²⁴I looked at the mountains and saw that they were shaking. All the hills were swaying back and forth! ²⁵I looked and saw that there were no more people, and that all the birds in the sky had flown away. ²⁶I looked and saw that the fruitful land had become a desert and that all of the cities had been laid in ruins. The LORD had brought this all about because of his blazing anger.*

b) Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution

Note that not all instances of God's judicial retribution display all of the following characteristics – certainly not to the extent of which they are spoken of here. Much of the judgment spoken of in this section is conclusive in its purpose, bringing the finality of death – as opposed to God's disciplinary judgment.

Awesome power . . .

JER 25:31–32 *The sounds of battle will resound to the ends of the earth. For the LORD will bring charges against the nations. He will pass judgment on all humankind and will hand the wicked over to be killed in war.' The LORD so affirms it! ³²The LORD who rules over all says, 'Disaster will soon come on one nation after another. A mighty storm of military destruction is rising up from the distant parts of the earth.'*

The “mighty storm” (v. 32) denotes a very powerful force – the Babylonians – and/or its destructive effects.

. . . and irresistible

REV 6:16B–17 [UNGODLY PEOPLE:] “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” ESV

Inescapable

JER 11:11 *So I, the LORD, say this: 'I will soon bring disaster on them which they will not be able to escape! When they cry out to me for help, I will not listen to them.*

ROM 2:3 [PAUL:] *And do you think, whoever you are, when you judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape God's judgment?*

Terrifying . . .

NAH 2:10 *Destruction, devastation, and desolation! Their hearts faint, their knees tremble, each stomach churns, each face turns pale!*

II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

(➔ *The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes*, in 15. 'The Last Things'; and *The Final Judgment (II): The Process*, in 15. 'The Last Things')

The topic of God's judgment – particularly its manifestation – is often avoided, as it contains much that is anything but “nice”. However it contains some of the most awe-inspiring teaching, and even reason for hope for God's people.

a) Means of God's Judicial Retribution

Angels

Ps 78:49 [A PSALMIST, REFERRING TO GOD:] *He inflicted his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, sending destroying angels among them.* ISV

Nature

Ps 105:28–35 *The LORD sent darkness and made the land dark, but the Egyptians turned against what he said. ²⁹So he changed their water into blood and made their fish die. ³⁰Then their country was filled with frogs, even in the bedrooms of their rulers. ³¹The LORD spoke and flies came, and gnats were everywhere in the country. ³²He made hail fall like rain and sent lightning through their land. ³³He struck down their grapevines and fig trees, and he destroyed every tree in the country. ³⁴He spoke and grasshoppers came; the locusts were too many to count. ³⁵They ate all the plants in the land and everything the earth produced.* NCV™

EZEK 38:22 [GOD, SPEAKING OF GOG:] *I will judge him with plague and bloodshed. I will rain down on him, his troops and the many peoples who are with him a torrential downpour, hailstones, fire, and brimstone.*

Rulers . . .

ROM 13:4 The ruler is God's servant to help you. But if you do wrong, then be afraid. He has the power to punish; *he is God's servant to punish those who do wrong.* NCV™

. . . and nations

HAB 1:6, 12B [GOD:] *Look, I am about to empower the Babylonians, that ruthless and greedy nation. They sweep across the surface of the earth, seizing dwelling places that do not belong to them. . . .*
¹²...[Habakkuk:] *LORD, you have made them your instrument of judgment. Protector, you have appointed them as your instrument of punishment.*

God's own people

EZEK 25:14 [GOD:] *I will exact my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel. They will carry out in Edom my anger and rage; they will experience my vengeance, declares the sovereign LORD.*

How do you think God may enact his judicial retribution in the present time? Are there any happenings that you think may be a manifestation of God's judgment?

What are the “pros and cons” of considering/speculating whether such things as natural disasters are due to God's judgment?

What do you make of God using the ungodly Babylonians – a “ruthless and greedy nation” – as his instrument of punishment (cf. Hab 1:6, 12b)? What does this show about God and what he does?
