

God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

Israel failed to keep God's laws and broke his covenant . . .

[GOD:] *They have gone back to the evil ways of their ancestors of old who refused to obey what I told them. They, too, have paid allegiance to other gods and worshiped them. Both the nation of Israel and the nation of Judah have violated the covenant I made with their ancestors.* JEREMIAH 11:10

Despite the Mosaic Law's provision for Israel's sin, the Israelites as a whole persisted in sin – rebelling against God and breaking his covenant with them. This showed that ultimately the law was not sufficient to deal with sin.

. . . Eventually God decided to destroy unfaithful Israel

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

But God promised to spare a remnant of Israel

[ISAIAH, SPEAKING A MESSAGE FROM GOD:] *Those who remain in Judah will take root in the ground and bear fruit. ³For 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.* 2 KINGS 19:30–31

Note that "Judah" was the name of the southern Israelite kingdom and that "Mount Zion" alludes to Jerusalem, with Zion originally being the name of one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built.

Remember the persecuted

10. God's Judgment

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I. Basics

The fact that God does and will judge us is one of the Bible's key teachings, without which the significance of other key Bible teachings is lost – notably that of salvation. An understanding of it is also vital to understanding God himself. Additionally, bear in mind that God's judgment – being just and righteous – actually gives his people much reason to be encouraged.

God Is the Judge of the World

God is judge – of the whole earth

The heavens declare his fairness, for *God is judge*. [PSALMS 50:6](#)

[ABRAHAM, TO GOD:] *You are the judge of all the earth...* [GENESIS 18:25B CEV](#)

As such, God makes judgments in the world

He is the LORD our God; *he carries out judgment throughout the earth*. [1 CHRONICLES 16:14](#)

God makes himself known by his judgment

[GOD, TO THE PEOPLE OF EDMON:] I will deal with you according to your anger, and according to your envy, by which you acted spitefully against them [the people of Israel]. *I will reveal myself to them when I judge you*. [EZEKIEL 35:11B](#)

Reasons for God's Judgment

God's judgment is to punish sin and unfaithfulness . . .

[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*. [DANIEL 9:11](#)

[GOD, PRONOUNCING JUDGMENT ON KING ZEDEKIAH:] *I will bring him to Babylon and judge him there because of the unfaithfulness he committed against me*. [EZEKIEL 17:20B](#)

The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

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

[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?* [JEREMIAH 12:1](#)

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

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.* [JOB 24:22B–23 GW](#)

. . . In due time God does take action against the wicked

[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.* [DEUTERONOMY 32:35 ISV](#)

Moreover, the wicked reap what they sow, brought down by their own evil

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

The violence done by the wicked will drag them away because they refuse to do what is right. [PROVERBS 21:7](#)

The future of the wicked contrasts with that of the righteous

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

Although a righteous person may fall seven times, he gets up again, but the wicked will be brought down by calamity. [PROVERBS 24:16](#)

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

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.'

JEREMIAH 25:31–32

Inescapable

[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?* ROMANS 2:3

Terrifying

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

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. HEBREWS 10:26–27 ISV

Horrific consequences

[GOD, CONCERNING PHARAOH:] *I will throw you into an open field, where birds and animals will come to feed on your body. ⁵I will spread your rotting flesh over the mountains and in the valleys, ⁶and your blood will flow throughout the land and fill up the streams.*

EZEKIEL 32:4–6 CEV

... and God's judgment is to discipline God's people

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

1 CORINTHIANS 11:32

God's judgment is to punish the wicked

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.* 2 PETER 3:7

God's judgment is also to reward God's people

[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.* REVELATION 11:18

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

God's Judgment Is Just

God judges righteously and justly

This is evidence of God's righteous judgment, to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which in fact you are suffering.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:5

For he has fixed a day in which *he will judge the whole world with justice* by means of a man he has chosen. ACTS 17:31A GNT

God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds

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

One reason why God's judgment is just is that he judges 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

[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.* JEREMIAH 11:20A

God judges and repays people according to what they do

[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: ... ROMANS 2:5–6 ISV

God gives fair warning, allowing for judgment to be avoided

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

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

Remember the persecuted

II. The Manifestation of God’s Judgment

See also: *I. Jesus Christ’s Return and the Final Judgment*, p. 134

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.

Means of God’s Judicial Retribution

The following list is by no means exhaustive.

Angels

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

Nature

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. PSALMS 105:28–35 NCV™

Nations

[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.* HABAKKUK 1:6, 12B