

Here Come The Judgment

2 Peter 2:4-10a March 8, 2026

In the United States, nearly 98% of criminals walk free.¹ It's not that we don't *try*. In fact, we spend about \$300 billion every single year to fund police, courts, jails, prisons, probation, and parole.²

Here in California, only 12% of burglary cases are even *solved*, let alone perpetrators punished. Only 10% of auto thefts, and a dismal 9% of larcenies and property crimes.³

Human society reveals that we're no good at righteousness - not on our own. But God *is* righteous, He is holy, He is just, and He *demand*s righteousness, holiness, and justice of His creation.

In this text, Peter warns of God's coming justice. He *will* repay the unrighteous for the evil they have done. Don't believe it? Peter gives us a list of historic examples that each foreshadow and guarantee the *final* judgment after Christ's return. He has absolute jurisdiction. It is *universal*. There is no place, there is no creature, there is no circumstance that falls outside of His judicial review and power. He judges on the celestial level, the global level, the local level, and the personal level.

These verses are one long if/then sentence. *If* God judged the wicked and delivered the righteous in these past examples, then He *will* do so again. That's what God has promised and He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. But here is the theological hope: Judgment is *inevitable*, but it is not *inescapable*.⁴ Each and every one of us can be rescued from death, saved for life and *live* a life of righteousness, which brings us refuge, hope, and strength even in the hardest circumstances.

2 Peter 2:4 - 4 For if God didn't spare the angels who sinned but cast them into hell, and delivered them in chains of utter darkness to be kept for judgment;

Last week we heard Peter's warning about false teachers and how their lies ruined lives. Now, he drives the point home that those who deny Christ, those who refuse the the path of righteousness and go another way, are going to be judged and condemned in the end.

Peter illustrates the certainty of God's coming judgment with three stories from Genesis. In verse 4, he starts on the celestial level - when God brought judgment on angels.

In Genesis 6 we read the story of how angelic beings known as Watchers came to earth and produced offspring with human women.⁵ These offspring were known as the Nephilim. They were violent giants, who worked wickedness on the earth.

¹ <https://rainn.org/facts-statistics-the-scope-of-the-problem/statistics-the-criminal-justice-system/>

² <https://www.vera.org/spotlights/election-2020/budget-justice>

³ <https://www.ppic.org/blog/a-large-proportion-of-crime-goes-unsolved-in-california/>

⁴ Dick Lucas & Christopher Green *The Message Of 2 Peter & Jude*

⁵ Richard Bauckham *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 50: Jude, 2 Peter*

In response, God judged this group and sent them to a holding place where they await their sentence. Now, most English translations say they were cast into “hell,” but Peter uses a specific word here - in fact, he’s the *only* New Testament writer to name it. It’s a place known as *Tartarus*.⁶

We covered this in our studies in Mark recently, but in the Bible there are a variety of places we would put in the category of the afterlife. There is Hades, Sheol, Gehenna, Tartarus, Heaven.

When we put this verse with passages in Jude, Revelation, and Luke, we learn Tartarus is an abyss of gloomy dungeons in the depths of Hades where angelic beings are held for final judgment.

Never think that hell is ruled by the devil and his minions. That’s not a biblical idea. In fact, in the Gospel of Luke we see that the demons are *afraid* of Tartarus, not to mention the Lake of Fire.⁷

Peter describes Tartarus as a place of darkness and chains. Interestingly, the Greeks *also* talked about Tartarus from time to time. Plato and Homer both reference it. They, too, described it as an under-underworld of gloom and chains. They said that the monstrous Titans were held there.

2 Peter 2:5 - ⁵ and if he didn’t spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others, when he brought the flood on the world of the ungodly;

Peter moves from the celestial to the global. After Genesis 6, looking down on creation, God saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth - that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time.⁸ And so, He sent a global flood to wipe out that generation.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of God. Noah and his family believed God and walked His path of righteousness. As a result, God protected them.

If you, by faith, live out God’s righteousness, you will find refuge. David wrote,

Psalm 31:1 - LORD, I seek refuge in you; let me never be disgraced. Save me by your righteousness.

Psalm 34:19 - ¹⁹ One who is righteous has many adversities, but the LORD rescues him from them all.

How was Noah protected from the flood? His faith was not only intellectual beliefs. It was a living faith. Noah did *not* go the way of the world, but actively followed the callings and leadings the Lord gave him. Build an ark. Hew the trees. Fashion the planks. Mix the tar together to cover all 100,000 square feet. Through that faithful participation in God’s will, Noah and his family were protected.

⁶ Marvin Vincent *Word Studies In The New Testament*

⁷ Luke 8:31

⁸ Genesis 6:5

2 Peter 2:6 - ⁶ and if he reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes and condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is coming to the ungodly;

Peter moves forward chronologically again, now moving from a global example to a local example. The story of God's judgment on Sodom and the cities of the plain can be found in Genesis 19.

Josephus, the first century historian, recorded that physical evidence of Sodom's destruction was still available during his lifetime. Philo of Alexandria said the same thing.⁹ These cities were dramatically judged by God for their wickedness. The telling of Genesis 19 focuses on their sexual immorality, which was a key reason for God's action. But that wasn't all:

Ezekiel 16:49-50 - ⁴⁹ Now this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters had pride, plenty of food, and comfortable security, but didn't support the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did detestable acts before me, so I removed them when I saw this.

Sodom and Gomorrah is an object lesson for what will one day come on the whole earth. You see, after the flood, God promised Noah that He would never again destroy the world with floodwater.¹⁰ But, as Peter will later reveal, God *will* destroy this world with floodfire. Sodom is not only a warning of the judgment of the Great Tribulation and the destroying of this earth, but also a warning of the eternal judgment found in the second death of the lake of fire and sulphur.

2 Peter 2:7-8 - ⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, distressed by the depraved behavior of the immoral ⁸ (for as that righteous man lived among them day by day, his righteous soul was tormented by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)...

We've gone from celestial to global to local, now to a personal view of judgment and deliverance.

The big reveal for us is that Lot is called a *righteous* man. Not once but *three* times. We have a hard time with that, don't we? We're *shocked* by Lot's choices, his behavior, and his compromise.

And yet, he *was* a believer. Weak. Compromised. Polluted by the culture he purposefully immersed his family into. Not someone we admire or aspire to follow. But when we are faithless, God remains faithful.¹¹ A God of *that* much grace that He would not only save Lot, but looking back, God *still* credits righteousness to him. Such grace! Such mercy! The God of the Bible is a God Who *wants* to rescue. He *wants* to save us from judgment, from our own weakness and failures. The God Who did not spare angels for their sin *sent* angels to deliver Lot and his family.

2 Peter 2:9 - ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

⁹ Thomas Schreiner *The New American Commentary, Volume 37: 1, 2 Peter, Jude*

¹⁰ Genesis 9:11

¹¹ 2 Timothy 2:13

So after seeing these examples, if this, if this, if that, *then* be confident. Be hopeful. Be sure that the Lord can and does rescue His people from trials.

God's people maybe saved from the wrath of judgment, but that doesn't mean life is always clear sailing. Consider what Noah and Lot had to face. Peter was facing imminent martyrdom. Both he and James explain that Christians will face "various" trials. Douglas Moo writes, "[Peter means] all those challenges to faith that Christians experience in this world."¹²

In the face of trials, our God is an Advocate. He is a Rescuer. An ever-present help in times of trouble.¹³ He is the God of all comfort. The Father of mercies. The God of hesed, agape love.

At times, we worry that God must not know what we're up against. We worry that He's not going to arrive in time with the help we need. And yet, He proves again and again that He sees Noah's family as the rain starts to fall. He sees Lot while the mob press on the doors. He sees Moses floating in a basket on the Nile. He sees Joseph, falsely accused in a dungeon. He sees David standing before the giant. He sees the people of Judah, besieged by the Assyrians. He sees Daniel in the lion's den. He sees the young prophet, who lost a borrowed ax head he couldn't afford to repay. He sees the hungry, the hurting, the bankrupt, the lost, the brokenhearted.

At the same time, the Lord *also* sees the unrighteous. If you're not a Christian, not only are you missing out all that God wants to *give*, He's also watching you, because your sin must be repaid.

Revelation 20:12 - ¹² I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books.

So in verse 9 we see two distinct groups: The Godly and the unrighteous. The Godly are those who believe God and receive His salvation and all that comes with it. The unrighteous are those who reject the truth, go their own way, and face judgment.

That judgement *can* be escaped. Jesus Christ took our place by dying on the cross. The Lord punished *Him*, putting on His own Son the iniquity of us all. He was taken away for judgment, struck for *our* rebellion.¹⁴ The only way for you and I to be rescued from the inevitable judgment that is coming on the wicked is to have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

2 Peter 2:10a - ¹⁰ especially those who follow the polluting desires of the flesh and despise authority...

How do I know if I'm in the righteous group or not? Evaluate the fruit of your life. It's not only whether you believe God exists. The conduct of your life matters. A tree is known by its fruit.

¹² Douglas Moo *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter, Jude*

¹³ Psalm 46:1

¹⁴ Isaiah 53:6-8

I do want to draw attention to those closing words: “Especially those who...despise authority.”

You know, we live in a time and culture that despises authority in just about every form. The Christians here today need to make sure we’re cultivating a proper, Godly, Biblical attitude toward authority. That doesn’t mean we don’t speak up when we see corruption - our system is set up for that kind of civic activity - but remember that Peter writes under the rule of Caesar Nero.

But for anyone here who is not a believer, this is the message: Judgment *is* coming. And you don’t know *when*. In Noah’s time, there was 30 to 75 years of delay.¹⁵ For Sodom? *One night*.

Have you heard of the Doomsday Clock? Since 1947, it has been a tool to try to warn people about how close we are to destroying the world. Right now, they say we’re 85 seconds till “midnight.” Although, the founder first set it at 7 minutes to midnight because it “looked good to [her] eye.”¹⁶

God is not *guessing*. He is working. His wrath and judgment are an inevitable part of His work. He wants to save you from your sin. He wants to save you from death, the grave, and eternity in hell. The *only* way out is to receive righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 12:28 - ²⁸ There is life in the path of righteousness, and in its path there is no death.

The majority of us in the room *are* Christians. Let’s talk about walking the path of righteousness. This morning, Peter gave us two human examples: Noah and Lot. Both were righteous, but consider the *difference* righteousness made in their lives.

Noah walked the walk and his whole family was saved. Lot, who picked up so much pollution from the sinful culture, hesitated till the last possible moment. The angels had to drag him out so he wouldn’t be destroyed with the city. His sons-in-law stayed behind and died. Lot’s own wife longed for Sodom and was judged. Lot was *bothered* by sin, but didn’t *bother* to live out his faith.

Noah had a *harder* set of circumstances. His was the *only* Godly family *on planet earth!* Lot was enamored of wealth, culture, and position. It wasn’t about circumstances, it was about commitment.

Are we making progress on the path of righteousness? Are we serving God? Are we preaching the Good News through the activity of our lives? We don’t have any record of Noah giving prophecy, but he *lived* prophetically. He knew the flood was coming and that knowledge changed his life. His living faith led to deliverance and grace from God and provision for their needs and a future.

And so we might close this way: Noah’s righteousness preached. Lot’s was paralyzed. The Lord was faithful to both, but it’s clear which example we want to follow. Let’s walk the road of righteousness faithfully today. That’s the path of rescue, of communion with God, the path of life.

¹⁵ <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-timeline/how-long-did-it-take-for-noah-to-build-the-ark/>

¹⁶ <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/faq/>