

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

What do you think of when you hear the word *righteousness*?

No right or wrong answer to this question - I'm just looking for what comes to your mind so I get an idea of its connotation for you.

What does *God* mean when *He* talks about righteousness?

This is in part what we're going to explore as we look at the book of Romans. But before we dive in too deep, I want to help give you a context for the book of Romans. If I were to quote the words, "As you wish..." some of you, maybe most of you would know what I was referring to, but if you didn't, we might need to watch, or at least give a summary of the movie, *The Princess Bride*, before those words would mean much to you. Similarly, the book of Romans is a book of the Bible, a letter in the context of a whole story that God has been playing out since the beginning of time. So today, one of my main objectives is to lead us in an overview of the whole story of the Bible. We'll need this because the book of Romans references all of these:

Creation	Isaac	Moses	Prophets
Adam	Rebekah	Law	Jesus
Abraham	Jacob	David	
Sarah	Esau	Zion	
Circumcision	Benjamin	Elijah	

After that I'd like to look briefly at the introduction to the book of Romans, and we'll wrap up with a homework assignment and some time to pray together.

BEGINNINGS

From Creation to the Curse:

God's word begins, (1) **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."** He spoke, and whatever he said happened: (2) **"God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."** He made everything in six days, ending with a man and a woman, Adam and Eve, who were created in God's image. The closing summary of God's creation was, (3) **"God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."** God gave life to Adam and Eve and put them in His garden where they had food to eat, work to do, and a clear command: (4) **"From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."**

Not too much later, a serpent entered the scene and targeted the woman with a bold contradiction: (5) **"You surely will not die!"** He cast doubt on God's word, and Eve gave in to the temptation, eating the forbidden fruit. She also gave some to her husband, Adam, and he ate. Adam disobeyed God's word. He sinned. Immediately they sensed a break in their relationship

with their Creator. He called; they hid. They died to God that day. God's word came true, and because of sin came death. God spoke additional punishments, God's good creation was cursed on account of man's sin. Finally, He sent them out of His garden. As sinners, they no longer shared in God's righteousness, and could not enjoy a physical presence with Him. Physical death *also* came as a result of their sin. The first physical death was of an animal God used to make them clothing, (6) **"The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."** Then eventually their own bodies died: (7) **"So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."** But before we get too far beyond Adam, let's talk about another way God gave life.

From Cain to the Flood:

Even in their fallen condition, God blessed Adam and Even with children. God gave life to their firstborn son, Cain, then Abel. Fast-forward, the boys grew up and Cain killed Abel. God gave them another son, Seth. Unlike Cain's, Seth's descendants are described as men who walked with God. Noah was one of them.

In his day the sin got really bad. Really bad: (8) **"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."** So God decided to destroy the world with a flood. But Noah stood out: (9) **"Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God."** God decided to save Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives - eight people. God told Noah His plan, told him to build an ark (massive boat), and gave other instructions, including plans to house and care for the many animals God would send his way at flood time. Noah did what God said, and God's word proved true. The flood came and (10) **"of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died."** , (11) **"and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark."** God punished the great sin of humanity by sending a world-wide flood.

From the Covenant with Noah to the Tower of Babel:

After the flood, Noah built an altar and worshipped the Lord (with animal sacrifices). God promised that He would never destroy the whole world with a flood ever again. He gave the rainbow as a sign of His promise...a promise of life. God said some other things, one of which was (12) **"as for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."** Then God's word lists out some of the descendents of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

But it isn't too much later that we hear about some people who gathered around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and said, (13) **"Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."** God did not let them keep their proud, rebellious plan. Instead He punished them for their sin. The Bible says, (14) **"the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad**

over the face of the whole earth." From Shem, Ham, and Japheth came all of the nations in the world today, and from this event at Babel, the diversity of languages.

I've intentionally taken a little more time in this foundational section of the Bible, but we'll try to pick up the pace as we go on...First, to wrap up, notice the two repeated themes: God gives life and punishes sin. We'll see this all throughout His story, as well as in the book of Romans.

FATHERS

God Chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

After Babel, God traces the family of Noah's son, Shem. From Shem's line, God picked one man, Abram, for a special purpose. God gave Abram a promise: **(15) "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."** The rest of the book of Genesis (the first book of the Bible) follows the story of Abram and his descendants as God grew and protected this family to be His own, chosen nation. Abram and his barren wife, Sarai (renamed by God as Abraham and Sarah) spent most of their lives just waiting and believing God's promises. Some aspects of God's promise they did not see fulfilled in their lifetimes, but they did see God fulfill one significant promise - the birth of their son, Isaac - and that was well after their child-bearing years. Isaac inherited God's promise, and he and his wife Rebekah had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. God chose the younger son, Jacob to also inherit the promises that He had given to Abraham and Isaac.

God Grew Jacob's Family:

The way Jacob went about receiving God's blessing was deceptive and caused some tension with his brother Esau, so he went to live with his uncle for a while. It turns out that deception ran in the family, and Jacob found more drama when he worked out a deal to marry a girl and was given her sister instead. He ended up with his girl, *and* her sister who together had an unofficial contest to have the most kids. The contest resulted in a total of four wives for Jacob, who God also named Israel, twelve sons, and one daughter.

God Used Joseph to Protect Israel:

Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife, so naturally he had a special love for her children, even though they were the youngest of the clan. This favoritism made his other sons jealous. Joseph, Rachel's oldest son, was shown exceptional favor, and besides being a tattletale, he also reported having dreams in which the rest of his family bowed down to him. That didn't help. The older brothers saw an opportunity one day to get rid of Joseph and sold him to traders that were passing through on their way down to Egypt. Then they made their dad think that he had been

killed by wild beasts. Meanwhile, Joseph prospered in Egypt; his master put all he had into Joseph's care. Even after a false charge landed him in jail, God still showed him favor and eventually used him to interpret the pharaoh's disturbing dreams. He explained to the king that there would be seven years of abundance followed by seven years of extreme famine. Seeing the wisdom in Joseph, Pharaoh made him second in command, and put him in charge of both the storage and distribution of food. When famine hit, Egypt was ready. Joseph's family was affected by the famine as well, and they came to Egypt seeking food. They bowed before Joseph, but didn't recognize him. Joseph did recognize them, and after a detailed process of testing to see if their hearts were changed, he revealed himself to his brothers and forgave them, saying **(16) "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."**

God chooses, grows and protects a family.

PLANTING A NATION

God Brought Israel Out of Egypt:

Jacob died in Egypt, after being reunited with his son, Joseph. Then eventually Joseph died and the rest of his generation. A new king came to power who did not know Joseph, so the descendents of Israel, a large foreign people living in his land, seemed threatening. He responded by enslaving them, and the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. But this was no surprise to God who told Abraham years before that this was going to happen: **(17) "God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.'"** The second part also happened. Through many miraculous signs, God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt under the guidance of His servant, Moses (and his brother Aaron). He topped it off with an incredible passage through the divided waters of the Red Sea.

God Gave Israel the Promised Land:

God's intent in bringing His people out of Egypt was to plant them in the land He had promised to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They would be His special nation, through which He could also bless the rest of the world. However, because of that generation's disobedience and unbelief, God made them wander in the wilderness for forty years. During that time, God gave the people His law which explained his righteousness (this is where the ten commandments fit in), and He taught them how He wanted to be worshipped. This law was to set them apart from other nations. Once the forty years were up, God brought them into the promised land led by Moses' servant Joshua. God used Joshua to lead the people in battle and to communicate the boundary lines for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

God Gave Israel Judges:

(18) "The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel." Joshua died, and the rest of that generation, **(19) "and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."** Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They worshipped idols and forgot the Lord. Throughout the rest of this chapter of Israel's history until God gave them a human king, the nation circled around and around in a crazy cycle. *(1) They forgot the Lord, served idols, and practiced evil. (2) God gave them into the hands of their enemies. (3) They cried out to the Lord for deliverance. (4) God raised up a judge to lead the people and delivered them from their enemies. (5) The people served the Lord for the lifetime of the judge, but then the judge died and...back to (1) again.* There are a lot of troubling stories in the book of Judges, still God plants this chosen family as a nation. What faithfulness!

GROWING THE NATION

God Made Saul King but Then Rejected Him:

As the people of Israel looked at the other nations around them, they became discontent and asked for a human king. By making this request, they were rejecting God as their king. After being warned of all that having a king would mean, they still wanted what they wanted, so God granted one, Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin. Though he looked like a king, his heart was not wholly devoted to God, so God soon rejected Him from being king.

God Chose David and Gave Him the Kingdom:

This time God chose a youth from the tribe of Judah to be king. David had to wait a while to receive the kingdom, but in the meantime he tended his father's sheep, fought a giant, served Saul as a soldier and musician, and because of Saul's unpredictable jealous rages, he also spent a lot of time on the run. After Saul died David was made king. Israel prospered, because David had a heart "after God's own heart". He made some pretty big mistakes, but He was quick to repent, and God was faithful to forgive. The Lord also promised David that his son would sit on his throne forever.

God Gave Israel Rest under Solomon:

For starters, after David died, his son, Solomon, ruled on the throne of Israel. Solomon was known all over the world for his great wisdom. God also gave him riches and a restful, prosperous reign, during which he built a temple for the Lord according the plans his father David made. This was the peak of Israel's kingdom.

God grows the nation into a kingdom.

PRUNING THE NATION

God Divided Israel into Two Kingdoms:

But sadly Solomon's many foreign wives led his heart away from the Lord to worship idols. This was God's response to Solomon: **(20) "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."** Sure enough, in the days of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, God divided the kingdom of Israel. The territory of Judah remained with him, but the northern tribes were gathered under Solomon's servant, Jeroboam. The northern kingdom continued to be called Israel, while the southern kingdom was called Judah.

God Sent Israel to Assyria:

Jeroboam led the northern kingdom into further idol worship right from the start. Israel never recovered. God sent prophets to warn His people, but the kings did not heed His warnings. In 722 B.C. God finally dealt with their sin, removing them from the land as they were carried off to Assyria as prisoners.

God Sent Judah to Babylon:

The southern kingdom fared a little better for a little while. Though some kings led the people into idolatry, others were devoted to the Lord and brought reform. God also sent His servants, the prophets, with words of judgment and hope. Still, by 586 B.C. Judah's sins had piled up and the Lord punished them too. The Babylonians took the Jews away from their land into captivity.

God punishes His nation's idolatry.

RESTORING THE NATION

God Replaced Babylon with Persia:

During the Jews' captivity in Babylon, God gave dreams and visions to kings and prophets explaining what was going to take place in the future among the nations of the world. One dream revealed a statue of a man which had layers made of different materials. Each segment represented a different kingdom: head of gold - Babylon; followed by chest and arms of silver - Media-Persian Empire; thighs of bronze - Greece; and legs and feet of iron - Rome. There was more to it than that, but in short, the Babylonian Empire (gold) was soon conquered and replaced by the Medes and Persians (silver), consistent with God's word.

God Used Persia to Send His Nation Home:

Unlike Israel, God mercifully told Judah that their captivity was only for a limited time. After 70 years, God moved in the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to send his people back to their land, even supplying them with the finances to rebuild the temple of the Lord.

God Protected His Nation As They Rebuilt Their Home:

The process of rebuilding God's temple, the city of Jerusalem, and their homes was complicated by their enemies, but God delivered them over and over again. He provided leaders among the people to direct and encourage, and He continued to use the rulers of Persia to provide legal protection until the work was completed. God still spoke through His prophets during this time. The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, closes with these words: "**Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.**"

God restores and preserves His nation.

INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

VISITING THE NATION

God Sent a Messenger Before His Son:

For this next section I'm going to let the Bible tell a lot of the story, but first...

God seems to have been silent for about 400 years. After the last of the prophets spoke in the Old Testament, no word from the Lord was heard until 3-2 B.C. At that time God sent an angel to a priest (descendant of Aaron) named Zacharias, who was serving in the temple in Jerusalem. The angel gave him a message from the Lord: **(21) "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**"** God kept His word and soon Zacharias' wife gave birth to their son, John.

About six months into Elizabeth's pregnancy, one of her relatives, Mary, also received a visit from the same angel. Mary was a young virgin woman engaged to a man named Joseph (a

descendant of David). The angel's message to Mary was, (22) **"Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."** The Lord graciously clued in her fiancé, Joseph, and he took Mary as his wife but was not intimate with her until after Jesus was born (You can imagine the controversy).

John Preached a Baptism of Repentance:

The following excerpt provides some historical context as well as some details about John's ministry and preaching: (23) **"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'"** And introducing Jesus to the crowds, John said: **"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

Jesus Was Anointed with the Holy Spirit:

Not much is said about Jesus' childhood. Instead the narrative really picks up around the time He begins His public ministry to Israel: (24) **"When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age".** (25) **" Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."** (26) **"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil."** Jesus, unlike Adam and Eve, did not give in to the devil's temptations, but replied with active faith in God's word.

God enters into the story of His nation.

REJECTED BY THE NATION

Jesus Taught; Jesus Healed; Jesus Was Rejected:

God revealed Himself to His people through the ministry of Jesus. Jesus taught about God's kingdom to anyone who had ears to hear. He also validated His authoritative teaching by performing many miraculous signs and wonders. He fed multitudes, demonstrated his authority over creation, and gave true and lasting healing to many who were sick and oppressed; He even raised people from the dead. Many saw or heard and believed, but the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus and saw Him as a threat. Jesus had spoken challenging things against them. They rejected Jesus and plotted to get rid of Him.

God reveals Himself through Jesus.

SAVING THE NATION

Jesus Died:

Their plan to kill Jesus would not have succeeded if it had been theirs alone. What they did not realize was that Jesus had come to intentionally lay down His perfect life as a payment for the sins of the world. God used their evil plotting to carry out His plan. Listen to these words spoken by one of Jesus' followers after His resurrection: **(27) " Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."** So right when the nation of Israel was having a feast to celebrate a time in their history when God permitted the death of a lamb to take the place of the death of their sons, Jesus, the Lamb of God, died on a cross in the place of any who would believe in Him. Right before He breathed His last breath, He declared victoriously, **(28) "It is finished!"** Jesus had done what He came to do.

Jesus Was Buried:

Jesus was taken down from the cross and buried in the new tomb of one of His followers, several others noting the place of His burial. It was also sealed and heavily guarded by the Romans at the request of the Jewish leaders. Jesus had mentioned rising from the dead, and they didn't want His followers trying anything funny.

Jesus Was Raised from the Dead:

God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day: **(29) "God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."** The Roman guards were frightened by the severe earthquake and the blinding angel from heaven who came and rolled the heavy stone away, but were paid off by the Jewish leaders

to lie about what they saw. Still, Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection, and stayed with them for several weeks.

God makes a way for salvation.

FROM THE NATION...

Jesus Ascended to Heaven:

For forty days Jesus stayed with them and spoke to them about God's kingdom. He told them that He would soon be leaving to go to the Father, but would send them the Holy Spirit. He also gave them a mission to carry out: **(30) "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."** **(31) And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."**

God Poured out the Holy Spirit:

Just a few days later, on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus disciples were all in Jerusalem gathered together in one place. **(32) "And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."**

God Sent out His Witnesses:

From that day on, Jesus disciples went out boldly telling others about Jesus. They were witnesses of his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, as well as his teaching and miracles. They proclaimed to others the way of salvation: **(33) "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."** Very quickly the number of believers multiplied around Jerusalem and beyond.

God grows the church around Jerusalem.

...TO THE WORLD

Jesus Appointed Paul:

Many believed their message, but still, the majority of the Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus and the message of salvation by belief in His name. One young man affiliated with these leaders agreed to help arrest men and women who were part of this new sect. His name was Saul. He believed He was doing God a favor by getting rid of these so called Jewish "heretics", and would even travel to distant cities to hunt down followers of Jesus. On his way to one city, Jesus appeared to Saul. From that time on everything was different. God said about Saul, who was also called Paul, (34) **"he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."**

Many Jews Rejected Paul's Preaching:

Paul faithfully and immediately embraced Jesus' call on His life. God had made it clear that the message of salvation through Jesus was for all the world, so Paul's job was to travel all over and tell people the good news. He also wrote letters to Christians all over the world (this is where we get the book of Romans). Everywhere he went, He would first preach in the local synagogues to the Jews. Some believed, but mostly they rejected the gospel. This too was somehow part of God's plan.

God Opened a Door of Faith to the Gentiles:

As the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul would share it with non-Jews (also called Gentiles or sometimes Greeks). Paul said at one point, (35) **"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" The response was opposite among the Gentiles. Some did not believe, but many more *were* believing. As Paul reported, God had indeed (36) **"opened a door of faith to the Gentiles."** With growth also came persecution. But God has used the persecution of His people to purify and grow His church in that and every age since. Today we are still in this chapter of God's story. God's church is comprised largely of non-Jewish people. But, as we'll explore later on in our study on Romans, God still has good plans for the nation of Israel.**

God grows the church among the nations.

NEW BEGINNINGS

God Showed John Things to Come:

This section mainly covers the flow of the book of Revelation (the last book of the Bible). The content of this book was revealed to the apostle John while he was in prison because of his faith. Jesus' instructions for him were, (37) **"Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things."** A lot of what we know about what is yet to come, comes from this book.

God Will Finally Punish All Evil:

As we look at the revelation of Jesus, we can sum up what God has shown us about His future actions like we did at the beginning: God gives life and punishes sin. From sin in the church, to the final punishment of Babylon and all spiritual forces of evil, to everyone who has not put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, God *will* punish sin. Jesus explains that the final judgment will (38) **"be the second death, the lake of fire."**

God Will Give Eternal Life in the New Jerusalem:

Similarly, God *will* give life. His promise of eternal life centers around the new heaven and new earth, and the new Jerusalem. Listen to John's description of what Jesus showed him: (39) **"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."**

God give life and punishes sin.