



## LESSON ELEVEN

### God's Governmental Judgement

Scripture Reading:

#### 1 Peter 4

- 4:1 Since Christ therefore has suffered in the flesh, you also arm yourselves with the same mind (because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin),
- 4:2 No longer to live the rest of the time in the flesh in the lusts of men, but in the will of God.
- 4:3 For the time which has passed is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having gone on in licentiousness, lusts, debaucheries, carousings, drinking bouts, and lawless idolatries.
- 4:4 In this they think it strange that you are not running together with *them* into the same flood of dissoluteness, slandering *you*;
- 4:5 Who will render an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
- 4:6 For unto this *end* the gospel was announced also to *those who are now* dead, that they might be judged in the flesh according to men but live in the spirit according to God.
- 4:7 But the end of all things has drawn near. Therefore be sober-minded and be sober unto prayers.
- 4:8 Above all, have fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins.
- 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without murmuring,
- 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
- 4:11 If anyone speaks, as *speaking* oracles of God; if anyone ministers, as *ministering* out of the strength which God supplies; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.
- 4:12 Beloved, do not think that the fiery ordeal among you, coming to you for a trial, is strange, as if *it were* a strange thing happening to you;
- 4:13 But inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice exultingly.
- 4:14 If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.
- 4:15 For let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler into others' affairs;
- 4:16 But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name.
- 4:17 For it is time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God?
- 4:18 And if the righteous man is saved *only* with difficulty, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?
- 4:19 So then let those also who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator.

## **QUESTIONS:**

### **Section 1:**

1. What is the basic thought in Peter's writing?
2. According to 1 Peter 1 :17, what does this judgement refer to? How do we see God's judgement throughout the Bible?

### **Section 2:**

1. What are the different kinds of judgement revealed in the Bible?
2. How do we know that Christ lived under God's government?

### **Section 3:**

1. What is the purpose of the sufferings that the believers undergo?
2. What does the word "difficulty" refer to? How does it relate to our Christian life?
3. Why do the believers need God's governmental dealing?

### **Section 4:**

1. How does God accomplish His purpose through us?
2. What should be our attitude toward the word of God?
3. How can we help others to understand the truth? Please share some of your experiences.

## **A BASIC THOUGHT IN PETER'S WRITINGS**

The concept of God's governmental judgment is a basic thought in Peter's composition of this Epistle. God's judgment as seen in 1 Peter may be likened to the hub of a wheel. If the hub were taken away from a wheel, all the spokes would collapse. Likewise, if the thought of God's judgment were removed from the books of 1 and 2 Peter, these Epistles would lose their basic structure.

Of course, in 1 and 2 Peter we cannot find the word "government." But in these two books we see the means by which God carries out His government. The means by which God carries out His government is by judging. Eventually, after God's judgment has been completed, there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells. The new heaven and the new earth are the consummation of 1 and 2 Peter. We all need to see this.

As we have already pointed out, at the beginning of 1 Peter we have a word concerning the foreknowledge of God before the foundation of the world, that is, in eternity past. In the last chapter of 2 Peter we have a word concerning the new heaven and the new earth in eternity future. This means that the scope of these two Epistles extends from eternity past to eternity future. These two books consummate with the new heaven and the new earth with righteousness as their contents. This is related to the government of God.

God's judgment began to be exercised in the Old Testament, and it has been continually exercised throughout the generations. Today God is still judging. In the New Testament we see that God's judgment begins from His own household and ends with the burning of the old heaven and the old earth. That burning will be the last step of God's judgment. When that last step of judgment has been completed, the new heaven and the new earth will appear. This means that when God has thoroughly cleansed the universe through judgment, there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness will dwell. This is a matter of God's governmental judgment.

## **THE DAILY JUDGMENT OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT**

First Peter 1:17 says, "And if you call upon as Father the One who without respect of persons judges according to each one's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." Peter "is not speaking of the final judgment of the soul. In that sense 'the Father does not judge anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son' (John 5:22). The thing spoken of here is the daily judgment of God's government in this world, exercised with regard to His children. Accordingly it says, 'the time of your sojourning' here" (Darby). This is God's judgment on His own household (1 Pet. 4:17).

Since these two Epistles are concerned with the government of God, the judgment of God and of the Lord is referred to repeatedly (2:23; 4:5-6, 17; 2 Pet. 2:3-4, 9; 3:7), as one of the essential items. It began from the angels (2 Pet. 2:3-4), and passed through the generations of man in the Old Testament (2 Pet. 2:5-9). Then in the New Testament age it begins from the house of God (1:17, 4:6, 17) and continues until the coming of the day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10), which will be a day of judgment on the Jews, the believers, and the Gentiles before the millennium. After the millennium, all the dead, including men and demons, will be judged and perish (1 Pet. 4:5; 2 Pet. 3:7), and the heavens and the earth will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10b, 12). The results of the varied judgments are not the same. Some judgments result in a disciplinary dealing, some in a dispensational punishment, and some in eternal perdition. However, by all these judgments the Lord God will clear up and purify the entire universe, that He may have a new heaven and a new earth for a new universe filled with His righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13) for His delight.

The fear spoken of in 1:17 is a holy fear, as in Philippians 2:12. It is a healthy, serious caution for us to behave holily. Such fear is mentioned a number of times in this book (2:17, 18; 3:2, 15) because its teaching concerns the government of God.

We need to be impressed by the fact that God's government differs in dispensation. There are different judgments for different cases, and these judgments have different results. It is important for us to realize that the judgment in 1:17 is not "the final judgment of the soul." As

John 5:22 reveals, that judgment has been given to the Son. What we have in 1:17 is the daily judgment of God's government in the world, a judgment that is exercised with regard to His children. This is not the final judgment at the white throne, but the daily judgment of God in the world. The daily judgment of God is not exercised upon fallen sinners; instead, it is exercised upon God's children.

Those who oppose this teaching from the Word may say, "How is it possible for us, God's children in grace, to be judged by God? God is our Father, and He loves us and gives us grace. How could He do something to judge us?" Because the truth of God's judgment is opposed in this way, I am burdened that we all grasp the pure thought regarding it in the Bible. Today all of us are under God's judgment. God is not only gracing us, giving us grace. He is also judging us. This is the reason we have many sufferings. We have sufferings because God is judging us. On the one hand, God is gracing us to live a life that suits His righteousness under His government. On the other hand, He judges anything that does not match His government. Therefore, in this age we the believers are under the daily judgment of God.

In the Old Testament God judged the fallen angels, He judged the earth at the time of Noah, and He judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He also judged the children of Israel in the wilderness. We have seen that in the New Testament God's judgment begins from the house of God. This means that God's judgment begins with us, that is, with the church including all the saints. God's governmental judgment has already begun. It was being carried out even during the time of the apostles. This judgment will continue until the coming of the day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord is mentioned both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. According to the Bible, the day of the Lord will be a day of judgment, not a day of saving. The whole world has gone away from God. Gradually the Lord has been carrying out His judgment. But a day of His final judgment will come. At that day God will judge everyone. Three categories of people are included in God's judgment: the Jews, the church people, and the worldly people. God's judgment has been carried out for thousands of years, and it will

continue to be carried out until the final judgment as the day of the Lord. Eventually, God will judge each of the three categories of people. He will judge the Jews, all the Christians, and then all the unbelievers. Do not think that because you are a Christian you will escape the judgment of God. Concerning God's judgment, there is no escape. The day of the Lord will be a day of judgment before the millennium on the Jews, the believers, and the Gentiles.

After the millennium, all the dead, including men and demons, will be judged at the white throne. That will be the final judgment for eternal perdition. After that judgment has been carried out, the heavens and the earth will be burned up and the new heaven and the new earth will appear.

-----[SECTION 2]-----

## **THE RESULTS OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF JUDGMENT**

### **Disciplinary Dealing**

We have seen that the results of the different kinds of judgments are not the same. Certain judgments result in a disciplinary dealing. This is true of the judgments we experience today. Persecution, trouble, and illness are God's judgments resulting in a disciplinary dealing in this age.

### **Dispensational Punishment**

Other judgments result in dispensational punishment. Dispensational punishment refers to punishment during the thousand years, during the millennial kingdom. The kingdom will be a dispensation. Defeated Christians will suffer a punishment during the coming age. That will be a dispensational punishment.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, some believers will suffer during the dispensation of the kingdom in the coming age (Matt. 24:48-51; 25:24-30). For them, that period of time will be a time of darkness with the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 25 clearly indicates that when the Lord Jesus comes back, the faithful servants will be rewarded and the unfaithful ones will be punished. Some Bible teachers say that the unfaithful servants in Matthew 25 are false Christians, whereas the faithful ones are genuine Christians. This

understanding is not logical nor correct. How could a false Christian be counted as a servant of the Lord? Furthermore, how could a false Christian be raptured to appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Instead of following the interpretation that the unfaithful servants are false Christians, we believe the pure Word of God. The Bible says that when the Lord Jesus comes back, we shall all stand before His judgment seat. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 Paul says clearly that we all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive a reward according to what we have done. If we have done a faithful work, the Lord will give us a prize. But if we have been unfaithful and have failed the Lord, He will give us some kind of punishment. That will be a dispensational punishment during the millennium.

### **Eternal Perdition**

Other judgments will result in eternal perdition. As we have seen, the judgment upon men and demons at the white throne will result in eternal perdition. Therefore, we can see three kinds of results of God's governmental judgment: disciplinary dealing, dispensational punishment, and eternal perdition.

### **CHRIST LIVING UNDER GOD'S GOVERNMENT**

In 2:23 Peter says concerning Christ, "Who being reviled, did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten, but kept committing all to Him who judges righteously." According to the usage of the verb "kept committing" in Greek, "all" needs to be inserted here as its object, referring to all the sufferings of the Lord. He kept committing all His insults and injuries to Him who judges righteously in His government, the righteous God, to whom He submitted Himself. This indicates that the Lord recognized God's government while He was living a human life on earth.

In no other book of the New Testament are we told that the Lord Jesus lived under God's government. Peter is the only one who tells us of this. In 2:23 Peter indicates that when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was under God's government. Because the Lord lived under God's government, He committed all His sufferings to God. Here Peter does not speak of God as the faithful One, but as the One who judges righteously. The reason for this is that

judging righteously is a matter of God's government.

-----[SECTION 3]-----

### **JUDGMENT BEGINNING FROM GOD'S HOUSEHOLD**

First Peter 4:17 says, "Because it is time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God?" This book shows the government of God especially in His dealings with His chosen people. The sufferings they undergo in fiery persecution are used by Him as a means to judge them that they may be disciplined, purified, and separated from the unbelievers and not have the same destiny as the unbelievers. Hence, such disciplinary judgment begins from God's own household. God's house, or household, is the church composed of the believers (2:5; Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19). From this house, as His own house, God begins His governmental administration by His disciplinary judgment over His own children, that He may have strong ground to judge, in His universal kingdom, those who are disobedient to His gospel and rebellious to His government. This is for the establishment of His kingdom, which is covered in the second book (2 Pet. 1:11).

We need to be deeply impressed from 4:17 that judgment begins from the household of God. This is God's governmental administration carried out by His disciplinary judgment over His own children. The purpose of this disciplinary judgment that begins at God's house is that God may have a strong ground to judge, in His universal kingdom, all those who are disobedient to His gospel and rebellious against His government. This applies in particular to the unbelieving Jews. The result of this judgment will be the establishment of God's kingdom.

In 4:17 Peter asks this question: "What will be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God?" Peter is asking, if the judgment begins from us, what will happen to those who do not obey God's gospel? This question indicates that the unbelievers, who disobey the gospel of God, will undergo a judgment more severe than that which the believers have undergone.

## **THE RIGHTEOUS SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY**

In verse 18 Peter goes on to ask, “And if the righteous is saved with difficulty, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?” Here “the righteous” refers to the believers, who became righteous by being justified through their faith in Christ (Rom. 5:1) and by living a righteous life in Christ (Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rev. 19:8).

The word “difficulty” refers to judgments, persecutions, and hardships. This may even include illness. Many believers have the concept that because they believe in the Lord Jesus and are saved, everything in their lives should be smooth. Actually, the very opposite is true. In the Christian life we have one difficulty after another. However, some may think that because they are in the church life, they should not have any problems. They imagine that they will be in perfect health, have a high income, and be well spoken of by others. Actually, both in the Christian life and in the church life there are many difficulties. Hence, Peter says that the righteous is saved with difficulty.

In 4:18 “saved” is not from eternal perdition through the Lord’s death, but from the coming destruction (1 Thes. 5:3, 8), through the trials of persecution as God’s disciplinary judgment. The believer, who has been disciplined by God through the sufferings of persecution to purify his life, is saved with the difficulty of persecution from the destruction of God’s wrath toward the world, especially toward the unbelieving Jews, with the coming destruction of Jerusalem in view.

This Epistle was written only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the prince of Rome. The Lord Jesus had prophesied concerning this in Matthew 24:2, when He said of the temple that not one stone would be left upon another. The Lord had predicted that judgment would come upon the disobedient and unbelieving Jews. Peter, along with all the other apostles, knew this.

We need to remember that this book was written in particular to Jewish believers. Peter warned these believers regarding the coming destruction. However, he told them that those who believed in the Lord would be saved from that destruction, but they would be saved through difficulty, that is, through persecution

and sufferings. This difficulty is a kind of governmental judgment.

Among the early apostles there was a strong belief that the Lord Jesus would come back soon to judge the unbelieving sinners, who are ungodly and disobey His gospel (2 Thes. 1:6-9). Peter’s word here refers to this. In God’s government, if the righteous, who has obeyed His gospel and lives a righteous life before Him, is saved with difficulty, suffering persecution as the means of His disciplinary punishment to purify his life, where will the ungodly, who disobeys His gospel and lives a sinful life against His government, stand when the destruction by His wrath comes?

## **COMMITTING OUR SOULS TO A FAITHFUL CREATOR**

In verse 19 Peter continues, “Wherefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator.” Persecution can damage only the body of the suffering believers; it cannot damage their souls (Matt. 10:28). Their souls are kept by the Lord as the faithful Creator. They should cooperate with the Lord by their faithful commitment. The word “commit” here literally means to give in charge as a deposit, as in Luke 12:48; Acts 20:32; 1 Timothy 1:18; and 2 Timothy 2:2. When the believers suffer persecution in their body, especially as in martyrdom, they should commit their souls as a deposit to God, the faithful Creator, as the Lord committed His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46).

The Creator spoken of in verse 19 is not the Creator of the new creation in the new birth, but the Creator of the old creation. Persecution is a suffering in the old creation. God as our Creator can preserve our soul, which He created for us. He has even numbered our hairs (Matt. 10:30). He is loving and faithful. His loving and faithful care (1 Pet. 5:7) accompanies His justice in His governmental administration. While He is judging us, as His household, in His government, in His love He cares for us faithfully. In suffering His just disciplinary judgment in our body, we should commit our souls to His faithful care.

## **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD**

First Peter is a book on the Christian life under the government of God. It is easy for us to pay attention to the Christian life and to neglect God's government. Actually, the Christian life and the government of God go together. The Triune God has passed through a long process and has become the life-giving Spirit to indwell us. This is for our Christian life. At the same time, the Triune God is still the Creator of the universe and its ruler. On the one hand, we have been reborn to have a spiritual life, the divine life. On the other hand, we are still in the old creation. For this reason, we need God's governmental dealings. In order for the Christian life to grow, we need the discipline of God's government.

The preciousness of Peter's writings is that he combines the Christian life and God's government. Paul did the same thing, but he did not do it in such a clear way as Peter did. Peter's writings show us that the Christian life and the government of God go together as a pair. If we would carefully read the two Epistles of Peter, we would see that Peter is quite deep in the matter of life. The first chapter of 2 Peter, in particular, is rich, deep, and profound in the matter of life. But at the same time in his writings Peter gives a serious word regarding God's governmental dealings with His regenerated people. Therefore, in the Epistles of Peter we need to see the Christian life and God's government and also see how the two go together.

-----[SECTION 4]-----

### **KNOWING THE TRUTH ACCORDING TO THE PURE WORD OF GOD**

In 3:15 Peter says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, being always ready for a defense to everyone who asks of you an account concerning the hope in you, but with meekness and fear." This indicates that we all need to be able to speak forth God's truth. I hope that the time you spend in all these messages on 1 Peter will help you in this regard. My desire is that the hands of all the saints would be filled with the solid things of the Word of God.

If you cannot remember all the details of what Peter says concerning God's governmental judgment, I hope that you will at least remember the basic points and also know where more

detailed information is found. For example, you need to remember such verses as 1:17, 2:23, and 4:5.

All of us need to personally carry out God's truth through our life, knowledge, and experience. Then God will have a way to accomplish His purpose. Otherwise, He will have to wait, perhaps for hundreds of years. The Lord's people have been veiled and drugged by traditional teachings for too long. I am burdened that the Lord may have a way and that all the saints would have a proper knowledge of God's truth according to the pure Word.

It is good to shout praise to the Lord and to release our spirit, but this must be filled with content. If we are filled with the solid content of truth in knowledge, life, and experience, we shall have a firm foundation for our praise and release. We shall also be able to show others that we have a basis for the shouting of praises and the release of the spirit.

### **TAKING THE WORD OF GOD SERIOUSLY**

Many of us have been addicted to traditional practices. When we read the Bible, study the Bible, or listen to a message, we may apply what we read or hear in a traditional and even a light way. We may not be serious regarding the Word. We may not regard every point found in the Word or released through a message as crucial. Regarding this matter, we need to be alert and sobered unto prayer.

I am burdened that all the saints would take the Word seriously. When we speak about the divine life, we must sense the seriousness of the matters of life. We need to realize that as believers, as those who love the Lord and seek Him, we must understand His Word, live His Word, practice His Word, and apply His Word first to ourselves and then to others. We need to take the Word into us as our nourishment, and we also need to learn how to apply it to ourselves and others.

I am concerned that certain of the saints have attended many trainings over the years, but have not received adequate nourishment from all the messages. Furthermore, they do not know how to present the truth of the Word of God to others. For instance, in these messages on 1

Peter you have heard something concerning God's governmental judgment. You may have a general idea regarding this, but you may not know how to use this truth or how to present it properly to others.

### **CONTACTING OTHERS IN A WISE WAY**

Once we have a clear understanding of the governmental judgment of God, this does not mean that we should go out and speak concerning it to everyone we meet. If we do nothing except speak about God's governmental judgment, we shall offend others needlessly. It is important, therefore, that we learn how to contact people. We may realize that a certain person is not really clear about salvation. He may be a believer in name, but he may not have the knowledge or experience of God's salvation. Perhaps we shall meet another who is saved, but who does not have the assurance of salvation. This requires that, being skillful in handling the truth, we know how to help such persons to have the experience of salvation or the assurance of salvation. In like manner, we must know how to help others understand the truth concerning the indwelling Christ. You may contact a Christian who does not know that Christ is life to him or that the Spirit of life dwells in him. Therefore, you need to pray for that one and help him to realize something from the Word regarding Christ as life and the indwelling Spirit of life. You should also help him to get into the experience of this.

As you have fellowship with other believers, you may sense that the time is right to share with them that we should not only love the Lord but also serve Him. Furthermore, you may point out to them that we need to have a healthy fear of the Lord. The apostle Paul not only loved the Lord but also feared Him. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul says that the Lord is loving. At the same time Paul indicates in this chapter that we need to fear Him because one day we shall all stand before His judgment seat (2 Cor. 5:10). Furthermore, we know from 1 Corinthians 11 that even today the Lord is exercising disciplinary judgment over His children. On the one hand, we need to know this truth ourselves. On the other hand, we should know the right time and the right way to present this truth to others. If we speak concerning this at the proper time, others will be helped, and there will be a positive reaping from what we say. Otherwise, even though we speak about an important truth

in the Bible, others will be offended. We need to speak the right word at the right season. Unless we speak the right word at the right time to the right person, what we say will be in vain. This, no doubt, requires training. We need to be trained to have the proper knowledge of the truth, to grow according to this knowledge, and to learn how to present the truth to others.

### **A TWOFOLD GOAL**

My goal in giving these messages is twofold. First, my desire is that through the messages the Word of God will get into the saints. Second, I expect that the messages, when put into print, will become seeds sown among God's people. No matter how much opposition there may be, I shall continue to sow this seed. On the one hand, this seed is a life supply; on the other hand, it is an inoculation. I believe that one day the seed we have sown will produce a harvest.