

God's Judgment in Time and Space

- My "fortune cookie" reminder about being compassionate
- **Romans 3:23** – *All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.*

Proverbs 8:22-23;

*The LORD possessed me (fathered me) at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of old...
Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.*

Proverbs 8:30-31;

*...then I was beside him, like a master workman,
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the children of man.*

Proverbs 8:32-36;

*And now, O sons, listen to me:
blessed are those who keep my ways.
Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
Blessed is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
**For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD,
but he who fails to find me injures himself;
all who hate me love death.***

- In the previous verses of Proverbs 8, Wisdom personified talks about himself (who is later revealed to be Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30: *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption*) and his role in creation.
 - **Proverbs 8:22.** God "fathered" wisdom before anything else was made. Wisdom guided the creation of everything else.
 - **Proverbs 8:30-31.** As he determined how everything would operate, he did it with mankind in view. Like a watchmaker designing and building the perfect watch, God's creation was designed to function flawlessly, for his glory and for the benefit of his creatures. His wisdom was/is the "software" that dictated how it should run.
 - **Proverbs 8:32-36.** God's instruction and warning to mankind are given. If we follow His ways we find blessing and favor. If we neglect his ways **we injure ourselves.**

- All who hate God's wisdom, God's design for the world and mankind, **love death**. So, when bad things happen as a result of sin, remember...ignoring God's wisdom and design result in injury and death. He has warned us!

In **Romans 1:18-32** Paul describes this process by which men/women "injure themselves," and how their actions eventually result in death.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

- God's wrath is revealed when men suppress the truth. His wrath is never arbitrary. It's not like he suddenly gets "fed up," loses control, and then let's us have it. Ignoring God's wisdom and created order unleashes the inevitability of injury and death God warned about in Proverbs 8.
- Paul explains that truth is suppressed through unrighteousness, which is sin. The unrighteousness explained here is in the ignoring of God's holy attributes, particularly his eternal power and divine nature.
- It's interesting that these "invisible" attributes are able to be "clearly perceived" through the created order which God designed through the wisdom we read about in Proverbs. Who hasn't marveled about the wonders of creation, the magnitude of the stars, the beauty and frailty of life, and the incredible balance of it all?
- Because these things are and can be clearly perceived (vs. 20), all men are without excuse because, through this observation process, men CAN and DO know God. We may think otherwise, they may claim otherwise, but God's word proclaims it to be so. All people know God.
- It's a general knowledge about God, but it's enough to inspire the worship that should come as a result: Observing the intricate design in nature should cause honor and thanks to God (vs. 21).
- Now the downward spiral occurs. Stage 1 is the darkening of hearts. Another term for this in scripture is "hardening." Repeatedly in the story of the Exodus, Pharaoh hardens his heart, or God himself hardens Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh simply refused to bend his will toward God's will. The writer of Hebrews (**Hebrews 3:13**) explains that this hardening occurs because of "the deceitfulness of sin" or the belief that our ways are better than God's ways. It's the belief that sin pays off.
- In this condition, people may retain a conscience, but it becomes "one way," meaning that a person can only see the wrong someone else is doing. He or she becomes progressively blinded to his or her own wrongdoing.
- Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, the wise Pharisee who came to Jesus by night to ask him questions. Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, and he told Nicodemus "For God so loved the world..." Within that same context, Jesus explained to Nicodemus why men reject

God and his light (Jesus) by saying *“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed”* (John 3:19-20). The reason people reject Jesus (wisdom) is simple. They love their sin. It’s not because no one has explained it well enough, nor is it because it’s too difficult to understand...people refuse the light because their sin is more appealing. On the other hand, Jesus said, in John 10:27 *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”*

- Stage 2 in the downward spiral occurs when, in this deceitful, hardened state, men become fools (vs. 22) and begin to fashion their own gods. Throughout recorded history, in the Bible and in other sources, we see evidence of this fashioning of gods in the creation of idols, and in the narratives about these graven images. Through the inspiration of demons they make up stories about their idols. For an example of this think of the myths told by the ancient Greeks and Romans about their Gods.
- Men fashion these gods in order to fulfill their lusts – lust for power, riches, sexual stimulation, murder, and...death (recall Proverbs 8:36: *“All who hate me (wisdom) love death.”*)
- You may be thinking that, in our sophisticated world driven by science and reason, we are no longer fashioning *“images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”* I beg to differ. Theories of evolution that attribute our creation to random, impersonal forces in a material universe are full of these images.
- In Stage 2 lots of other lusts become gods: an obsession around celebrities, food, fashion, the acquisition of things, gluttony, the highs of drug and alcohol abuse, power, and the list goes on.
- Sometimes, the god’s we fashion may, on the surface look like Jesus or even sound a bit like Jesus, but the truths are tweaked to appeal to pride, lust, power, or the desire to be loved and accepted. Quotes like:
 - *“God just wants you to be happy”* (so, go ahead and sin), or
 - *“God just wants us to love everybody”* (so we are not permitted to talk about sin or confront sinful tendencies in our culture)
 - *God doesn’t want you to be burdened with a baby at so young an age (so go ahead and get an abortion)*

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

That is the crux of the matter. Any worldview that does not have God, his wisdom and his son, Jesus at the center is *“worshipping and serving the creature (the creation) rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”* It’s one or the other: If you are not worshipping the true God, then you are worshipping the creature/creation. There is no neutral ground. Scripture is full of these dichotomies (refer to the list in the notes). One is *“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”* (Matthew 12:30)

- False religions worship creatures (people) and the creation detached from its creator. Buddhism is creature worship, as is Hinduism, Islam, and any non-Christian religion.

- Atheism is creature worship. Science and reason replace God. A materialistic worldview is built from the premise that material things – matter and energy, are all there is. The first line of the first Cosmos series starring Carl Sagan, and the more recent remake featuring Neil DeGrasse Tyson start with this line: “The cosmos is all there is, or was, or ever will be.” Right from the beginning, the possibility of a creator is ruled out. EVERYTHING is then viewed through this lens, causing theories about origins that remove any divine influence. Contrast this with **Genesis 1:1**: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Your presuppositions determine your entire worldview (read Darwin quote).
- As a result of this false creature worship, “God gives them up to their lusts...” This is Stage 3 in the downward spiral. God judges sinful man by giving him up to his lusts. God removes his merciful restraint. This is God’s mercy. He does this so that those who are his will become so sickened by the fruit of sin that they will turn to him in repentance.
- Paul continues by explaining more about what this “giving up” looks like:

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

- This may be troubling to some, but scripture speaks for itself. When we abandon the God of creation, and his wisdom, and his design, we engage in passions that are out of order.
- This is a fearful thing. Paul makes it clear that the normalizing of patterns, functions, and relationships that are unnatural are part of his judgment. Recall the warning in **Proverbs 8** that those who fail to find wisdom injure themselves.
- This normalization will not bear good fruit. We don’t hear much about HIV/AIDS any more, but it is still at epidemic proportions. The Centers for Disease Control has clearly indicated that the MSM lifestyle (men having sex with men) is filled with extreme health risks, with gay men having lifespans that are approximately 8 to 20 years shorter than heterosexual men. Homosexuals experience much higher rates of depression and suicide.
- These facts should break our hearts and cause us to want to reach out in love by sharing the good news of the Kingdom and the forgiveness that is offered by our Lord, without which we ALL would be condemned.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

- The final stage mentioned in his judgment is that God gives the sinful culture up to a debased mind. In other words, the things that, traditionally, were always assumed to be wrong now become culturally ingrained.
- In case you doubt this, try this experiment: sit with your TV remote at some point and take a “Channel Up” tour of what is currently showing. Note how most television shows focus on sex,

murder, drug use, silliness like naked dating, an excessive obsession with celebrities and cultural fringe groups, prison populations, and other obsessions that do not resemble a normal healthy lifestyle.

- Even though their consciences tell them these things are wrong, they now do them and give approval to those who practice them. In other words, evil-doing is now normalized and even recommended.
- One clear example of this is in the culture of death surrounding the abortion industry:
 - Each year since 1973 when abortion was legalized by the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision, between 1 million and 1.5 million babies are aborted, right up to the full term 9 month gestation period.
 - In many large urban areas, more babies are aborted than are born.
 - The platform of one of the two main political parties in this country actively promotes the murder of babies through abortion.
 - Pro-abortion groups celebrate an increase in the numbers of abortions performed, heralding such news as great victories. Women who abort their babies are deemed "brave" and "heroic."
 - Just this past week, an undercover video that shows Planned Parenthood's chief medical officer casually discussing the harvesting and sale of aborted baby body parts. Liberal news outlets and politicians, instead of expressing horror, have risen to defend the practice...need I say more?
- May God, in his mercy, grant repentance before it's too late. Only a spiritual revival will turn around this downward descent.

Let me close with this true story:

- Our Key Largo sailing vacation, use of a sailboat larger than my own with options mine does not have.
- After sailing to an isolated island, anchoring, having a picnic lunch, and taking a swim we pulled up anchor and put up the sails to head back to the resort.
- Once we came out from behind the protection offered by the trees of the island, the boat heeled over and it became very difficult to handle. It was uncontrollable and spun around as I tried to gain control.
- Soon we discovered that we had neglected to put down the centerboard keel, and I had not dropped the retractable rudder.
- Compare this to trying to navigate life without the controlling factors of God's law and God's wisdom as expressed in scripture and demonstrated in the life of his son Jesus.
- Our culture is flailing about because the counterbalance of his word and the guidance of his Son, Jesus, are missing. He has "given us up" to the wind to drive us to repentance...or to perish in our sins.
- God is "giving up" people and our culture to sin so that those who are called to be His will realize the deceitfulness of sin, and repent, and turn to Him.

Close with prayer...

Resources:

- 2 revealing quotes by proclaimed atheist Richard Dawkins:

“It is the plain truth that we are cousins of chimpanzees, somewhat more distant cousins of monkeys, more distant cousins still of aardvarks and manatees, yet more distant cousins of bananas and turnips... continue the list as long as desired.”

“I think that when you consider the beauty of the world and you wonder how it came to be what it is, you are naturally overwhelmed with a feeling of awe, a feeling of admiration and you almost feel a desire to worship something. I feel this, I recognise that other scientists such as Carl Sagan feel this, Einstein felt it. We, all of us, share a kind of religious reverence for the beauties of the universe, for the complexity of life. For the sheer magnitude of the cosmos, the sheer magnitude of geological time. And it’s tempting to translate that feeling of awe and worship into a desire to worship some particular thing, a person, an agent. You want to attribute it to a maker, to a creator. What science has now achieved is an emancipation from that impulse to attribute these things to a creator.”

- In her first book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, Rosaria Butterfield described how God took her from lesbianism and a tenured professorship in English and Women's Studies at Syracuse University to friendship with a Christian couple, then church, then marriage to a Reformed Presbyterian pastor, and life as a homeschooling mother, pastor's wife, author, and speaker. [Watch a video of an interview](#) in which Rosaria tells her story.

- Quote by R.C. Sproul:

“It is fashionable in some academic circles to exercise scholarly criticism of the Bible. In so doing, scholars place themselves above the Bible and seek to correct it. If indeed the Bible is the Word of God, nothing could be more arrogant. It is God who corrects us; we don’t correct Him.”

- Dichotomies In the New Testament

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24)

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?(Romans 6:16)

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. (1 Corinthians 3:18-21)

... they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:25)

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:6-8)

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (Revelation 3:15-16)

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Matthew 12:30)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (Galatians 5:16-17)