

The Decree of Judgment

by Aaron Dunlop

Aaron Dunlop's sermon explores the decree of judgment as a divine law reflecting God's justice against sin and the inevitable consequences faced by the ungodly.

Duration: 33:04

Scripture: Genesis 19:24, Isaiah 3:6, Joel 1:15, Matthew 5:38, Romans 12:21, Romans 13:3

Topics: "Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concept of judgment and the decree of judgment as prescribed by the Lord. The sermon explores the idea that what we sow, we will reap, and uses the example of Edom suffering the consequences of their actions towards Judah. The preacher also discusses the three types of suffering in the world: calamity, which is the result of the fall but not guilt; judgment prepared for the ungodly; and judgment precipitated by the ungodly. The sermon emphasizes that while judgment is sanctioned by God, it is not compulsory and can be carried out in different ways, including monetary compensation.

Transcript

We come today to verse 15 again. We have been looking at verses 15 and 16 under the general title, Judgment Prescribed for the Ungodly. Judgment Prescribed for the Ungodly.

We saw in verses 2 through 9 that judgment was prepared in the ungodly. They were a people who were innately sinful. They were a people of depravity, total depravity.

Their heart, verse 3, is identified. And throughout the verses 3 or verses 2 to 9, we have this sin in the people of Esau. And then we saw from verses 10 through 14, judgment precipitated by the ungodly.

They were judged because of what they did. They hastened the judgment of God. They brought it on.

They, because of their sin, brought the judgment of God upon their own head. They were to blame. Verse 15, we see that comes to a climax, for the Lord says, For the day of the Lord is near upon all that hasten.

As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee. And we see here, verses 15 and 16, that judgment is prescribed for the ungodly. There is a prescribed judgment on ungodliness.

We saw last week, the day of the Lord. This concept that is found throughout the Old Testament, prophets in particular. But it is a concept that is not only theological, i.e. that the Lord is judging sin.

But it is eschatological, i.e. that it is a future day of the Lord, when the Lord is going to judge the world. And while there were days of the Lord in the Old Testament, and while perhaps there may be days of the Lord today, days when God manifests His glory, manifests His judgment, as He doesn't at other times when He comes down. When God, as one prophet put it, comes out of His place.

When God comes out of His place, when God steps into time in a decisive, conclusive judgment, that is a day of the Lord. That is a type. That is a picture.

That is, in microcosm, what the Lord is going to do in the earth at the last great day of judgment. The day of the Lord is coming. We come then to verse 15, the second phrase, As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.

And we see here, not only the day of the Lord concept, but we see the decree of judgment. The decree of judgment. We have the day of judgment, prescribed day.

There is also a prescribed decree. There is a law that the Lord works on. And that is what we are going to look at tonight.

As thou hast done, so it shall be done unto thee. That is the decree, that is the law that the Lord works on and works by. Then we are going to see in verse 16, next week, we are going to see the demonstration of judgment.

How the people drank on Mount Zion. And the Lord uses this figure of drinking. As ye have drunk on my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually.

As ye have drunk, you will drink again. The cup of wrath, the cup of God's wrath. And we are going to see there that concept of the cup of God's wrath.

This demonstration of judgment. But let's look tonight at this decree of judgment. This judgment that is prescribed on the ungodly.

It was no normal calamity. It was no normal providence of God. But it was this definite, distinctive punishment for sin.

And it is acting upon a decree. The Lord does not act capriciously. What God does and how God acts is not changeable.

He is an immutable God. He is without change, that is. He does not act on a whim.

And He is not unpredictable. God is not unpredictable. There are certain laws.

There are certain directives. There are certain decrees that the Lord works by. And God does not have one method for one person and another method for another person.

He is predictable in a sense. There are fixed decrees by which God works. And when one of these decrees is revealed in a given situation, then we can rest assured that in a parallel situation the Lord will act similarly.

He is predictable. When we come to Obadiah verse 15, we have one of these laws by which God operates. Obadiah has been called the prophet of poetic justice.

The prophet of poetic justice. Those of you who have studied English literature will know that this term is a term from literature, either fictional or factual, where virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. You see it in some of Dickens' novels where the villain ends up at the end to be punished and where the underdog or the one despised but virtuous ends up to be favored.

It's a literary term. And Obadiah has been referred to as the prophet of poetic justice. This is what we see in Obadiah.

Edom, the sinful nation, while rich in wisdom, verse 8, he shall destroy the wise men out of Edom. They were rich in wealth. They were rich as far as strategic position goes geographically.

They sat on the top of Mount Seir. And they had all of this going for them. But all of this, and all of this privilege and wealth and wisdom and geographical strategy, they will be punished for it all because of their wickedness against Israel.

Justice is going to be brought to bear on the wicked. While Israel, in the mercy of God, are restored and brought from under the bondage and the tyranny of Edom and Edom's malice, Edom is going to be judged. So we have this poetic justice.

As justice is brought to bear on the wicked in the day of the Lord, it is in this regard a day of the Lord's anger, Zechariah 2, verse 3. And the theme of retribution and judgment on sin throughout the prophetic writings, this theme of judgment upon sin, this theme of retribution, this theme that we are going to look at tonight made the prophet's job ominous. And in many cases made the prophet's job dangerous. Jeremiah was imprisoned.

Isaiah, according to rabbinic tradition, lost his life. And some believe that the reference to many being cut asunder in Hebrews 11 is a reference to Isaiah the prophet. And so this preaching against sin and this preaching this law of retribution, law of punishment against sin, made the prophet's job very ominous and very dangerous.

But it was a necessary message to preach, notwithstanding the danger of the task and the unpleasantness of the message, the day of the Lord, was a familiar theme throughout all of the minor prophets. And judgment was always, in the mind of the prophet, was always a clear consequence for sin. This concept of retribution and retaliation is a concept that is found throughout Scripture and there are various references to it.

Theologians call it the *lex talionis* or the *jus talionis*. That comes from the Latin *lex*, law, *talionis*, such. It is the law where the punishment resembles the crime in kind and degree.

As is the crime, in other words, such will be the punishment. As is the crime, such will be the punishment. It is referred to in the New Testament, in Matthew 5, verse 38, as the eye for the eye and the tooth for the tooth.

As is the crime, such will be the punishment. It is referred to again in Galatians 6, verse 7, Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. We have heard these verses.

They are common verses. These New Testament verses are the law by which God makes out judgment. God, as the supreme judge of his creation, has bound his creation to this simple law of equity.

The law of equity, a law that comforts the sufferer and punishes the offender. It comforts the sufferer and punishes the offender. It is clear from this decree of punishment and retribution that with God there is no respecter of persons.

There is no respecter of persons. The Israelites would be punished for their sins, as well as the heathen were punished and would be punished. The sin of the Israelites was in many ways more heinous in that they had the privileges of God's repeated admonition.

They had sinned against God's love. God's love. And judgment then for Israel was right.

It was right. The Lord says to Israel in Amos chapter 3, verse 2, You only have I loved of all the families of the earth. And it is worthy of note here that the punishment meted out to the Israelites was the same as that meted out to the heathen.

The punishment that the Israelites suffered was the same as that which the heathen suffered and the Gentiles suffered. And it is significant that the Lord makes reference to this in Amos 4, verse 11 and reminds the people that some of them had been overthrown by God. In Amos 4, verse 11, they had been overthrown by God as Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown.

I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. There is no respecter of persons with God. More significantly is the comparison between Isaiah 3, verse 6 and Joel 1, verse 15 where the word used is the same to speak of the punishment of God on both the heathen and Israel.

Israel or Isaiah speaking to the heathen in Isaiah 13, he is actually speaking to Babylon. And in Joel 1, verse 15 Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Isaiah 13, verse 6, Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

This day of the Lord, this retribution, this punishment is going to come as punishment from the hand of the Almighty on Israel and on the heathen. There is no respecter of persons. Israel had aligned themselves with the world and the judgment of God which is not capricious was going to be then for Israel undeserved.

For both Israel and the heathen there was right for this law of retribution. This was the history of Israel. This was the repeated history of Israel in sinning against God.

This law, this lex talionis as it is called applied to Adam. In verse 15 As ye have done, it shall be done unto thee. And he repeats it over again for he says Thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

He says again in verse 16 For as ye have drunk on my holy mountain so shall all the heathen drink continually. All of this, all of the sin of Adam is going to be judged in proportion to their sin against God. This was the sin that Adam had committed.

Retribution of evil for evil committed against Israel. Judgment was the clear consequence of sin and this punishment establishes the fact that sin was the cause of judgment. Sin was the cause of their judgment.

There are two things I want us to notice briefly tonight. The first is that this decree is proposed by God. This is a decree proposed by God.

It's not merely the words of Obadiah. It is the law of God. I want us to understand that.

These are not merely the words of Obadiah the prophet. The prophet is speaking by the Lord and you'll see this the words of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God in verse 1. And what we're reading in the book of Obadiah then is what the Lord is saying to Adam.

It is the law, this law, the lex talionis is a law that is proposed by God. It is put in place by God. It is prescribed by God.

As thou hast done, so shall it be done unto you. Treachery against Judah in verses 11 and 12 found for the Edomites that they were going to be dealt treacherously by their confederates in verse 7. Edom was treacherous against Judah. They were going to be dealt treacherously against by their confederates in verse 7. Verse 13 tells us that they robbed Judah.

Verses 5 and 6 tell us that they will be robbed themselves. Verse 11 tells us that they were violent against Judah. Verse 9 tells us that they themselves are going to perish by a violent death by the edge of the sword.

Verses 12 to 14 tells us that they sought for Judah's destruction. Verse 10 tells us that they are going to be destroyed. Verse 14 tells us that they sought to dispossess Judah.

Verse 19 tells us that they themselves are going to be dispossessed. And so you see throughout all of this, woven throughout the book of Obadiah is this law of retaliation, this law of the eye for the eye. As ye have done, so it shall be done unto you.

This is a law of God. It is a law that He has put into nature itself. We often say, and we hear it said, He had it coming to Him.

He had it coming to Him, the eye for the eye. We are going to see later on that what we sow, what we sow, we will reap. The Bible tells us that a man who hath friends must show himself friendly.

The same principle underlies that proverb. If we want friends, we must show ourselves friendly. If we want enemies, then we are going to act as enemies.

This law of the eye for the eye is woven throughout the fabric of our thinking and throughout the fabric of society. In short, Edom is going to suffer what they brought upon Judah. There are three kinds of suffering in the world as we know it today in general.

Three kinds of suffering. There is first of all calamity, just mere calamity. Calamity occurs only in a sinful world.

That is true. It is calamity. It is the effects of the fall.

But calamity is not and does not refer to guilt. We have this example in the book of Job. All of this calamity fell upon Job.

But the Bible tells us that Job was a righteous man. Indeed in all the earth at that time there was no more righteous than Job. But all of this calamity fell on him.

He was not being chastised. He was not being punished. It was calamity brought on by Satan.

As far as Job goes and as far as calamity, suffering through calamity or suffering through the providences of God. You have a car accident or something simple. Stump your toe or something simple.

Hit your finger with the hammer. It is calamitous. There is no reference to guilt.

The other type of suffering is chastisement. This is spoken of in Hebrews 12. Verse 6 where the Lord says that he chastises those whom he loves.

There is chastisement. The purpose of chastising is specifically for discipline. For improving.

We chastise our children to improve their behavior. We chastise our children for discipline. We do not punish them.

Although the word punish is often used in reference to parental care it is not a punishment. It ought not to be a punishment. It is chastising.

It is motivated by affection and love. It is not motivated by judicial severity. Chastisement is not motivated by judicial severity.

It is motivated by affection. The third type of suffering is punishment. This is pain that is inflicted because of guilt.

And is for the satisfaction of justice. It is for the satisfaction of justice. I get a little annoyed sometimes when I hear of prisons and penitentiaries being used only for recuperation.

In order to bring them back into society. Many of those behind bars ought never to be in society again. Prison is not as far as the government is concerned.

Prison and government legalities is for punishment. It is to exact punishment. It is to exact a satisfaction for justice.

And it is strange that those who are most involved in law seem to get it so wrong. It is the satisfaction of justice that punishment is for. It is the last of these kinds of sufferings that we read of in Obadiah.

The Lord throughout the scripture deals with calamity. As in the book of Job as we have seen. He deals throughout the scripture with chastisement.

He chastises those whom he loves. But here in Obadiah verse 15 we see that the Lord is dealing with punishment. He is satisfying justice.

The ungodly, to put it one way, the ungodly are sacrificed to justice. That is a phrase we will pick up on a little later. In other words, what suffering the Edomites will endure is the justice of God upon them.

It is their just deserts. It is their reward. It is what they deserve.

It is, to put it in the language of Paul in Romans, it is the wages of sin. It is the wages of sin. This was law.

And the law that the Lord instituted in Exodus 21 verses 22 to 25. We read there in Exodus 21, 22. So if a man strike and hurt a woman with child, so that her foot depart from her, and yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished.

According to a woman's husband will lay upon him, and he shall pay as the judge determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. This is that initial laying down of the law of retribution.

It is important that although this law was sanctioned in the Mosaic economy, yet it was not compulsory. And I want us to understand this. It was not compulsory.

It was sanctioned, but not compulsory. In other words, it was not necessary to be carried out to the letter, nor was it necessary to be carried out literally. Let me explain.

If someone lost an eye, the law allowed them to gouge out the other man's eye. It allowed them to do that. It sanctioned it.

But it was not compulsory that they would. If someone lost an eye, they could require that he give me what I believe the eye was worth. You can get the picture when we come into modern society.

If I lose an eye at the hand of a violent man, I can either gouge his eye out, an eye for an eye, or I can ask that he repays me what I believe my eye is worth. I could demand, for instance, if I lost both eyes, I could demand that he becomes my permanent guide. You bring it into modern society, and we speak today of monetary compensation.

All we hear about today is compensation. This is what was spoken of and what was permitted in the Old Testament economy. It is also important to notice that in this passage, in Exodus 21-22, that the law of retaliation, or the lex talionis, was placed in the hand of the magistrate.

It was placed in the hand of the magistrate. We are going to see this a little later on. The words of Deuteronomy 19.21 were addressed to the judges.

And thine eye shall not pity them. For life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand. If the individual asks that his eye be gouged out or his hand be cut off, then the judge is not to pity him.

He is to do it. He is to carry it out. Now the wording of Paul, that Paul uses in Galatians 6-7.

In Galatians 6-7 we have this law reiterated again. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And the word that Paul uses here, and the terms that he uses, is the broadest possible treatment. Follow this through.

It is the broadest possible treatment to the subject, and at the same time it is the narrowest possible application to the individual. Look at the word that Paul uses in Galatians 6-7. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

There is no definite article here. This entire sentence is indefinite, and it deals in two broad generalities. It is the broadest possible treatment.

But because it is the broadest possible treatment, it has the narrowest possible application. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Whatsoever, that means anything he does.

Anything he does. It covers his entire life. Whatsoever he sows, whatsoever he does, that shall he also reap.

Whatsoever means whatever he does. Whosoever means whoever does it. Whatsoever a man.

Indefinite. Thomas Adams, the Puritan writer, translated it this way. Whatsoever, whosoever soweth, the same shall he also reap.

Whatsoever, whosoever soweth. You think of that. Broad statement.

Indicating that there is a harvest for everything that we do. Whatsoever, whosoever soweth. The invitation of the gospel is to whosoever.

It is the broadest possible treatment of the gospel and pre-Opera of the gospel. It has the narrowest possible application because it means you. And it means me.

So the breadth of it encompasses the application and the specific application of it. Because it means every individual and everything we do and say. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

This is the law that the Lord works by. This is the law of retribution. It is a law that is applied.

Secondly, it is a law and a decree applied by God. This law of retaliation or retribution is not to be thought of. It is not to be thought of as a private revenge.

The Jews, the Jews by Christ's day took this law of Exodus 21, 22 to 25. They took it and used it as an excuse for private revenge. And that is why when we come to Matthew 5 verses 38 to 39.

That when the Lord says ye have heard that it has been said unto you an eye for an eye. And that it is true that it is said that way. And it is true that it is an eye for an eye.

But it is not an excuse for private revenge. I cannot take the law into my own hands. This was laid down not only in Matthew 5 verse 38.

But this was laid down by Moses in Leviticus 19 verse 18. Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people. But thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

I am the Lord. So Moses back in Leviticus 19 verse 18 said exactly what the Lord said in Matthew 5 verse 38 and 39. Ye have heard that it has been said unto you an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say unto you resist not evil. But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also. There are two aspects of this that are worthy of note.

Briefly and in closing. God will apply it on behalf of the believer. God applies this law of retaliation.

God applies this law, the lex talionis, on behalf of the believer. What the rabbis said God says otherwise. The rabbis identified it as a law and excuse for retaliating and for revenge on a private level.

God says resist not evil. The word resist here simply means to stand against. Do not stand against.

If someone on a private capacity is resisting you and is doing you harm, persecuting you for righteousness sake, resist not the evil. In other words, let it take its course on a private level. Let it take its course.

If someone is doing you wrong, go to God with it. Unless it can be dealt with on a public or a structural level. But on a private level if someone is doing you wrong, you are not to retaliate.

You are not to revenge. You are not to seek vengeance. Resist not the evil.

Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. The Lord will apply this law on our behalf. As He does on Israel's behalf in Obadiah 15.

He is working on behalf of Israel as we are going to see in the later parts of the verses. This eye for the eye in the Old Testament was speaking to the magistrates and it speaks to the magistrates today. This gets me back to what I was saying earlier concerning the law courts of our land.

It is for the satisfaction of justice. The Bible tells us in Romans 13 verse 3, For the rulers are not a terror for good works, but of evil. For he that is the magistrate is a minister of God to thee for good.

But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid. For he beareth not the sword in vain. The magistrate, the governor, the judge beareth not the sword in vain.

He has to use it. Justice must be exacted on those who take life and destroy life. They are not to be taken into prison and given degrees so that they can come out and get good and plentiful jobs three years later as many in Britain do.

They beareth not the sword in vain. The magistrate has to, under God, exact justice. They are a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

This is not my opinion. This is the Bible. Romans 13.

They are a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. And if we had stricter courts, law courts today, we might find that there would be less criminality. The Lord, on our behalf, will execute judgment for us.

Finally, the Lord will apply it to the unbeliever. Here the Lord says to Edom and to the heathen, For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen as thou hast done. So it shall be done unto thee.

This law of retribution is going to be exacted on the ungodly. Here is a phrase that I used earlier that I want to pick up on closing. It is a sacrifice to justice.

A sacrifice to justice. My friend, as I said earlier concerning Romans 3, the wages of sin is death. The Lord must make a sacrifice for justice.

If you are saved tonight, Christ is that sacrifice. If you are not saved tonight, and you die in an unsaved condition, you will be that sacrifice. Because as you have done, so it shall be done unto you.

Exercising faith in Christ transfers that punishment to Christ. As I have done, I can say it tonight by the grace of God, as I have done, so it has been done unto Christ. He has borne my punishment.

By his stripes we are healed. If you reject that tonight, you will suffer the vengeance of God's eternal wrath. The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen.

That's bond prayer.

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