

- (Picture) This is Thomas Andrews. The shipbuilder of the Titanic. He was on board the Titanic when it sank. Andrews had said of the Titanic’s design that it was "as nearly perfect as human brains can make her." Along with many others, Andrews expected that the Titanic could not sink.

Imagine building something that amazing, only to have it destroyed before your eyes. He had built something amazing. Something impressive. Something remarkable. But when the Titanic hit that iceberg on April 14, 1912, it sank in an hour. Gone. How do you think he would have felt as it sank? How would he have felt watching that boat descend into the ocean, killing 1,507 people?

## WHAT GOD DID (1-7)

What had God done in Israel?

God had planted a vineyard.

His vineyard **was** his people Israel. He had planted them and built them into his own people. He had cared for them and looked after them. And he had expectations – he expected his vineyard to produce good fruit: worship, justice, obedience...

But all that he got from Israel was **bad** fruit. Injustice, evil. Nothing good was coming from them.

What more could God have done? He gave them all they needed. He made them a great nation. He rescued them from Egypt. He kept them alive in the desert for 40 years. He gave them a land to live in. He gave them laws to follow to help them live well. He protected them from their enemies.

What more could God have done?

Nothing.

God could not have done more for his people.

But all he gets from them is bad fruit.

So now, God will make Israel a wasteland. Israel will be destroyed.

## WHAT GOD’S PEOPLE DID (6 woes) (8-23)

*Woe to the people of God*

So what did God’s people do? There are 6 “woes” in this chapter:

### 1. **8** Woe to you who add house to house

The rich are buying more and more land and taking over the poor so the poor don’t even have land to earn a living off.

2. **11**Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks,  
They're life revolves around getting drunk!

3. **18**Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit,

4. **20**Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,

5. **21**Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.  
They THINK they're really clever. They rely on their own intelligence rather than  
relying on God.

6. **22**Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing  
drinks, **23**who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.  
God's people are **unjust**. There is no justice in Israel for the innocent.

God is a God of justice, but his people are a people of **injustice**. The vineyard he planted  
has produced **nothing** good.

And what does God say about that? Verse 12:

- **12***They have harps and lyres at their banquets, pipes and timbrels and wine, but  
they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands.*

So what will God do?

### **WHAT GOD WILL DO (24-30)**

God will do 3 things:

1. Verse 13: The people will be exiled. Driven out from their land. God will throw  
them out of the Promised Land.
2. Verse 16: The Lord will be exalted. God will exalt his name by taking out justice  
on his people. Because God is a God of justice, he cannot let his people continue  
to live like this. Sin **MUST** be dealt with. Because it reflects on His name.
3. Verse 26: God will bring justice.
  - **26***He lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of  
the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily!*

God will lift up a banner and wave the other nations in. He'll wave a big metaphorical  
flag to say to the other nations, "OK – come on into Jerusalem and destroy them.  
They're yours for the taking!"

It's a pretty hopeless picture for Israel, but the big idea that we see in this chapter is  
this:

**God is a God of justice.**

God doesn't **WANT** to have to bring this judgement on his people, But he **WILL**. And he  
**MUST**. Because he **MUST** uphold his name. He cannot let Israel go on treating each

other like this and ignoring the poor and hurting the oppressed, because it disrespects his name.

### **God is a God of justice.**

What does that mean for US today?

**Ohio** – Recently, you probably heard of the 3 girls in Cleveland Ohio who were held captive in a basement for 10 years. Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Night were held captive by a 52 year old man, Castro. Michelle Night even became pregnant and had a baby by him. She also miscarried **5 times** because she was repeatedly starved and punched by Castro.

Throughout the world people are in shock over this story. Disgusted. Angry. People want justice. These things are horrifying. There are people doing these things to other people all the time and it's not right. And we cry out for justice!

And God wants justice too. But God wants justice for EVERY crime, and for EVERY sin against him. God wants justice for **your** sin and **my** sin. You see, many of us think "we're not that bad!" We've never locked anyone up in a basement for 10 years. Rape, murder, all that stuff – we've never done it. But sin is sin. God sees rape and murder, but he also sees our lies and our lust, our greed and adultery, our gossip and slander, our cheating and evil thoughts. And he wants justice for that sin. God must have justice for EVERY sin.

Romans 3:23 –

- **23** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

God wants justice for every sin. And where do we see that justice?

#### **1. First of all, we see God's justice in Jesus**

God's greatest act of justice was seen in the death of Jesus on the cross. On the cross, God showed us that he WILL NOT ignore sin. He WILL NOT let it go unpunished. But BECAUSE he loves us so much, he was prepared to take out his punishment on Jesus, for the sins of all humanity.

Listen to the next verse from Romans 3:24

- **24** *and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

We have **all** sinned, we **all** fall short, but we can **ALL** be justified freely! **ALL** of us are guilty. But all of us can be forgiven.

Think about these 4 key words:

- We are **JUSTIFIED**. God has acted out his **justice**. Jesus has taken the punishment from God **for us**, so we are now **justified** – we are **right** with God. All of our sin is taken away.
- We are justified **FREELY** – it costs us nothing! It is God's GIFT to us.

- We are justified freely, by his **GRACE** – Jesus’ death for us was undeserved. That’s what grace is. We didn’t deserve it because of our sin against God. But he did it anyway, because he loves us.
- We are justified freely by his grace, through **REDEMPTION**. A price has been paid for us. We have been bought, paid for, by God. Purchased by him from the jaws of sin and death. And the cost was Jesus on the cross.

Think about that word “Redeemed”. That means ***we belong to God***. He **paid** for us to be free. We are HIS people. HIS children. HIS nation. We belong to a God of justice, and so, like Israel, we are called to be a ***people*** of justice.

And that’s the second place we SHOULD see God’s justice.

## **2. We SHOULD see God’s justice in his people. In us.**

God expects us to be just: towards each other, and towards him.

So are we people of justice? Two questions:

### **1. Do we cheat other people?**

How do we show justice to other people?

Of course there are the obvious examples: to seek justice for the poor, the oppressed, the homeless, the refugee. Christians cannot ignore these issues. We actually don’t have a choice. We care about these things because God cares about them. What is each one of us doing for these injustices in our own society?

But showing justice is also about being fair and right with everyone. We can be unjust by cheating on taxes or being dishonest in business. But we can also be unjust in the way we treat other people day to day. By simply not showing people grace, like God has showed us. By not being forgiving. By judging people unfairly. By taking advantage of them in a relationship. Parents can be unjust by robbing their children of time with them. We can be unjust in the way we serve at church by not meeting our commitments. Being just and right and fair is important to us as God’s people, because God is just.

The second question is this:

### **2. Do we cheat God?**

Israel disrespected God. They had no respect for the work of his hands.

We cheat God, we disrespect him, when we do not respect his work. When we ignore the way he is caring for us. When we come to him in prayer asking for a million things on a wish list and never thank him, and never praise him.

We disrespect him when we are not generous with our gifts, our time, our finances. When we fail to give God what he ***deserves*** from us, when we fail to recognize that EVERYTHING WE HAVE comes from him.

## **Conclusion**

Let me conclude just with this thought: God has MADE us his people. He sent Jesus to justify us freely by his grace and he redeemed us. We are his vineyard. What fruit are we producing? Since we have a God of justice, are we people of justice?