

Judgment Begins in the House of the Lord:

The Restoration of All Things Begins in the Church

by: David Sliker

Part One: The of Restoration of All Things

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost:

“38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38-39)

In Acts chapter 2, Luke captures one of the most dramatic moments in Church History: the dramatic conviction and salvation of three thousand Jews who bore witness to the sudden explosion of the power of the Spirit on the one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus who had gathered to pray and wait on the Lord. For Peter, this was an “*eschatological moment*” that he understood through the lens of God’s grand redemptive plan for Israel and the earth itself. Peter directs the attention of the gathered crowd to Joel 2 to do more than merely explain what is happening with the “upper room saints”, but to help contextualize *why* the outpouring of the Spirit was happening.

In Peter’s framework, the coming of Messiah, His death and resurrection, and the subsequent outpouring of the Spirit were all powerful signs that the world as we know it was about to change. Those who had gathered to bear witness were an audience to more than a significant event. The event - the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost - was itself a sign that ***all that the prophets declared was true and would come to pass***. The outpouring of the Spirit was the beginning of events that would culminate with the gathering and destruction of God’s enemies in Joel 3:14-16. The death and resurrection of Jesus was also the beginning of events that would lead to the gathering and destruction of God’s enemies in Psalm 110. Jesus was more than a resurrected Man - He was now seated at the right hand of the Father, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit came from Him (Acts 2:33), and He now has been given all authority. This was the Man that the house of Israel crucified, and therefore were now numbered amongst His enemies.

Hearing this while bearing witness to the corresponding power of the Holy Spirit prophesied by the prophet Joel caused the assembled onlookers to be “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37) and cry out for help, which Peter answers with a call to repent and be baptized, cleansed of their sins, and filled with the Spirit. Once cleansed by the blood of Jesus and brought into newness of life, they would now be counted amongst those who were truly a part of the Family of God, marked as Friends of God. In other words, from Peter’s point of view the death and resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit proved that the whole world was about to change, as the initial fulfillment of ancient prophecy would

inevitably lead to the ultimate and complete fulfillment of all prophecy under the leadership of the Man who was now at the right hand of the Father.

Repentance, Renewal, and Refreshing From the Presence of the Lord:

Peter preaches a similar sermon after a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit in the next chapter:

“19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:19-21)

Peter understood the events that were happening in his day as events that were (1) foretold by the prophets themselves and (2) were catalytic in initiating the salvation of Israel and revival (“times of refreshing”) amongst the nations (as Peter would discover in Acts 10) and (3) would culminate with the *times of the restoration of all things*. In these two events, each of which contains a sermon from Peter calling the masses to repentance, we begin to connect with and understand how Peter understands the prophetic storyline of scripture, God’s grand plan of redemption for the earth, and how humans can participate and engage with this plan. Because of sin and rebellion, mankind is *not right*, or “out of sync” with the flow of God’s will and God’s plan for the earth. In Peter’s view, we literally stand in opposition to God’s plan as enemies, as evidenced by the crucifixion of Christ - even if it was “done in ignorance” (Acts 3:17).

This is similar to what Paul the Apostle wrote in Romans 1:

“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...” (Rom. 1:18)

As Peter stated in Acts, the actions of the House of Israel against Jesus numbered them with the enemies of God who were operating according to *their own will* rather than agreement with *the will of God* for the earth. The human race, from the fall of man in the garden, did not just act wickedly and sinfully (ungodliness), but did so in a manner that was opposed to God as enemies of God (unrighteousness). The gospel does not immediately transform us from “bad people” into “good people”. The good news of the Cross and the blood of Jesus is that our sins can be washed away as we are made new and in so doing we are transported by grace from being enemies of God to standing with God as sons and daughters. The death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of His Spirit signaled a dramatic shift on the earth to the beginning of a sequence of events that would culminate in the *times of the restoration of all things*. In other words, history would now flow in a very specific direction with a very specific ultimate and climactic destination - the question now for Israel and all of humanity would be: are you flowing *with* or standing *against* where history is now going? Are you with God (righteous) or against Him (unrighteous)?

Peter’s call to the unrighteous is for *repentance* that the obstacle of sin would be *blotted out*, that we would experience a new beginning according to the free gift of righteousness, numbered amongst the saints as ones *forgiven* and *flowing* in agreement with God’s will and God’s plan. As we find with Peter’s preaching and teaching, we discover that for him this

moment of repentance represents the beginning of a process of restoration or sanctification. We are “*begotten to a living hope*” (or, as Paul wrote, we were “*made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...*”) towards an “*inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away*” (the restoration of all things and the age to come).

Peter urges us throughout his writings to live holy lives that are undefiled by sin *in light of where history is going under the leadership of Jesus*. As we labor in obedience as children (1 Pet. 1:14) we do so confident in the grace of God and His commitment to bring us into the fullness of maturity and transformation in His image. We are a part of a plan to restore the human race to God’s original intentions and desires in the garden before the fall, which itself is the beginning of God’s plan to restore the earth to the beauty and perfection of the garden. According to Peter, we have already received “*the end of our faith*”, the salvation (or liberation) of our souls (1 Pet. 1:9) from the corruption of the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:4).

This is a critically important idea in understanding the power of the Gospel, the character of Christ, and the very nature of our salvation and future with Him and one another. The “good news” of Jesus Christ is that He has secured for us the “end of our faith”, therefore igniting our hope regarding our inheritance in the age to come. Because our souls have been liberated from corruption and death, because we have been born again and made alive in Christ, we press forward towards our future glory with confidence in the grace of God and His redemptive work. This confidence is meant to extend to trials and tribulations, difficulties and persecution, and all manner of hardship and pain through which our response of faith has profound power and meaning in regards to who we are now and where we stand in Christ.

As Peter states at the beginning of each of his two gospels:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

“1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious

promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Pet. 1:1-4)

The Second Coming of Jesus Initiates the Times of Restoration of All Things:

Peter stated in Acts 3:21 that the Second Coming of Jesus initiates the times of the restoration of all things, or the start of the Millennial Kingdom and the reign of Jesus from Jerusalem. Why did Peter speak of “the times” of restoration? The prophets (and later, the apostles and then the early Church) understood the future restoration in three key ways:

1. **The “Shalom” of God:** the **peace of God** established through the full restoration of Divine Order. The *shalom* of God speaks to the restoration of order where sin and rebellion introduced chaos, uncertainty, and fear. Isaiah 54:10 speaks of God’s “covenant of *shalom*” or His eternal commitment to wholeness and transformation into the fullness of His will “on earth as it is in heaven” - even in the context of God’s righteous judgments. God’s righteous judgments worked to preserve Israel from self-destruction so that She could enter into Her future glory in experiencing the peace of God and fullness of His glorious righteousness expressed in every area of life and society. Psalm 85:7-13 (“*He will speak shalom to His people and to His saints...*”) speaks of the *shalom* of God being reflected in the very land itself as “truth springs out of the earth” and all of the people see the land as God intended in the garden. We see this harmony in the animal kingdom as well (Isaiah 11:6) as the wolf lies down with the lamb, both at peace as order is restored.
2. **Tikkun Olam:** the **repair of the world** that is spoken of most prominently throughout Isaiah, specifically Isaiah 61 and the role of the saints in *rebuilding, restoring, and repairing* ruined places destroyed by judgments of God, the rage of rebellious men, and the final rage of Satan against the human race and, specifically, Israel herself at the end of the age. The prophets envisioned a future in which the people of God have a significant role in partnering with the Messiah to rebuild and repair a broken world. Isaiah 24 speaks explicitly of the ultimate breaking of the world and the desolation that follows; yet throughout Isaiah after the coming of Messiah the saints are depicted as rebuilding and renewing what wicked men have ruined. The concept, which comes from these prophetic passages, give us a picture of an incremental but very fruitful process of restoration rather than an instantaneous transformation of the earth after the return of Jesus.
3. **The “Sabbath Rest” of God:** the **rest of God** was understood by the early Church as a 1000-year era of rest that corresponded with the Jewish concept of the Messianic Age. 2 Pet. 3:8 and Psalm 90:4 spoke of “*a thousand years as one day*”. As with the concepts of the *shalom* of God and *tikkun olam*, the Sabbath Rest of the Lord involved the promise of comprehensive global peace, justice, freedom from toil, war, and hardship, unprecedented fruitfulness, and a global Sabbath-like calm, or restfulness. Hebrews 4:9-11 states this idea explicitly: “*9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*” Micah 4:4 states, “*They shall beat their*

swords into plowshares, and their spears into [pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. 4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid..”

The early Church spoke often of this coming Sabbath Rest of God:

- **Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 100 CE):** "The Lord will finish all things in six thousand years... He rested on the seventh day. This meaneth: when His Son, coming again, shall... change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day."
- **Justin Martyr (ca. 150 CE):** cited John the Apostle and the book of Revelation, speaking of believers dwelling "a thousand years in Jerusalem," connecting Rev. 20 to Psalm 90:4.
- **Irenaeus (ca. 180 CE):** "In as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded... The rest, the hallowed seventh day;... the true Sabbath of the righteous, which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation; but shall have a table at hand prepared for them by God."
- **Hippolytus (ca. 200 CE):** "Six thousand years must be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest... For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints." These tied the future thousand-year reign of Jesus to Abrahamic covenantal promises of inheritance, with post-tribulation return, judgment, and restoration.

The times of the restoration of all things can be understood as both an end and a beginning. It is the time of the end of this age as we know it related to injustice, ungodliness, unrighteousness, and all that opposes the will and way of Jesus and His kingdom. It is also the time of a new beginning, the ushering in of an era of unprecedented peace, justice, righteousness, beauty, and rest as we enjoy the perfect and glorious leadership of Jesus over the nations of the earth from Jerusalem. They are the “times” of restoration because of the thousand year time frame and the process of restoration that unfolds over that time frame prior to the coming of the Father in fullness to the earth.

Part Two: Restoration Begins With the Church

Judgment Begins in the House of the Lord:

“17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17)

As I have heard this passage discussed over the years, I have mostly heard it spoken in negative terms. It has seemingly been understood through the lens of negative judgment, God’s dissatisfaction with His Church, and the necessary purging and cleansing of all within the Church that offends the Lord, specifically involving sin and sinfulness within the Church. While the Lord undoubtedly wants to purge sin from the Church (2 Tim. 2:21), and there is a corresponding judgment for the unrepentant sinner who continues and persists in sin (Rom. 2:5-11), I am not convinced that this particular passage is seeking to communicate those ideas.

Here is the verse in context to the entire passage:

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now

***"If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"***

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

When we see the verse in its context, we find that Peter is talking about judgment beginning at the house of God as it relates to *suffering, persecution, and fiery trials* that afflict our lives. In other words, when seen through the lens of the suffering saint, Peter's words have almost an entirely different lens by which we can understand them. Throughout the New Testament, suffering, persecution, and betrayal were signs of *God's approval and friendship*, with God's judgment serving a similar function and expression to Song of Solomon 5:6-8, where the testing of God serves to reveal the interior beauty of His Bride, forged through the fires of grace and transformation.

When we connect this passage to the passages and sermons from Peter we explored earlier, I believe we have a more complete - and gospel oriented - picture of the kind of judgment he has in view when he writes about it in the context of suffering, gladness, and joy. We are almost naturally conditioned in our carnal thinking to equate *judgment* with negative dynamics such as wrath, God's displeasure, and purging or removal. However, judgment - and specifically, God's judgments - have a much broader meaning and expression that are not primarily or even mostly about those elements throughout scripture.

God's judgments against sickness, demons, and sin via healing, deliverance, and revival have *very* positive dimensions for the beneficiaries of those judgments, for example. God's judgments throughout the Old Testament served a powerful redemptive purpose through the preservation of His plan and promises despite the disobedience and rebellion of His people - the very stewards of those plans and promises. Even His most severe judgments - such as those proclaimed by Hosea - were wrapped in powerful promises of redemption, restoration and reunion for His scattered and broken earthly family. The culmination of God's work to mature and transform the Church can be seen in Revelation 15:

"3 Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested." (Rev. 15:3-4)

The Day of the Lord and the manifestation of His judgments throughout the earth have a redemptive expression for all, according to Isaiah:

7 The way of the just is uprightness; O Most Upright, You weigh the path of the just. 8 Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. 9 With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (Isaiah 26:7-9)

I believe that this passage in particular holds the key to understanding what Peter is communicating to the Church in 1 Peter 4:17. There is a deep longing within our souls for the Lord to intervene and make every wrong thing right (“*mishpat*”, or *restorative justice at the hand of the Lord*). The judgments of the Lord globally will instruct the whole earth, in the midst of the shaking, burning on every heart in an unmistakable, inarguable way what is **right** and **true** according to the will of the Father. What did God intend for humanity, and later, for society, from the beginning of creation? What does God desire for us as the human race today, and into the future? Human beings apart from the fear of the Lord have the luxury of *debate* and *opinion*, whereas when God speaks, all arguments cease, all opinions are exposed, and the word of the Lord is revealed as eternal, enduring, faithful, and true.

In the same manner as Isaiah prophesied about the earth itself in Isaiah 26, so too will the Lord beautify and instruct His Church as we learn righteousness through His judgments. When we re-look at the entirety of the passage, we see the nature of the judgements of God and the desired end: persecution, suffering, and shaking will enter into our lives, and the desired end result of the Lord is that the shaking will beautify, purify, and refine our souls and train us in His righteousness. What the Lord will do throughout the nations of the earth, He will first do within the Church for our good, and for the sake of our mature, wholehearted love and obedience to Him. Where some can only see displeasure, dissatisfaction, purging, and removal, Peter instead is describing refining, purifying, transformation, and revival. In the midst of the reproach and suffering, ***“the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (1 Pet. 4:14)***. There is outrageous, abundant grace on the Church in the midst of Her great shaking to emerge victorious, loving, and leaning into Jesus with beautiful poverty of Spirit and dependency on Him.

Peter concludes these ideas of judgement, repentance, redemption, transformation, holiness, and purity beautifully in 2 Peter 3:

“8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...” (2 Pet. 3:8-15)

The restoration of all things begins with the Church, as the Lord takes us through the seasons of suffering, trial, difficulty and pain to train us in righteousness and transform us in beauty and godliness. The hallmark of His kingdom and the beauty of His leadership is a *people transformed*. A transformed Church, purified by fire and beautified by grace, is the ultimate picture of hope for a lost and dying world that His judgments are righteous and pure, holy and just, meant to escort us as a people into the fullness of all that He wants to do in the deepest places of our hearts and souls. God wants to shout to the entire world, *“This is what My grace and glory can produce! Believe me, and trust Me!”* Our lives, transformed through fire and shaking, are the ultimate apologetic for the goodness of God and the perfection and trustworthiness of His leadership. As He begins in the house of God, He is working to put His grace on display to win the hearts of the skeptic and the accuser alike.

The restoration of all things begins with a *restored, beautified, mature and spotless Bride*, the hallmark of which is a delivered and transformed people. The judgments of God will be celebrated and delighted in, as much - or even more - than they might be feared. Fiery trials, in Peter’s framework - which is echoed by Paul, James, John, and other New Testament writers - is an occasion to rejoice. Where there is judgment, there is corresponding glory to be revealed. He is our “Faithful Creator”, and therefore will bring us into the fullness of His intentions for us from our beginnings in the garden.

Why Does Peter Contrast the Wicked with the Righteous?

It is important to note Peter’s reference to Proverbs 11:31 (1 Pet. 4:18). Proverbs 11 is a series of contrasts between the *wicked* and the *righteous*. One example is Prov. 11:28 - *“He who trusts in riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage.”* These contrasts serve to illustrate the wisdom of trusting in the Lord versus the folly of trusting in our own way. The specific Proverb Peter is referring to is 11:31 - *“If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner.”* Peter is contrasting responses and rewards. When shaking, trouble, and persecution comes to our life, how do we respond? The righteous man responds by trusting the Lord, and according to Proverbs 11, will be vindicated, even though according to Peter he may be *“scarcely saved”*. In other words, we prevail, not according to our own strength or wisdom, but by the hand of the One who loves us. We are those who are *“5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Pet. 1:5) Yet we are still rewarded, because we have been and will be justified. Our justification is by faith alone, and our glory is that we are justified before God in the face of reviling, rejection, and persecution.

The wicked have no such justification for their actions or responses to shaking, fiery trials, or persecution. In their fear and anger, they likely become the very source of trouble for the shaken Church, and will also be “recompensed” for their wickedness and faithlessness in the face of the judgments of the Lord. In that light, Peter is making a similar comparison between the wicked and the righteous as he did a few verses earlier (1 Pet. 4:15-16). The Christian man or woman has the *dignity of suffering well*, **not** as one **ashamed**, but as one who is a **free man or free woman, able to rejoice and glorify God in any and every circumstance**. It is the goodness of the Lord to provide the wicked with a witness of His glory and grace, and in so doing give the wicked a means of righteous escape and a beautiful future with Him and His glorious Sabbath Rest He desires to mercifully bestow on any who would repent. We endure trouble and trial, shaking and judgment not only for the sake of the salvation of our own souls, but for the sake of the lost, that they too would be justified by faith and saved by grace. As Solomon wrote in Proverbs 11:30: *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.”*