

God's Wrath At The Flood

In our study "The Bible Interprets Itself" as posted on propheciesoflove.com and on my YouTube channel "Prophecies of Love," in a three part series we explored many biblical statements that if interpreted at face value using popular definitions would prove the Bible self-contradictory, internally inconsistent, and hence not a book whose God should be regarded as anything less than highly suspect if not a pure fabrication.

We observed there however that by cross-referencing Bible word usage and the defining events and principles with which they are associated, we can discover how to understand biblical terminology by deriving definitions from multiple instances of usage, thereby resolving the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in defense of God's character and the loving principles by which He governs.

In this study we begin by observing several manners of speech related to the flood which similarly, if taken at face value, leave the reader at best puzzled at God, and at worst leads them to reject Him as a loveless tyrant. We sympathize with those who look at the simple language and have difficulty concluding that it does not entirely mean what it says. Of those who take it literally in the popular vernacular two groups emerge. One group reasons that if God acts as they infer, He is not to be respected as a God of Love and liberty, but should be rejected as either a phantom invention of religion or a Creator worthy of the rebellion of His creatures. The other group of literalists believe that regardless of what they infer God does, it must be classified as loving because by definition "God is love." They therefore make little effort to defend their interpretation of God's behavior, although, were it any human, it would subject them to imprisonment or execution. This raises a question about how well those who are comfortable with the face value of biblical language can vindicate the God of love? In defense of His worthiness to be worshiped and trusted as a God of love do they want not only to understand His love language but also to convincingly explain to a skeptical world that God is not the destroyer misconstrued Bible language at times makes Him appear?

Below we've listed four verses containing perplexing manners of speech related to the flood.

1. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. Genesis 6:6
2. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Genesis 6:13
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. Genesis 6:3
4. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. Genesis 9:16

In this study, The Wrath of God Revealed at the Flood, we develop answers to four questions to which the above four perplexing verses give rise:

1. Why would a sinless God repent?
2. What does "is come before me" mean and what is God's solution to the end of all flesh?
3. Why wouldn't a loving God "always strive with man?"
4. Does God need to be reminded of His promise?

Question 1. Why would a sinless God repent?

How do we interpret seeming contradictions in the Scriptures? Can we always apply the same definitions to God as we do to man?

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

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

Since God does not sin, then His repentance must differ from ours.

Question 2. What does "is come before me" mean and what is God's solution to "the end of all flesh?"

Because man inhabits mortal flesh God determined He must save whom He could save within the next 120 years. He knew if He did not intervene to protect those obedient few who could be trusted with the continuation of the human race, the continual evil imagination of man would lead to the entire self-destruction of the human race as surely as death follows sin.

Genesis 6:13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

What does "The end of all flesh is come before me" mean? Was God seeing that the earth was so filled with violence that it would lead to the end of all humanity if He didn't intervene, or is God saying, "it has come to my attention that I should put an end to all flesh because of their wickedness?"

Is it possible that without divine intervention humanity is capable of destroying the earth? Revelation tells us that it is possible for humanity to destroy the earth.

Revelation 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

The Bible seems to say that God's solution to "the end of all flesh," is to destroy all flesh. It doesn't make sense that God would need to destroy all flesh if it were true that "the end of all flesh" had come before Him. The solution to the problem, "the end of all flesh," would be to save as many as would believe rather than to allow them to be destroyed.

Genesis 6:13 The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Just what does it mean that He "will destroy them with the earth?" I'm reminded of the verse in Proverbs 26:2 which reveals a cause and effect principle.

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

The following verse as well shares the same cause and effect principle.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Is it logical to suppose that God's solution to "the end of all flesh" was to destroy them? It may help at this time to remember the bigger picture presented in Genesis 3. The Scriptures record the enmity between Satan and Christ, between the wicked and the righteous. It is Satan who is at enmity with the righteous. His agenda was to prevent the Seed to be born that would eventually bruise his head.

Genesis 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.

The Seed the serpent would bruise was Christ. If he could prevent the Seed being born, it might assure his life and agenda to rule the universe. The verse below reveals that the ultimate seed that was promised to Abraham, was Christ.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

The controversy was then ultimately between the serpent and Christ. What better way for Satan to win the battle than to prevent the "seed" from manifesting. If he could destroy all the righteous seed, Christ would never be born and would not be able to bruise his head.

God found a way to prevent "the end of all flesh." He commissioned Noah to build an ark and to "strive with all flesh" (Genesis 6:3) starting 120 years before the impending flood in order to save as many as would be saved from the coming destruction, thereby preserving the righteous seed and assuring the birth of Christ and the bruising of the serpents head, ultimately winning the great controversy.

Question 3. Why wouldn't a loving God "always strive with man?"

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.

What does God mean when He says, my Spirit will not always strive with man? Does it suggest 1) that God is warning that His Spirit will eventually reach the reasonable limits of patience and abandon striving in man's behalf, or 2) that God decided to appoint an arbitrary date after which He'd cease to strive with man, or 3) that God foresaw there would come a time when universally mankind would become so hardened against His Spirit that continuing to strive with man would be useless in that mankind would be non-responsive to His Spirit?

Let's gather biblical passages which when integrated provide an answer to question three, Why wouldn't a loving God "always strive with man?"

First, we'll explore the circumstances under which God's spirit can strive with man? Many suppose that God's sovereignty over the earth is absolute. In a sense that is true because He made it. We don't deny the sovereignty of God, but the real issue we are examining is, "what does He do with it?"

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 2) For He hath founded it upon the seas...

We find an absolute principle revealed in the Bible that the Sovereign does not have it in His character to force on man what is in man's best interest, but truly extends to us the dignity of willfully governing our own behaviour. On close examination it appears that what could be termed the law of liberty, the precious gift of free will to accept or reject God's counsel, is a freedom He will not violate.

Zechariah 4:6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

2Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

1Corinthians 13:5 Charity ... seeketh not her own...

Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

That liberty includes the freedom not to listen but to harden our hearts and thus cause our own destruction by rejecting saving knowledge from the Sovereign of the universe. As Psalm 81:11 below indicates, His respect for mankind's liberty not to hear obligates Him to give "them up unto their own hearts' lust," or as Hosea 4:6 puts it, "I will also reject thee..."

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

2Chronicle 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 4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the Land . . . 6) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee . . .

The three Bible passages above explain part of the flow from cause to effect regarding God's ceasing to strive with man. Logically expressed, if we reject the knowledge of God's truth and mercy, God's law of liberty obligates Him to "reject" us and we "are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

Effectively, rejecting a knowledge of God is equivalent to rejecting God. Likewise, that rejection results in God's giving them over to their choice, which is equivalent to God rejecting them, or as stated in Psalm 81:11, giving them "up to their own hearts' lust."

In Romans 1:24, 26, 28 the wrath of God is revealed in the phrases "God also gave them up," and "God gave them over to a reprobate (hardened) mind." For a deeper study see "The Wrath of God, What Is It" posted on our website <http://propheciesoflove.com>.

Notice next the appeals to Christians in the book of Hebrews, indicating that to hear His voice is not to harden your heart. On the other hand, to yield to the deceitfulness of sin is to harden your heart. One negates the other. There is no middle ground.

Hebrews 4:7 Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Not to "hear" that which you have been told, is another way of saying not to obey, as was the condition of virtually the whole of humanity before the flood, as 1Peter 3:20 establishes.

1Peter 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

How universally corrupt was the spiritual condition of man 120 years before the flood?

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.

Genesis 6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12) And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

The apostle Paul elaborates further on how not hearing and heeding causes the effect of grieving away God's Spirit when Paul urges Christ's followers to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind," the equivalence of which he contrasts in Ephesians 4 with "grieve not the holy Spirit of God...."

Ephesians 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27) Neither give place to the devil. 28) Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30) And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

By combining Genesis 6:11 and 1Peter 3:20 we observe that, "all flesh" had rejected a saving knowledge of God's ways having "corrupted his way upon the earth." "when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

On what had "God waited in the days of Noah" "when He looked upon the earth, and, behold it was corrupt." Was He awaiting a date He had set as a God-induced curse on humanity for rejecting Him? Was He waiting out the inevitable effect of sin which had "come before" Him, that is, come to His attention? Was He waiting for permission to intervene to prevent the flood? How does one decide? What is His involvement in the train of cause and effect?

One clue is set forth in Job where one of Job's friends says of the antediluvians: (those who lived before the flood).

Job 21:14 Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways 15) What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?... 20) His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

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 overflowed with a flood: 17) Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?

Notice it doesn't read "and what can the Almighty do *to* them" but rather "*for* them." If you want to do something for another, then at the basic level of language you are indicating that you want to improve on their well-being by doing something positive "for" them, not destroy them. The language suggests that God was deferring to man's liberty to reject His intervention in their behalf against an existing threat from which He wanted to protect them.

In this context the "wrath of the Almighty" in Job 21:20 would refer to what happens when God is not given permission to moderate the effects of natural laws and satanic manipulation of them. Today we hear a great deal about man's destructive effects on the global ecosystem, and we know from Revelation 11:18 that it is possible for man to destroy the earth. When we deal with our fourth question in section 4 we make a more detailed inquiry into the mechanisms of destruction both at the flood and the end of the world.

As proposed above, we've gathered many verses so far in answer to question 3, "Why wouldn't a loving God always strive with man?" As we combine the evidence a compelling, consistent explanation emerges:

God governs "not by might nor by power but by [His] Spirit," and that Spirit "is liberty," therefore those "on the other side of the flood" were given liberty to choose "whom ye will serve" because God's "Charity ... seeketh not her own." When "wicked men" "whose foundation was overthrown with a flood" "would not hearken to [God's] voice," "would none of [Him]," "trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers," wouldn't "Hear the word of the Lord," and therefore had "no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the Land" and subsequently were "destroyed for lack of knowledge" as their "hearts" were "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," because they refused to "hear His voice, the "Spirit of the Lord," which "is liberty," claimed no right to overrule the "gods which [their] fathers served" and thus respecting their God-given liberty ceased to strive with a people in universal rebellion who "say unto God, Depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Hence after 120 years "when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing," waiting with hope that some would be willing to "be renewed in the spirit," He "gave them up unto their own hearts' lust," "gave them up to desolation," and "what can the Almighty do for them?"

Understanding why God could no longer intervene, given the liberty He extends to humanity, leaves unanswered the question of how the flood came about after God ceased striving with man. 1) Did God cause it? 2) Did Satan cause it? 3) Did man cause it? 4) Or did natural law cause it?

Dare we suggest that while one may not be fully informed of the entire sequence of cause and effect leading to destruction, a better answer would be "All of the above." Lest you immediately object to the involvement of more than one destructive agency, that is God, consider the attack against Job and his family, one of several biblical examples of the complex flow from cause to destructive effect. Regarding Job's health, property and children, Satan proposed it, God agreed to it, and the rebellion of Job's children exposed them to the destructive natural law's manipulated by Satan. We can conclude from this story of Job, that Satan had control over the murder and destruction of Job's servants and animals. We can also conclude that Satan had control over the lightning that killed some of Job's servants and his animals. We can also conclude that Satan had control over the strong wind that destroyed Job's children. Why would we question whether Satan could also have control over the weather in the destruction of the world by flood?

As we consider the destruction that came to Job, we see the involvement of all four agencies; 1) God allowed it, 2) Satan implemented it by tempting man to destroy, 3) man submitted to the temptation, 4) Satan used natural natural law, lightning and wind to destroy.

Satan's deceptions can be easily seen in the few words he spoke to Eve when he tempted her. It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy, whether law can be transgressed or not.

Two opposing conclusions: God destroys or sin destroys?

Why does humanity generally perceive the flood as an act of God without seriously considering the possibility that sin, not God is the initial cause? We will discover that not only does Satan deceive, but sin does as well. The Scripture warns us that the devil has deceived the whole world. Due to the subtlety of Satan, and the very nature of sin, those deceptions are alive and well today.

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.

Who was telling the truth? God or Satan?

Genesis 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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.

What did Satan say regarding transgressing God's command?

Genesis 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5) 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.

Their eyes were opened and now they experienced guilt, shame and fear of God, which automatically accompanies sin.

Genesis 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10) And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

God has made it clear through the Scriptures that the cause of death is sin, not an arbitrary act of God.

James 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16) Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17) 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.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Romans 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Romans 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

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

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

1Corinthians 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

What is the Wrath of God?

Consider below how casual reference to such passages as Romans 1:18 and 2:5, which address the wrath of God without describing it, are popularly regarded as punishment God initiates in response to man's misapplication of His laws, rather than the natural effect caused by transgression of God's law.

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;

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;

Let's look beyond these verses to their context. Romans chapters one and two reference the wrath of God revealed from heaven. Contextually they speak of those with an "impenitent heart," who "became vain in their imaginations regarding the gospel of God." "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, . . ."gave them

up unto vile affections," . . ."gave them over to a reprobate mind . . . receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." "Meet" is translated from "necessary (as binding)." [See Strong's] Is an "error" binding because God will take a fresh initiative to punish you for it, or binding as a natural effect of misused law? Romans 7:5 above answers that the "motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."

These passages describe those who "hold the truth in unrighteousness" "changing the truth of God into a lie" and "changed the glory [character] of God" like unto themselves." The truth of God is meant to show us our need and thus bring us to repentance, but because we are attached to our sins, rejecting truth causes us to be unable to see the truth, and therefore we are left to the natural consequences of our sinful choices. The working mechanism of "the wrath of God" in Romans 1:18 is well explained by "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." James 1:15b. The wrath of God is not directed at the ungodly and unrighteous but at "all ungodliness and unrighteousness," which produce their natural, lawful effect—death.

2Chronicles 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.

Psalms 81:12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

Acts 7:42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets . . .

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.

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

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

The Lord speaking to Moses regarding the future of Israel said,

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 32:35 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.

Notice that God "will surely hide [His] face" because "they are turned unto other gods." Is He miffed or does He regretfully defer to the gods we place above Him, even our self-trust? Is God so forceful and controlling a Creator that despite His claim that, "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17), He will continue to intervene uninvited, even when we have "turned unto other gods?" Does He demand He must "direct [our] path" whether or not we "Trust in the Lord with all [our] heart and lean not unto [our] own

understanding?" Proverbs 3:3-5 How can He protect us if we trust ourselves more than we trust Him by doing what we determine is best? This would be a violation of our God-given liberty and God does not violate His own Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." The logic is explicit in Deuteronomy 31:17 and 18. Because they "turned unto other gods" God says, "I will hide my face." The result? "Many evils and troubles shall befall them" "because [their] God is not among [them]."

Contextually comparing parallel passages in Deuteronomy 31:17,18 and 32:35-38, the Lord describes a logical sequence of cause and effect. Deuteronomy 31 says God's "hiding [His] face resulted in "many evils and trials." In chapter 32 "vengeance and recompence" result in "many calamities" when "their foot shall slide in due time." Notice specifically in Deuteronomy 32:35-38 that the "vengeance and recompence" is the consequence that shall befall them because they are no longer under His protection but have placed themselves under the "protection" of other gods.

Jeremiah speaks similarly.

Jeremiah 2:28 But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

Jeremiah 2:13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Far from being miffed, verse 36 says he shall "repent Himself for His servants [man]." "Repent" comes from the Hebrew word "nacham" (Strong's #5162.) Interestingly that word can be applied "in a favorable sense" or "unfavorably." Which do you think was intended?

Repent: H5162. nacham, *naw-kham'*; a primitive root; properly, to sigh, i.e. breathe strongly; by implication, to be sorry, i.e. (in a favorable sense) to pity, console or (reflexively) rue; or (unfavorably) to avenge (oneself):—comfort (self), ease (one's self), repent(-er,-ing, self).

If God shall "repent Himself for His servants" is taken in "a favorable sense" it means God's sorrow is a pitying sorrow that wants to console His servants (mankind), but cannot because of sin-induced separation from God by humans who do not trust Him. If taken "unfavorably," God wants to avenge Himself on His servants by causing a punishing harm that would not otherwise have naturally occurred from man's harmful exercise of the liberty God had presumably given them. This would make Satan the one who told the truth, "ye shall not surely die."

Iniquity Separates Man from God's Merciful Intervention:

Let's look at some passages that describe what happens when God's Spirit is grieved away and He is obligated by the law of liberty to honor our choice and remove not only His Spirit but His protection.

There is no lack of power on God's part to save or hear the repentant sinner.

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

Does separation occur because God will not hear the prayer of repentance, or is it because the sinner is attached to his sins and therefore has no desire to repent. Just as a court of law cannot hear a case it deems is not under its jurisdiction, neither can God.

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.

Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Iniquity translates in Strong's #205 as panting in vain after nothingness, "specifically an idol." Ironically God cannot give us a hearing because we've chosen the jurisdiction of other gods and will not hear Him.

Elsewhere the Scriptures describe the consequences that result from the separation from God as His hiding His face.

Isaiah 54:7 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.

God is the judge of all hearts. Only He knows when we are attached to our sins and have grieved away His Spirit. In consequence of His great law of liberty He will respectfully but sorrowfully give us over to the gods whom we have chosen to worship and trust. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." (Hosea 4:17).

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 destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Just as God left Ephraim alone because he was "joined to idols," God also left the antediluvians alone when they said, "depart from us" and "what can the Almighty do for them?" (Job 21:14; 22:15). God was obligated to hide His face at their request to depart from them, ever anxious to return His merciful intervention and protection to those who trust in Him, though there were but eight people.

Isaiah 54:9 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.

To spare is to protect from harm as we find in the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Exodus 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. 13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over [margin; spare, protect] you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer (allow) the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

What can we conclude from these three verses? God could only spare and protect from the destroyer those who put their faith in Him. Is God then the "destroyer?" Was He promising to protect them from Himself?

We read in Peter that God was not able to spare the world from destruction and could only save the eight who put their faith in Him.

2Peter 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;

God "spared not," . . . "bringing in the flood..." "Spared not" from what?—from God's initiative to cause a flood that otherwise could not have occurred or from the separating iniquity of "your sin" which "have hid His face" . . . that, "He will not hear?" (Isaiah 59:2) Mercy is another word for divine intervention and direction. Isaiah 54:7 contrasts "great mercies" with "have I forsaken thee" . . . "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee."

Let's put the sequence of cause and effect we've discovered from the above-referenced verses together in context. Because of the separation that the iniquities of man have caused, our "sins have hid His face from" us such that by His own law of liberty He cannot "hear," that is, mercifully intervene when we have chosen to place ourselves under other "gods" by giving ear to our greatest idol, self-trust, in place of trusting "in the Lord with all [our] heart" exercising our liberty to "lean not unto [our] own understanding but in all [our] ways acknowledge Him that He may direct our paths." Our thus compelling God to "depart from us" makes us subject to what happens when He turns away and stops mercifully intervening. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment..." This defines the wrath of God in an entirely different light than mankind generally defines wrath. So it is written, "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20). The

biblical definition of “wrath” is the result of laws we have violated working to our own destruction when God turns away without liberty to mercifully intervene as we read in Romans 2:5.

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;

With this broad contextual understanding of the sequence of cause and effect, by which “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), we can better understand how God destroys, allowing the wicked to “fall by their own counsels” while He “defendest them” who rejoicingly “put their trust in [Him.]”

Psalms 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. 10) Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. 11) But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. 12) For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

As we conclude Question 3, Why wouldn't a loving God “always strive with man, you decide. Which of the three possibilities contemplated above in answer to question 3, do you see in these Scriptural principles? 1) that God is warning that His impatient Spirit will eventually become exasperated and abandon striving in man's behalf, or 2) that God decided to appoint an arbitrary date after which He'd cease to strive with man, or 3) that God foresaw there would come a time when universally mankind would become so hardened against His Spirit that continuing to strive with man would be useless in that mankind would be non-responsive to His Spirit of liberty?

Question 4. Does God need to be reminded of His promise?

Genesis 9:16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Genesis 9:16 is a good example of Bible language not meaning what a surface reading would suggest it means, unless God really is a forgetful being who needs a reminder to remember. So what does it mean? God speaks to man in his own language, that man may better understand Him.

Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

In divine wisdom He chose, allegorical, reassuring language for all ages,

Genesis 9:13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

We know the original foundation of the Earth was laid by the Lord and upheld by the Word of His power:

Hebrews 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

Hebrew 1:3a Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, . . .

What does the Word teach us about the original creation of the earth?

Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7) And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

Genesis 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. 10) And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Notice in the following verses Peter refers to three different conditions of the earth. First he takes us to the creation of the earth, then he refers to the flood, and finally he refers to the destruction of the world by fire. Why? Does Peter give us some clues of the cause and effect of the final destruction of the earth? Doesn't the burial of organic matter from the flood predispose the volcanoes of fire?

In 2Peter 3, Peter speaks of the impending fire. He reveals that God is holding back by "the same word" the inevitable effect of the burial of organic matter resulting from the flood. He speaks of the willing ignorance of those scoffers who deny that Christ is coming and claim that there has been no change in the earth since the beginning. It is by the Word of God that all things consist and are upheld, that, "the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water" that the same "heavens and earth ... are kept in store, reserved unto fire...." If "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," yet the flood radically changed the surface and sub surface of the earth, it cannot be argued that the state of the earth has continued unchanged from the beginning, but rather that the laws that govern the earth continue unchanged. In other words "by the same word" refers to God's impartially sustaining His laws, "the Word of His power."

2Peter 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4) And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5) For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6) Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7) But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

A connection is being made here between the original creation of the world in the Genesis account, the flood, and the final destruction of the world by fire. Why? What does the condition of the world since the flood have to do with the final destruction of the world by fire? Does the geophysical condition of the world that resulted from the flood predispose the world to be destroyed by fire? How much is the earth no longer functioning as it was? Could it be that the current condition of the earth will no longer allow for a world wide flood? Is this why God covenanted that there would never be another flood to reassure us He would never drown the wicked again? Why would the next worldwide judgment be of fire instead?

We learn from the following two cited Bible verses that in monumental ways the earth no longer functions as originally created. For example Genesis 2:6 tells us that the earth originally was watered by "a mist from the earth."

Genesis 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

We are also told that there were two great lights created, the sun and the moon. We know that the moon is not a light in itself but only reflects the sun. Whether that remains the case in the Earth's recreation, in Isaiah 30:26 we are promised that again the light of the moon shall be as the sun and the sun shall be seven times brighter.

Genesis 1:16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

Isaiah 30:26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

We can see from the above two examples the condition of the earth and the intensity of light to which it is exposed have drastically changed. When God promised (Genesis 9:11) that He would never destroy the world again with water was He simply saying that He prefers to destroy us with fire the next time or that the condition of the earth, sun and moon will never again make it possible for a flood to take place because the geophysical condition of the earth has been drastically changed by the flood, predisposing it to destruction by fire?

The Scriptures reveal some cataclysmic disasters that will occur before Christ returns.

Luke 21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

Psalms 46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

As we consider the curses that shall come, we need to remember that the curse without a cause shall not come. (Proverbs 26:2) The following verses reveal the mercy of God in His promise to never flood the earth again. It also refers to the final destruction of the earth before Christ returns. He assures us that His mercy never ceases.

Isaiah 54:9 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. 10) For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

Even at the destruction of the world when "mountains shall depart and hills be removed," when fire, not water is the destroying agent, Isaiah 54:9 above assures humanity that it will be as true then as it was during "the waters of Noah" that God's "kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Think about that. If God directly caused these destructive calamities by flood and fire, and they were not the natural effect of man's transgressing His laws, how could it be reasonably said that His "kindness shall not depart?" Where is "kindness" and "mercy" to be found in drowning and burning. A more defensible explanation is that God's kindness is seen by His making a way of escape from those calamities if, in loving, trusting obedience, the faithful place themselves under the everlasting covenant which encompasses but goes far beyond a promise about rainbows.

Isaiah 54:16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work: and I have created the waster [destroyer] to destroy.

If God created the destroyer, how could He be the destroyer? The word "waster" is the same word as "destroyer." (Hebrew #7843) The destruction of the world by fire will be by the destroyer who is Satan.

Christ admonished us to not be deceived regarding the events that transpire around His coming.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. 27) They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

God mercifully prevailed with man to get into the ark and be saved. But mankind walked after their own lusts, being deceived by their own unrighteousness, and grieved away the Spirit. What could God do for them when they said, "Depart from us?"