Introduction

Will God hold you accountable for your sins?

Illustration: Most of the time, that is not our concern. For example, *how do you feel about speeding tickets?* For most of us, the answer depends on who is getting the ticket. If ***I*** am speeding around a curve and see a police car, I do not want accountability, I want mercy. But for the guy who just cut me off and is driving fast, I ***hope*** that there is a police car shooting radar around the curve.

We are typically more concerned about other people being held accountable than whether we should be held accountable.

Jeremiah 4:5-31 answers the question - *How will God respond to your sin?* God is merciful - *will He overlook your sin?* God is just - *Will he judge all people without mercy?* Scripture teaches that **God judges all people by their sin and their response to Jesus**.

Judged by sin

Scripture teaches that God judges all people by their sin.

Certain judgment

Jeremiah 4:5–8 CSB

5 Declare in Judah, proclaim in Jerusalem, and say, Blow the trumpet throughout the land. Cry
out loudly and say, “Assemble yourselves, and let’s flee to the fortified cities.” 6 Lift up a signal
flag toward Zion. Run for cover! Don’t stand still! For I am bringing disaster from the north— a
crushing blow. 7 A lion has gone up from his thicket; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has
left his lair to make your land a waste. Your cities will be reduced to uninhabited ruins. 8
Because of this, put on sackcloth; mourn and wail, for the LORD’s burning anger has not turned
away from us.

The first thing we see in Jeremiah 4 is that **God’s judgment is inescapable**. ***Verses 5-8*** are a warning to Judah of the certainty of their judgment. In 586 B.C., the Babylonian Empire, led by Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and conquered the nation of Judah. The Babylonian army is the “disaster from the north” in verse 6.

Notice the irony between verses 5 and 7. Verse 5 warns Judah to flee to the fortified cities. Then verse 7 tells them that their “cities will be reduced to uninhabited ruins.” The point is that they cannot escape God’s wrath against their sin. He says in verse 8 “***I*** am bringing disaster from the north [the Babylonians].”

How seriously do you take God's judgment? **Illustration:** When I drive to Conway on Hwy 25, it is clear to me that people do not take seriously the speed limit or the possibility of a ticket. *How often do we live like we drive - breaking every law, hoping we won't get caught?*

Unfortunately, we approach sin the same way. We ***acknowledge*** that God will judge sin, yet *how many of our actions would God say is not loving Him and loving our neighbor?*

2 Peter 3 describes that some people disregard the possibility of judgment. They argue that the world has continued as it is since creation and God has not stopped it. We may not ***say*** that, but we often ***live*** like that. 2 Peter 3 warns that we should not mistake God's patience for Him overlooking judgment; His patience is an opportunity to repent before judgment.

God's judgment is inescapable.

Deserving judgment

Jeremiah 4:9–18 CSB

9 "On that day"—this is the LORD's declaration—"the king and the officials will lose their courage. The priests will tremble in fear, and the prophets will be scared speechless." 10 I said, "Oh no, Lord GOD, you have certainly deceived this people and Jerusalem, by announcing, 'You will have peace,' while a sword is at our throats." 11 "At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, 'A searing wind blows from the barren heights in the wilderness on the way to my dear people. It comes not to winnow or to sift; 12 a wind too strong for this comes at my call. Now I will also pronounce judgments against them.' " 13 Look, he advances like clouds; his chariots are like a storm. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined! 14 Wash the evil from your heart, Jerusalem, so that you will be delivered. How long will you harbor malicious thoughts? 15 For a voice announces from Dan, proclaiming malice from Mount Ephraim. 16 Warn the nations: Look! Proclaim to Jerusalem: Those who besiege are coming from a distant land; they raise their voices against the cities of Judah. 17 They have her surrounded like those who guard a field, because she has rebelled against me. This is the LORD's declaration. 18 Your way and your actions have brought this on you. This is your punishment. It is very bitter, because it has reached your heart!

The next thing we see in verses 9-18 is that **God's judgment against sin is certain**. Notice in verse 10 that Jeremiah questions how God could bring judgment. His argument is that God had promised them peace, but now He is sending the sword. As we read later in Jeremiah, this promise of peace was not from God. It was from false prophets who told people what they wanted to hear - a message of peace (Jer 6:14; 14:13; 23:16-17).

What message do people want to hear? **Illustration:** When you visit the doctor for a checkup, you want them to tell you that you are in perfect health. You don't want them to tell you that you aren't exercising, eating right, or getting enough sleep.

People want to hear a message of peace; they want someone to tell them that God is loving and they will not answer for their sins. 2 Tim 4 warns that people will not tolerate biblical teaching. They will seek out teachers that suit their own desires - with no concern for God's desires. This accurately describes preaching in churches today. People flock to churches that teach encouraging messages without warning of God's judgment against their sin.

Verses 11-12 warn that God's judgment against Judah was not meant to discipline; it was meant to destroy. Notice why God judges Judah. In verse 14, He calls them to "wash the evil from your heart" and leave behind their "malicious thoughts." In verse 18, He tells them "your way and your actions have brought this on you." God is judging them because of their sin.

People want to hear a message of peace. *What message does **God** want people to hear?* Scripture teaches that you are a sinner (Rom 3:23). The wage of your sin is eternal death (Rom 6:23). God does not condemn innocent people. God condemns sinners. **His judgment against sin is certain**.

Judged by the gospel

Scripture also teaches that God judges all people by their response to Jesus.

Knowing God

Jeremiah 4:19–22 CSB

19 My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in agony! Oh, the pain in my heart! My heart pounds; I
cannot be silent. For you, my soul, have heard the sound of the trumpet— the shout of battle.
20 Disaster after disaster is reported because the whole land is destroyed. Suddenly my tents
are destroyed, my tent curtains, in a moment. 21 How long must I see the signal flag and hear
the sound of the trumpet? 22 "For my people are fools; they do not know me. They are foolish
children, without understanding. They are skilled in doing what is evil, but they do not know
how to do what is good."

Verses 19-22 make an important point about God's judgment - a point that has underlying hope. **God judges those who do not know Him**. In verses 19-21, Jeremiah expresses his anguish over the destruction of Judah. It is hard for him to watch lands and homes destroyed. But notice God's response in verse 22. The people are foolish. They don't know God. They don't know what is right and wrong.

I think that verse 22 is a reference to the Garden of Eden. I think the following verses confirm this. In Genesis 2, God told Adam and Eve that every tree of the garden was good and they could eat from them. But one tree, which Scripture calls the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was forbidden. Satan told Eve that the tree would make her know good and evil (Gen 3:5). Eve ate the fruit because she expected it would make her wise (Gen 3:6). What was the outcome of her sin. It made her foolish, not wise. It opened her eyes to evil, not good. And it separated her from her relationship with God. The same things happen when you or I sin.

*How will **you** defend your right to God's mercy? How will you defend your right to enter heaven and be spared from His wrath?* I was a church member. I was baptized. I understood theology. I took care of the poor.

In Matt 7:21-23, Jesus said that people would tell Him on their day of judgment about all of the things ***they*** had ***done*** in His name. Jesus's answer, though, was that they never ***knew*** Him; therefore, they were sent to eternal judgment.

The good news of Scripture is that you ***can*** know God. Like Adam and Eve, your sin has separated you from God. Yet, Jesus was born as a man, lived a substitutionary sinless life, and died to atone for sins. Colossians 1:20-23 says that those who have faith in Jesus are forgiven of sins and reconciled to God. **God judges those who do not know Him**. You can know God through faith in Jesus. *Do you know Him?*

Creation and desolation

Jeremiah 4:23–28 CSB

23 I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty. I looked to the heavens, and their light was gone. 24 I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills shook. 25 I looked, and there was no human being, and all the birds of the sky had fled. 26 I looked, and the fertile field was a wilderness. All its cities were torn down because of the LORD and his burning anger. 27 For this is what the LORD says: "The whole land will be a desolation, but I will not finish it off. 28 Because of this, the earth will mourn; the skies above will grow dark. I have spoken; I have planned, and I will not relent or turn back from it."

Verses 23-28 give us insight into why God ***can*** judge sin. **God has authority to judge sin because all things belong to Him**. Notice the reference in verse 23 to Genesis 1:2 "2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep …" Genesis 1 describes God shaping the formless earth, filling the empty earth, and giving light to the dark earth.

Yet, here in verses 23-28, we see the opposite. In Gen 1, God formed the mountains; in verse 24, the mountains were breaking apart. In Gen 1, God filled the earth and sky with life; in verse 25, all life was gone. In Gen 1, God filled the earth with fruit-bearing trees; In verse 26, the fertile field became a wilderness. In Gen 1, God made light and filled the sky with the sun, moon, and stars; In verse 28, the skies become dark.

The point in these verses is that God created all things and all things belong to Him. Therefore, God has all authority to judge the whole earth.

Verses 23-28 perfectly describe the sinful state we are already in. We are dead and desolate in our sins (Eph 2:1). *How can you have eternal life?* Scripture's answer is that you must have faith in Jesus. Jesus is the eternal God. Jesus created everything (John 1:1-3; 1 Cor 8:6). Jesus has all authority to judge people for their sins (John 5:22). And Jesus gives life to whoever has faith

in Him. John 11:25–26 "… I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. …"

Dressed up destruction

Jeremiah 4:29–31 CSB

29 Every city flees at the sound of the horseman and the archer. They enter the thickets and climb among the rocks. Every city is abandoned; no inhabitant is left. 30 And you, devastated one, what are you doing that you dress yourself in scarlet, that you adorn yourself with gold jewelry, that you enhance your eyes with makeup? You beautify yourself for nothing. Your lovers reject you; they intend to take your life. 31 I hear a cry like a woman in labor, a cry of anguish like one bearing her first child. The cry of Daughter Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands: "Woe is me, for my life is weary because of the murderers!"

Verses 29-31 close this chapter with a reminder that **there is no hope of salvation apart from the Lord**. These verses describe the great suffering that Judah would endure. Verse 31 says that their cries of pain are like a woman in labor. Yet, notice verse 30. They continued to dress up, put on makeup and jewelry, and pursue help from others. Looking back to Jeremiah 2, they were trusting in the Assyrians and Egyptians. But verse 30 points out, that those nations had rejected them. They would be no help.

Where will you seek salvation from your sin? Musician Keith Green said that in his pursuit of God, he looked at all of the world's religions. What stood out to him was that many of the world's religions spoke of Jesus, calling him a great teacher or a great prophet. In fact, they encouraged people to listen to Jesus. However, as he read the Bible, he noticed that Jesus said, "… I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Apart from Jesus, we have not hope of salvation. Whatever else we trust in for eternal life will fail us.

Conclusion

How will God respond to your sin? Scripture teaches that **God judges all people by their sin and by their response to Jesus**. We see this in Jeremiah 4:5-31. God's judgment against your sin is inescapable and certain.

However, God has shown us mercy by Jesus, the eternal God, becoming a man, living a sinless life, dying for our sins, and resurrecting to overcome our slavery to death. Jeremiah 4 shows us that God judges those who don't know Him, He has authority to judge sin because all things belong to Him, and there is no hope of salvation apart from the Lord. All of these things are fulfilled in Christ.

I encourage you to live by faith in Jesus. Devote yourself to Him by faith so that your sin will be forgiven and you will be reconciled to God. Throughout your life, continue to live by faith in Jesus, trusting in His salvation, but also submitting to His word and His will.