

Pentwater Bible Church

Hebrews Message 41

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The Fifth Plague of Egypt (Thunder, hail & Fire) by J.M.W. Turner cir. 1800

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Hebrews

Message Forty–One

GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

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DO NOT REFUSE A CLEAR COMMUNICATION OF GOD’S WORD

Hebrews 12:25

²⁵See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven (ASV, 1901).

Jesus, is the Mediator of the new covenant. His blood is a better offering than that of Abel who offered the first blood sacrifice. He was active in the creation of all things out of nothing (John 1:10). He was present in the giving of the Law to the Israelites, in the wilderness, and brought His wrath upon the ancient Israelites when they turned away from Him. He spoke as a human person, the Messiah to the church, in the days of His flesh. He now speaks in heaven, by appearing in the presence of God for his people, and by presenting his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice. He speaks by His Spirit, in and to the hearts of His saints; and by his ministers in the Gospel. It is clear that He should not be refused. He is though when His Gospel is made light of, and neglected; or when men make excuses for when they will not hear it. When they do, most contradict, and blaspheme, and despise it. The simple truth is that God offers salvation to this world. Without accepting this one is disassociated from His presence and His wrath falls upon them. He told us that most will not accept His offer (Matthew 7:14).

John 3:36

³⁶He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (ASV, 1901).

God’s wrath is not one of His characteristics that is taught much in contemporary church messages. Some think that this inattentiveness is a relief and it excuses them from it.

Others think this discussion belonged to the “fire-and-brimstone” preachers of an era fortunately past. But God’s Word does not omit it. John the Baptist asked the Pharisees who warned them to flee from the wrath to come (Matthew 3:7). The apostle Paul frequently mentioned God’s wrath (*orgē*). As the apostle explained in his epistle to the Romans, the reality of God’s wrath was the reason people needed to receive His righteousness.

Romans 1:16–20

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the

righteous shall live by faith. ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse (ASV, 1901).

Wrath is the response of God to sin. After the Fall the entire world became subject to God's wrath. However, immediately God set up the promise of the Redeemer (Genesis 3:15, 21) to counter the Fall. It has both a present and a future aspect. Paul referred to both in his First letter to the Thessalonians. First, he assured the Thessalonians that they would escape the future expression of God's wrath, reminding them that "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This was a reassuring repetition of his previous description of Jesus, as One "who rescues us from the coming wrath" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

But God's wrath is also a present reality. The unsaved Jews for example, are suffering a form of the wrath of God because of their hostility to the Church and their opposition to the spread of the Gospel. As written in 1 Thessalonians "*the wrath of God has come upon them at last*" (1 Thessalonians 2:16). God's wrath in the present time can be seen in the expression "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness;*" (Romans 1:18). This "suppression of the truth" is similar to what he had told the Thessalonians that the Jews were guilty of doing in their opposition to the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:15–16). God's wrath manifested itself, according to Paul, in the fact that He permitted people to indulge their sinful practices in increasingly greater degree. Three times in the following verses Paul mentioned how; "God gave them over": to "sinful desires" (Romans 1:24), to "shameful lusts (Romans 1: 26), and to "a depraved mind" (Romans 1:28).

The failure to accept God's offer of salvation and in the Old Testament recognition of Him and obedience to His Law results in the pouring out of His wrath both in the world now but especially in eternity. For there it is an eternal separation from God in outer darkness.

The Bible is clear that there are two possible destinations for every human soul after physical death: heaven or hell (Matthew 25:34, 41, 46; Luke 16:22–23). Only the saved inherit eternal life, and the only way to be declared righteous before God is through belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 3:16–18; Romans 10:9). The souls of the New Testament believers go directly into the presence of God (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23). Old Testament saints went to the good side of Hades awaiting Christ's sacrifice.

For those who do not receive Jesus Christ as Savior, death means everlasting punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:8–9). This punishment is described in a variety of ways and stages culminating with the lake of fire (Luke 16:24; Revelation 20:14–15). Descriptive terms include, outer darkness (Matthew 8:12), and a prison (1 Peter 3:19), for example. This place of punishment is eternal (Jude 1:13; Matthew 25:46). There is no biblical support for the notion that after death people get another chance to repent. Hebrews 9:27 makes it clear that everyone dies physically and, after that, comes the judgment. Christians have already been

judged and sentenced. Jesus took that sentence upon Himself. Our sin becomes His and His righteousness becomes ours when we believe in Him. Because He took our just punishment, we need not fear ever being separated from Him again (Romans 8:29–30). Our only judgment is at the Bema Seat. There we will be judged for the quality of the exercise of our Spiritual Gifts while we were in these bodies not for our sins. This results in some degree of rewards (crowns).

The judgment for unbelievers is still to come. This will happen at the Great White Throne which is the second resurrection of all the dead who passed away not accepting the gift of salvation. There the unbelievers will receive a judgment of punishment based upon the degree of their works (Revelation 20:11–12). Scripture that does teach degrees of punishment based upon degrees of sinfulness and upon greater or lesser light or knowledge and the response or lack of it to that light. He spoke of things being more tolerable for some than for others in the day of judgment (Matthew 11:20–24). As recorded in Luke 12:47–48, Jesus spoke of few stripes and many stripes: In John 19:11, Jesus spoke of greater and lesser sins. So, those who are coming to this judgment is because of unbelief in the finished work of Jesus. However, the degree of punishment will be on the basis of one's works. In determining the degrees of punishment, *books* are mentioned.

1. The *Book of Life* contains the names of every person who was ever born, according to Psalm 139:16. Those who believe have their names retained in the *Book of Life*, according to Revelation 3:5.
2. Psalm 69:28, the unsaved have their names blotted out of the Book of Life:
3. *Other books* cited in Revelation 20:12.
4. *Lamb's Book of Life*. This book contains the names of every individual who is born again and only those who are born again.

So then, at the Great White Throne Judgment, if their names are not found in the Book of Life, it will show them to be unsaved and worthy of partaking in this particular judgment. It is at that point that the *other books* mentioned in Revelation 20:12 are used. These other books contain accounts of one's deeds and responses. It is on the basis of what is written in these books that the degrees of punishments will be determined.

Another book mentioned in the Scriptures that should be recognized is the *Lamb's Book of Life*. This book contains the names of every individual who is born again and only those who are born again. Their names were written into this book before the earth was ever created, according to Revelation 13:8 and 17:8b. In Psalm 69:28, it is known as the Book of the Righteous.

Finally, according to Revelation 20:14 all who were unsaved are cast into the Lake of Fire which is the second (spiritual) death. It is eternal suffering in separation from God.

This does not have to be. God offers salvation to this entire world.

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and of the Pharisees. He knew that Jesus had come from God because of all the miracles He was doing and he wanted to talk to Jesus about it. The Jews were looking for the long-awaited Messiah. (the anointed one prophesied in Jewish Scripture for several thousand years) As he began to talk Jesus told Him that he needed

to be born again. This was very puzzling to him and he responded with a question about how this was possible to reenter his mother's womb and come out again.

Jesus then gives His profound answer by saying:

John 3:5

⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (KJV).

To read this passage in the Greek word order the text would say; “Unless one is born of water *even* or *that is* of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”

Water cannot accomplish the new birth and it does not mean the amniotic fluid associated with the natural birth (flesh) or a water baptism. He addresses that in the subsequent verse. In John 7:37-39 the Lord clearly confirms that the water represents the Holy Spirit.

John 7:37–39

³⁷ In the last day, that great [day] of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. ³⁸ He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (KJV)

The apostle Paul carried this thought through in Titus. If we read the English words as it would read from the Greek text word order it says:

Titus 3:5

God saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of “the again birth” even “remaking” by the Holy spirit.

Some have said that one does not need to be “born again.” They refer to that as a particular type of Christian. However, Christ told Nicodemus that he *had* to be born again. He did not make it an option for one to enter the family of God. One can only do that by being born again.

Why is that so important? Why did Christ stress this concept with Nicodemus? God wants us to “become” His children by entering His family. *This is the only way in!* Christ is the only way to heaven and one must be born again to come in to a saving grace knowledge of Jesus the Christ. So, nobody on earth will go to heaven if they don't believe that Christ is the way and if they don't accept His salvation.

John 14:6

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (KJV).

Galatians 3:26

²⁶For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (KJV).

Why do we need to do this at all? Why can't we simply be in God's family? He created us and gave us life. Isn't that enough?

No it is not enough. Since Adam and Eve "fell" and brought sin into the world we have been at enmity with God. This sin is a corruption that is unholy and produced a separation of the human spirit (heart) from God. Eve doubted God's Word then and much of the world's population does now too. We have to be cleansed of that sin in order to be "one with God." Some would say that; "I am not a sinner." Others maybe but not me! Why I belong to a church, I give to the poor, I don't kill, I don't steal etc. Only the real sinners do those things. I don't!

The apostle Paul in his book of Romans develops the argument for almost the entire first three chapters that every person on the face of the earth is a sinner and therefore "guilty" before God. He starts with the pagan Gentile world and lets us know that they have creation to see which tells them of the existence of God. He then moves on to the "moral Gentile" man and explains his guilt before God too. Finally, he tells us of the Jews who had the Law of Moses and lets us know that they too are "guilty." He summarizes this section of Scripture with the verse from chapter 3:

Romans 3:23

²³For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (KJV);

What does it mean to be guilty before Him? It means that we missed the mark; we have sinned. The human sinner will not inherit the kingdom of God. We have inherited the condition our first parents brought into the world from the evil enemy of God, Satan.

1Corinthians 15:50

⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption (KJV).

Again, some would try and tell us that they have not sinned. It is interesting that God through the prophet Jeremiah explains the condition of the human heart. This is God's perspective:

Jeremiah 17:9–10

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it? ¹⁰I, Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings (ASV, 1901).

In many other sections of Scripture God tells us that the human heart is unwilling to come under the constraints of God's Spirit. Further it hides from others and thinks that it can hide from God in the same way. *It is evasive.* It thinks God cannot see. However, we have just seen that God searches the heart and knows the hearts of men. Christ said in 1John 3:20 that He is the *heart knower*. In the Greek, the words are "Cardio Kenosis." He knows the hearts of *all* humans.

1 John 3:20; 24,25

²⁰For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.²⁴But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all [men],²⁵And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man (KJV)

God demands perfection in us and since the fall we are not perfect. He knows us and wants us to enter His kingdom. He will not force us to enter. Many will try to keep out those who are entering from going in. Christ will not stop those efforts to keep People out.

Matthew 23:13

¹³ But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in [yourselves], neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (KJV).

What then is the remedy for the situation that the entire human family is in? Again we look to the book of Romans for an answer.

Romans 6:23

²³For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (KJV).

In order to appropriate a gift, one must receive it. That is we must take it. A gift given and not received is not a gift that has any merit or value to the person to whom it was intended to be given.

Next message: CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

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