

GRACE BEFORE JUDGMENT

I remember a sermon from over 35 years ago by a guest preacher at our little country church who likened our world to a bathtub being filled with dirty water. He said that at some point God was going to pull the plug and the evil world would go down the drain. As we look back through history, we see that God does bring judgment upon cities, nations and peoples when sin reaches a saturation point. It is sudden, swift, terrifying and complete. However, it is not from a God who is capricious (fickle, unstable or unpredictable). God gives ample warnings before great judgments because He is gracious, compassionate, patient and long suffering.

And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.' - Exodus 34:6-7 NIV

(The Amorites and other Canaanites practiced wicked abominations such as child sacrifices to Molech in the fire, homosexuality and bestiality - Leviticus 18. God gave them 400 years to repent, but after their sin had reached its full measure, He destroyed them - Genesis 15:16, Deuteronomy 20:17) His love for his people of Israel required that he protect them from enemies who would corrupt them and lead them away from Him as their true source of life. I remember when America's President, D.J.T, said that we wanted to secure our border. It was not because we hated the people who wanted to come in but because we loved the citizens who were already in our country. That is the prime responsibility of a President, to serve and protect its citizens.

After the fall of Adam and Eve, the world began a gradual descent into darkness. Several generations later, the earth was filled with idolatry, immorality, sexual perversion, violence, lust for power and even genetic manipulation (hybrid offspring through fallen angels and women / Genesis 6:2-4, Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4))

The earth was depraved and putrid in God's sight, and the land was filled with violence (desecration, infringement, outrage, assault and lust for power) And God looked upon the world and saw how degenerate, debased and vicious it was; for all humanity had corrupted their way upon the earth and lost their true direction. - Genesis 6:11-12 Amplified Classic Edition

Later, even at Sodom, the men of the city wanted to have sex with the two angels that visited Lot / Genesis 19:2,5.

God showed grace /favor to Noah, and instructed him to build an ark to save him and his family and any others who might heed his warning about a coming judgment. God told him that after the flood, mankind's life span would be limited to 120 years. Before the flood, people lived hundreds of years and some over 900 years! (note: Noah did not have 120 years to build the ark. God told him to take his wife, his sons and their wives into the ark (6:18). Noah did

not have sons until he was over 500 years old (5:32) The flood came when Noah was 600 years old (7:11).

Which person lived the longest on this earth? Methuselah. He lived 969 years! His father was Enoch, a very righteous man who walked with God and prophesied judgment to come upon the wicked - Jude 14-16. He named one of his sons Methuselah, which has various prophetic meanings: *'man of the javelin', 'man of the sending forth', 'his death shall bring forth'*

The time between Methuselah's birth and when Noah entered the ark was 969 years. The flood was sent forth upon the earth in the year that Methuselah died. His long life of nearly a thousand years was a sign of God's great patience before sending sudden and thorough judgment upon sinful mankind through a worldwide flood (as evidenced by fossils in the far reaches of the earth on the mountaintops)

In the early 30's, Jesus warned of coming destruction upon Jerusalem (Matthew 23-24). However, they failed to repent and receive Him as their Messiah. About 40 years later the Romans brought destruction to the city and the Jewish temple. Jerusalem means 'city of peace' (jeru = city and salem = peace). However, it has been and still is a target for conflict and unrest. During its long history, it has been besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times and destroyed twice. God has instructed his people to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

***Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.
- Psalm 122:6 KJV***

At the beginning of this year we shared a Bible passage for this year.

***Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you. And His glory will be seen upon you.
- Isaiah 60:1-2 NKJV***

This prophecy by Isaiah was given over 700 years before that light of glory came upon the earth. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, made reference to Jesus in his prophecy.

'.....because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.' - Luke 1:78-79

Isaiah's prophecy was about the coming Messiah, but it was more than that. It was about the people of God who would carry His light in a dark world. Jesus taught his first disciples that they were 'the light of the world.' When a person welcomes and receives Jesus into their life, the Holy Spirit comes into their inner most being which is their spirit.

The spirit of man is the candle/lamp of the Lord. - Proverbs 20:27

The light of God begins its work of exposing the darkness in the innermost parts of our life and going through every room with the purpose of giving us a total make over. In Biblical terms it is known by the term salvation, which is complete wholeness to individuals (spirit, soul and body) 1 Thessalonians 5:23. True Christianity begins when an individual encounters Jesus Christ. However, it does not stop there. It must effect all areas of culture and life, for being a Christian is not just personal, it is also social.

***Christianity that does not begin with the individual does not begin.
Christianity that ends with the individual ends. - E. Stanley Jones***

The early church in Acts did not have revival, they had 'vival'. They had LIFE! They were alive with the presence and power of the risen Christ Jesus. Scores of thousands were swept into the kingdom of God throughout the Roman Empire for many decades. God had shown grace before judgment. Around 70 A.D. scores of thousands of Jews were massacred by the Romans in Jerusalem. Starving Jews ate human flesh. There were so many mass crucifixions that the Romans ran out of wood to make crosses.

America experienced great revival in the 1850's. During the 1858 revival there were over 500,000 persons converted to Christ. However, in the 1860's, there was a bloody civil war which cost more than 500,000 soldiers their lives. Evangelist D.L. Moody remarked that many he had led to the Lord were now dead and he had to comfort many grieving families. God had showed grace before a time of great tragedy and death.

From 1900-1910 there was revival in various parts of the world through the Welsh Revival and the Azusa Street Revival in California. The USA, Germany and England were the prime Christian mission sending nations at the time. However, a few years later, each was involved in World War 1 where millions lost their lives. Satan had come once again to steal, kill and destroy, but God had shown mercy. He had brought new life to many before all of that death.

The book of Revelation was written to the seven churches in Asia Minor in the first century. Jesus knew that they would face trials and judgments in the days to come. He sought to bring commendation and correction where necessary, so that they would be better prepared for things to come. All mankind will face Him before the judgment seat to give account of their life. He has given us adequate warnings and wisdom from the Bible, in order to prepare us for that day. It is His grace before judgment.