

## THE WRATH OF GOD. WHAT IS IT?

Have you ever had someone tell you, "To hell with God! I did not ask to be born! I am nothing but a puppet and if I don't do what He says, He's going to burn me! What's with that? You can have Him!" Or, have you ever had someone tell you, "I want nothing to do with your damning God!" Have you ever had someone tell you "I tried to be like Jesus, but I couldn't? I like the God of the Old Testament."

Sadly, I have. What is the truth about the God who is considered to be the epitome of love? Would you drown, burn or bury alive your child if he rejected your love? Would that be considered love among humans? Would that be considered mercy? Would that be considered justice? Why no. You would likely spend the rest of your life in prison and rightly so. Yet some would reasonably argue that, though we humans cannot understand the God of love, His justice is no less love than His mercy? We would agree. But to see God's love in His "wrath" as more than a theoretical acknowledgment is the purpose of this study. If we are to escape the wrath of God we must know Him as He truly is.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.

God assures us that in the last days we will better understand the wrath of God.

Jeremiah 23:19, 20 Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until He have executed, and till He have performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

So, let us "consider" the "anger" or wrath of God, whose prophet Jeremiah foresaw would be more "perfectly" understood in the latter days. Is there a difference between God's wrath and man's wrath?

James 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

From this text we see that man's wrath does not equal the righteousness of God. In other words, God's wrath is righteous but man's wrath is unrighteous. This should not surprise us for the Scriptures declare that God's ways and thoughts are not the same as ours.

Isaiah 55:8, 9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We know that there is a time of trouble spoken of in the scriptures called the wrath of God. This is by far the most graphic language of retribution for the rejecters of God's grace.

Revelation 14:9-11. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

The mark of the beast crisis is the final test to come upon mankind when probation finally closes for the human race and the seven last plagues are poured out. Christ then comes to harvest His saints and take them to heaven. Daniel describes these plagues as "the time of trouble such as never was" (Daniel 12:1). The Bible also tells us,

Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Such biblical language evokes the popular inference that there comes a time when a normally all-loving God, whose “mercies endure forever,” in a “strange act” of abrupt reversal reverts to “wrath,” which they understand to be a direct lethal attack by God, attended by punishing earthquakes, plagues, and assault angels assigned to induce suffering and death on all dissenters from His law. They declare matter-of-factly that the Scriptures are plain in their meaning, that by definition “God is love” and therefore whatever He does is loving, though it would not normally be construed as an expression of love.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Could it be that the old serpent from the very beginning of this earth’s history has been artfully successful in deceiving us regarding the true nature of the “God of Love?”

Early on in the Garden of Eden, God tried to warn our first parents that sin, the transgression of God’s laws, would lead to death.

Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Scripture warns of the wily foe that insinuated in the garden that sin would not cause death, that instead they would experience an exalted state of being, suggesting that, without God, they could distinguish between good and evil. Satan spoke to Eve suggesting that surely sin would not lead to death, that God could not be trusted but was selfishly keeping her from further enlightenment.

Genesis 3:4, 5. Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Far from enlightenment, notice that the result of Adam and Eve’s sin led to their being afraid of God and hiding from Him. Once they sinned there was a change. But what changed—God’s attitude toward man or man’s perception of God? God says,

Malachi 3:6 For I am the Lord, I change not:

What is the possibility we share Adam and Eve’s misconception of God’s attitude toward us in favor of Satan’s lie that sin will not lead to death and that God is not to be trusted? Is death, the penalty of sin, imposed by God or the inevitable result of sin? How have you interpreted Hebrews 10:31?

Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

What is God’s attitude toward us?

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

What does Jeremiah mean by “an expected end?” “Expected” translates a **cord**, an **attachment**. In other words, the inevitable end result of your choice whether it be righteous or wicked. Notice, Biblically “expectation” does not necessarily refer to what we expect but to what God expects according to the principle that effect follows cause.

Proverbs 26:2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

David's expectation was salvation. He chose to repent of his sin and be righteous.

Psalm 62:5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. 1) Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation.

However, whether or not they expect it, the "expectation" of the wicked is destruction because they cherish wickedness and will not separate from it.

Proverbs 11:23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

How does God feel about the destruction of the wicked?

Ezekiel 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Consider that the "long-suffering" of God doesn't simply imply waiting but a forbearing fortitude, suffering a long time."

Let's return to the Genesis account of Satan's artful deceptions regarding the attitude of God toward the first sinners. In just a few words Satan insinuates great lies regarding the nature of sin and the nature of God, specifically that sin will not lead to death and that God is not to be trusted.

Genesis 3:4, 5 Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

In fewer words a great truth about sin's effect on our perception of God shouts from God's question,

Genesis 3:9 Where art thou?

Did God not know where they were? Had He separated from them or they from Him? If God knew where they were, wasn't He really asking, "Why are you hiding? Do you really believe that I would hurt you? Have you believed Satan's insinuation that I am self-exalting and cannot be trusted? Do you believe that sin does not lead to death and that I am more to be feared than sin?"

We find Paul describing the wrath of God, the inevitable result of sin in Romans chapters one and two. Let's see if he will answer these questions for us.

*What* is the wrath of God?  
*Who or what* is it directed toward?  
*How* is it directed?  
*When* is it directed?  
*What* is the result?

Paul begins the heart of his message to the Romans in verses 16-17. It is the gospel, the life and work of Christ that is the power that can save anyone from the sins that lead to wrath, that is, separation from God, the source of life.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

What does salvation encompass? Yes, it saves us from eternal death, but to do that it must also save us from sinning, the cause of the death.

Matthew 1:21 Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.

It is not God who separates from us, but through sin we separate from Him.

Isaiah 59:1, 2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.

What is the gospel of Christ? The gospel is described as the righteousness, the goodness, the love and mercy of God the Father as revealed in Jesus.

Romans 1:17 For therein [in the gospel of Christ] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

John 14:9 He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

In Romans 8:3, Paul states that Christ came "In the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be revealed in us."

What is the above verse trying to tell us? Because of the sin problem, Christ partook of human nature and was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:14, 15.

How did Christ condemn sin in the flesh? By overcoming in all points. By this victorious power of the "*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:2), He empowers us to also overcome and experience the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. What is this power? It is beholding the goodness of God, the love of God manifested in the flesh. This salvation from sin and its result is the whole purpose of God's sending His son to humanity in an attempt to reveal His true character, and to restore His character in us. Christ partook of the human nature, that we might partake of the divine nature.

Hebrew 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The result of not partaking of the divine nature leads to partaking of the wrath of God.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Who hold what truth in unrighteousness? The truth of the gospel and the wrath of God. What does wrath have to do with the gospel? John 3:16 answers this question for us. God gave His Son that we might not perish, that is, experience the inevitable wrath that comes from sinning.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Did you notice that the wrath is directed against the ungodliness and not the ungodly? These are men who “hold the truth in unrighteousness,” who “Have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.” 2 Timothy 3:5.

God has been faithful to reveal His goodness, His character, in more than one way so that no one has an excuse not to know Him.

Romans 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in [to] them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20) For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Even creation speaks of the love of God toward us.

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handywork.

What is the result of not having the right understanding of the character and purpose of God? We will read in verses 21, 22 that they became vain in their imaginations professing themselves to be wise. They bought into Satan’s lie that your eyes will be opened and you can become your own god, discerning for yourself right from wrong, you can decide your own standard of righteousness, you do not need to obey God. Because they did not seek to “know” God, their foolish heart was darkened and they became fools.

Revelation 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Paul elsewhere describes how deception comes.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send [allow] them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

Notice Romans 1:23, “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God,” What is the *glory* of God?

And he [Moses] said, I beseech thee, shew me thy *glory*. And He said, I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the LORD before thee; Exodus 33:18, 19.

So God’s glory is His character, His goodness.

Continuing on in Romans 1:23, “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.” They “became vain in their imaginations,” verse 21, by imagining the glory or *character* of God to be like themselves, and the result was that, “their foolish heart was darkened.”

Psalms 50:21 reads, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:” But as we read earlier, His thoughts and ways are not like our thoughts and ways.

Not only did they change the glory of God into an image like unto themselves, but they changed the glory of God “into birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Romans 1:23

Exodus 20:4, 5 tell us,

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them for I the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

Why is God jealous? He is jealous for our salvation knowing that no other god can create or sustain life, neither can they save us from the wrath to come as God honors our choices and gives us up to natural consequences.

“Wherefore,” [for this reason], “God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.” Romans 1:24

We see a form of speech not once but three times in Romans chapter one. Here in verse 24 it states “God also gave them up,” in verse 26 it states that, “For this cause God gave them up,” and in verse 28 it says, “God gave them over.”

1. To what does God give us up?
2. Why does He give us up?
3. When does He give us up?
4. What is the result of His giving us up or giving us over?

Let’s answer these questions one at a time.

### 1} To what does God give us up or give us over?

Romans 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up unto **uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.**

James traces cause and effect from lust to sin, and from sin to death.

James 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Notice next how God honors our persistent, willful attachment to sin by yielding regretfully to our fateful exercise of free choice.

Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto **vile affections.**

Romans 1:28 God gave them over to **a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.**

Psalms 81:11, 12 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto **their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.**

2 Chronicles 30:7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up **to desolation,** as ye see.

Hosea 11:8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Admah and Zeboim were cities that suffered destruction with Sodom and Gomorrah, yet God is grieving over Ephraim, not wanting to “give thee up....as Admah....as Zeboim.” Did He also give them up?

## 2) Why does God give us up or give us over?

Romans 1:23, 24 . . . and **changed the glory of the uncorruptible God** into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up. . .

Romans 1:25 Who **changed the truth of God** into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator which is blessed for ever. Amen. 26) For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.

God gave them up because they changed the glory, the truth regarding the character or goodness of God, into a lie. Character is made up of thoughts and feelings. Remember what Jeremiah 29:11 taught us, that God’s thoughts toward man are not of evil but of peace to give them an expected end, that is, to “*give them up*” to the natural result of their choice, to that to which they are attached, “*the lusts of their own hearts.*” (Romans 1:24) In other words, God granted them their hearts’ desire.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over. . .

Psalms 81:11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

2 Chronicles 30:7, 8 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

Hosea 4:17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

Ephraim was given up (Hosea 11:8) because he was joined to idols. In this verse “*let him alone*” is the same thing as “*gave him up.*” Remember what “*expected*” meant? Strong’s defined it’s root as a chord, an attachment, (joined).

## 3. When does He “give us up” or “give us over”?

Romans 1:28 reveals the condition at which we are given over as that of a “**reprobate mind.**”

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Romans 2:5, 6 describe the reprobate as having a hardened, impenitent heart. The Scriptures also describe this condition as the grieving away of the Spirit, the searing of the conscience, the sealing. It is often referred to as the unpardonable sin, the sin that is not confessed.

But after thy hardness and impenitent, [unrepentant] heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

We have the assurance of forgiveness if we confess our sin. If we are not forgiven it is only because we have not sought for it.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Another way of describing the righteous judgment of God is found in Galatians 6:7 where it says,  
Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Paul speaks of this alienated condition in Ephesians 4:18, 19 where he says,

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

#### 4. What is the result of His “giving us up” or “giving us over”?

In Romans 1:27, we find that those who have found themselves in this condition because of the choices of their hardened hearts receive in themselves that recompense or end result of their error which was meet, or due.

Romans 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and **receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.**

Romans 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of **death.**

Romans 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself **wrath against the day of wrath** and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds, . . . 8) But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

2 Chronicles defines the result of our being given up as desolation.

2 Chronicles 30:7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to **desolation**, as ye see.

Admah and Zeboim along with Sodom and Gomorrah were given up and suffered the wrath of God.

Hosea 11:8 How shall I **give thee up**, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Jude 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the **cities about them** [Admah, Zeboim] in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire.**

Let's look at some other harmonizing Scriptures that further unveil the correct biblical definition of the wrath of God. In the following verses we'll discover that the wrath of God is repeatedly described as His hiding His face, reluctantly giving us over to reap the consequences of our choices, while at the same time He suffers great grief, filled with deep emotion that He must remove His protective care, no longer permitted to spare us.

The flood was the first universal manifestation of divine wrath against wickedness. It parallels with the upcoming second universal manifestation of divine wrath. By examining the biblical explanation of wrath in the first universal destruction we can better understand the wrath of God at the final universal destruction of the wicked.



The Bible is plain in its language that God destroyed man and beast in the flood. However, this study will help us understand **how** He destroyed. In our study "The Bible Must Be Allowed To Interpret Itself," we learned that the Scriptures describe God as actively doing that which He simply allows, which has proved very misleading to those whose superficial reading of the plain statements of Scripture fail to examine the language beyond a surface reading. See our study "The Wrath of God Revealed at the Flood" where these insights are more fully developed.

God mercifully strives with man for 120 years attempting to save him from the wages of sin.

Genesis 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: **yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.**

Man finally reaches the point where he is sealed or hardened in his choice to sin.

Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every** imagination of the thoughts of his heart was **only** evil **continually.**

When man eventually rejects His Spirit, God will comply with His wishes and remove His Spirit.

Job 22:15 Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? 16) Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: 17) Which said unto God, **Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?**

It is with intense emotion that God removes His Spirit and His protection.

Genesis 6:6 And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it **grieved Him at His heart.**

In the following verse, we have an example of Christ's wrath against the Pharisees who were plotting to kill Him.

Mark 3:5 And when He had looked round about on them with anger, **being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,** He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand.

The inevitable result of their choice follows. Just as there is seen cause and effect in weather calamities today, so there was as well at the flood. In the story of Job we see that Satan had power to manipulate the weather to bring destruction upon Job's servants, children and animals, so today his destructive power can also be witnessed.

Genesis 6:7 And the LORD said, **I will destroy man** whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Ezekiel 22:31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: **their own way have I recompensed upon their heads,** saith the Lord GOD.

God was only able to spare those who trusted in Him by getting into the ark.

2 Peter 2:5 And **spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person,** a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

The anger or wrath of God is His hiding His face from the wicked, His forsaking them because they have forsaken Him.

Psalms 27:9 **Hide not thy face** far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither **forsake** me, O God of my salvation.

2 Chronicles 15:2b. . . and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; **but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you.**

Ezra 8:22b. . . The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and **His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.**

It is widely understood that God is intolerant of sin and will eventually destroy those who refuse to obey Him. Was this true at the flood or did God actually step in and save humanity from utter annihilation?

Isaiah 54:7-9 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8) In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9) For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

In the following verses we see again elsewhere in Scripture how the wrath of God is poured out on the impenitent.

Deuteronomy 29:20 The LORD **will not spare him**, but then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

Deuteronomy 31:17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will **forsake** them, and I will **hide my face** from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall **befall** them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, **because our God is not among us?** 18) And I will surely **hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

Deuteronomy 32:20 And He said, I will hide my face from them, **I will see what their end shall be:** for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.

Deuteronomy 32:29 O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; **their foot shall slide in due time:** for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. 36) For the LORD shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. 37) And He shall say, **Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted,** 38) Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? **let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.**

We have yet another example of how the Scriptures describe God as actively doing the killing, yet the previous verses actually describe the way in which God kills.

Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: **I kill**, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

We have taken a look at the first example of the wrath of God as it was poured out on the entire world, but the next time He pours out His wrath on the entire world has been described as "His strange work."

Isaiah 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act.

What does “strange” mean? Would it be strange for Him to eventually destroy the whole world if He had already been actively involved in destructive judgments since the flood? God’s “strange act” will not be inconsistent with who He is, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, (Hebrews 13:8). Let us take a close look at this verse with the help of Strong’s definitions and see if we may have been mistaken in our understanding of “strange.”

Isaiah 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth [Strong’s 7264; to quiver (with any violent emotion, especially anger or fear)] as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange [Strong’s 2114; a primitive root; to turn aside] work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act.

For a God whose mercies endure forever how apt to translate “to turn aside” as strange.

### Summary:

The wrath of God is biblically defined as the natural recompense of our error which is meet (due), death or desolation. It is directed toward the “ungodliness” and “unrighteousness” and not against the ungodly or the unrighteous. It is the “expected end,” that is, the “cord” or result that is “attached” to the choices we make according to the laws that govern cause and effect. It occurs when we have so rejected the goodness of God that our hearts have become impenitent and hardened in the choice we have made. God not only honors our God-given choice but grieves over it, knowing the inevitable result,

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Romans 6:23

... sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. James 1:15

Do not err, my beloved brethren. James 1:16

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. James 1:17

Do not err regarding what? Do not err regarding what brings forth death—sin. Death is either the inevitable result of sin or an imposed result of sin. What did God mean in the garden when He said, “For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die?” He either was warning of the inevitable results of sin or He was saying, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely be put to death.” Which is correct?

We have seen God suffer long “not willing that any should perish.” We’ve seen Adam and Eve’s sin evoke fear of punishment by God, while the all-knowing God harmlessly asks, “Where are you?” We’ve asked, “What is wrath, to whom is it directed, how, when and where?” We’ve discovered that God’s wrath has been described as His hiding His face from us because of our cherished sins, those sins to which we are attached.

We also observed that, “God shall send them strong delusions,” who “receive not the love of truth,” but “change the glory [character] of the incorruptible God” into images “made like to corruptible man,” and having “changed the truth of God into a lie” by imagining the glory or *character* of God to be like themselves, they interpret God’s wrath to be like their own. But we know that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

We saw three times in Romans 1 that in order for men to receive “in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet,” also described as “death,” or “wrath against the day of wrath” (Romans 1:27, 32; 2:5), God simply “gave them up” (v. 24, 26), or “gave them over” (v. 28) “unto uncleanness” (v. 24) to reap that which they have sown.

We saw that those “overflowed with a flood” commanded God to “Depart from us” with Job’s friend asking “and what can God do?” We learned that the irretrievable condition in which God forsakes us is this — “if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you,” This is how “His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.” We saw that God parallels “be wroth with thee” with “hid my face from thee...” and elsewhere that “my anger shall be kindled against them” was explained as “I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them: so that they will say in that day, “Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us.”

In Deuteronomy Chapter 32 we saw that God does not actively cause the end of those whose forsaking He ultimately honors by turning away, but rather that He “will see what their end shall be,” (v. 20) that “Their foot shall slide in due time.” (v. 35) “And He shall say “Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted,” (v. 37) “let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.” Later God summarizes saying, “See now that I, even I, am He and there is no god with me: I kill, I make alive, I wound, and I heal. . .” (v. 39)

We have learned from the primitive root for “strange” that, “His strange act” means “to turn aside,” which hints nothing of a direct assault to destroy but rather of letting go, no longer protecting from natural and Satanic forces unleashed when God ceases to mercifully intervene.

Returning to our opening verse, let’s consider again Jeremiah 23:20:

Jeremiah 23:20 The anger of the LORD shall not return, until He have executed, and till He have performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

What is it that we will “consider perfectly” “in the latter days?” Will we more perfectly than in earlier days consider how relentlessly an angry God executes judgment to perform the destructive thoughts of His heart? Mankind, especially pagans, have long considered that deities have it in their heart to execute great harm in their anger against those who ultimately cross their will. Will we rather grasp as never before that the thoughts of God’s heart are “thoughts of peace and not evil, to give [us] an expected [attached] end.” What is our expectation? Is it of salvation or of wrath? (See Psalm 62:5, 1 and Proverbs 11:23)

Romans 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7) To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8) But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

God desires that we be His witnesses, the first fruits of His righteousness, His character, His love, His wrath.

Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. James 1:18

So then, let us reflect His divine nature,

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. James 1:19, 20.

In light of what we have learned exploring the scriptural meaning of wrath, prayerfully contemplate these corroborating quotes from the pen of Ellen White for your consideration.

Desire of Ages 22.1

“The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, ‘with healing in His wings.’” Malachi 4:2.

1888 Messages, 386.9

“The understanding of the people of God has been blinded; for Satan has misrepresented the character of God. Our good and gracious Lord has been presented before the people clothed in the attributes of Satan, and men and women who have been seeking for truth, have so long regarded God in a false light that it is difficult to dispel the cloud that obscures His glory from their view. Many have been living in an atmosphere of doubt, and it seems almost impossible for them to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel of Christ.”

Great Controversy, 535.2

“He [Satan] leads them to misconstrue strong expressions of Scripture, giving to the language the coloring of bitterness and malignity which pertains to himself, but not to our Creator. ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?’” Ezekiel 33:11,

Review & Herald, June 3, 1880 par. 9

“The people of God should awaken to a keen perception of the grievous character of transgression. Sin is disguised, and many are deceived in regard to its nature. Satan has planned it thus, that the understanding may be clouded, the spiritual vision obscured, the perceptive faculties of the soul blunted. But God would not have one of us to be ensnared, therefore the nature of sin is faithfully portrayed in the inspired pages,—its offensive character before God, its corruption, its shame, and its results. Everything has been done that God could do to save man from the power of sin, which defaces the divine image, frustrates God's purpose in man's existence, degrades his God-given powers, narrows his capacity, leads to unholy imaginations, and gives loose rein to unsanctified passions. Sin! how hateful in the sight of God! Holy angels look upon it with abhorrence.”

4 Testimonies, 232, 233

“God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite understanding will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith.”

Desire of Ages, 471.1

“It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.”

Great Controversy, 35

“Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.”

Desire of Ages, 763

“Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Mal. 4:1),--Satan the root, and his followers the branches. . .

“This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is ‘alienated from the life of God.’ Christ says, ‘All they that hate me love death.’ Eph. 4:18; Prov. 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.

“At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.”

The Faith I Live By, 178

“God has given to men a declaration of His character, and of His method of dealing with sin. . . . ‘All the wicked will He destroy.’ Psalm 145:20. . . . Yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being. . .

“And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes.”

Great Controversy, 36

“We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.