

A book

that *really* explains
“the wrath of God” and His
“strange act.” This book
brings hope and a
way of escape!

The God on Trial Series

Book 3



“THE WRATH of GOD UNMASKED

God is love —1 John 4:8

Oswald and Denice Grant

**“THE WRATH OF GOD”
UNMASKED**

Oswald and Denice Grant

“The Wrath of God” Unmasked

by Oswald and Denice Grant

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

One of the most misunderstood and misrepresented topics in the Bible is the “wrath of God.” God punishing sinners in “wrath” is a recurring theme that runs throughout the Bible. The “wrath of God” has puzzled the human race for millennia, and not surprisingly, for how can one harmonize “the wrath of God” with the love of God? Isn’t this a most puzzling paradox? And yet this is a highly important subject, one which every human being needs to know and understand.

There are many principles we must keep in mind as we study “the wrath of God”. But the foremost is this: all the puzzling examples of “the wrath of God” must be in harmony with the revelation Jesus Christ gave of God. If Jesus came to *fully* reveal the Father—which He repeatedly claimed to do—then what did He reveal regarding “the wrath of God”?

Jesus is our final arbiter, our only foundation, the only unmovable criteria upon which we base our complete and final understanding of God’s ways of being and acting. Anything outside of Jesus Christ’s revelation of God’s heart and character can be discarded as private interpretation and mere human reasoning based upon the traditions we inherited from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is because Jesus is the only revelation of God’s pure principles of the Tree of Life.

The next thing we must keep in mind is the theme of the war between Satan and God, “the great controversy.” We cannot arrive at a correct understanding of the “wrath of God” without understanding it in the context of this “controversy,” or to be more precise, this *battle* between God and Satan. This is a war of *ideas or principles* which was brought on by Satan’s hostile attack on God’s government of *agape* love. If we leave the Devil out of the picture as we try to understand the “wrath of God,” we are bound to arrive at all possible erroneous conclusions, which is indeed what has happened with many, and is something the great deceiver would most happily intend for all to do.

Often, when the Bible describes the “wrath of God” it does so in the context of the gods. Throughout the Bible, God’s people, who should have known better, suffer the “wrath of God” only after they left God and went over to worship the gods of their surrounding neighbors.

The leading biblical chapter that explains “the wrath of God” is in the Book of Romans—chapter 1: 18-32, which we will study phrase by phrase as we proceed. There, we will find all we need in order to understand this biblical term that has kept us confused for so long. Once we look at it carefully, it will tell us *what* “the wrath of God” is, *why* it happens, *when* it happens, and *how* it happens. No study of “the wrath of God” can be credible without a careful exegesis of Romans chapter one. This is a critical study that should rely completely on the Bible and allow the Bible *only* to define itself.

Then it is no surprise that this extremely important biblical text also brings the “wrath of God” into the context of the gods. It talks of exchanging “the truth of God into a lie” and worshipping and serving “the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1: 25). The “creature” here is explained in verse twenty-three:

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1: 23)

Changing the “glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man” is understandable. We have done that since Adam and Eve chose to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We have always done the opposite of what should be done; we make God into our own image instead of modelling ourselves after Him. We think God thinks and acts like us. But this is not the case.

Having separated ourselves from God by that one single action of choosing to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, our human race entered the domain of “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4: 4). He then twisted our minds about the true God by *maligning* and *misrepresenting* Him through the gods. In this way, Satan has portrayed to us an incredibly cruel, perverse and perverted picture of God. The gods’ representations of the Creator were of such a nature as to cause mankind to feel forced into *buying* God’s favors. This is because the gods themselves are gods of reward and punishment, gods of Good and Evil, gods who operate through the *corrupted, dual, mixed* principles of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The only solution to this foundational problem of mistaking the character of God for the character of the gods was for the true God to send someone down here to correct our understanding. That someone is Jesus Christ, who is the “express image” of “the only true God” (Hebrews 1: 3, John 17: 3).

So far so good; we can understand what Paul is telling us. However, what do “birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things” have to do with the glory—that is, the character (Exodus 33: 18-19)—of God? Clearly these “birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things” must be symbolic. Birds, cattle, and reptiles have nothing to do with the war between God and Satan—except as to be used as *symbols*. These must be symbols that refer to

the idols, who in turn are themselves symbols of something much greater than just a sculpted piece of wood, stone or precious metal. Idols are visual representations of the gods and indeed, many of the pagan gods take the form of “birds, four-footed beasts and creeping things.”

Take Osiris, the Egyptian god of fertility, for example. He was also the god of the underworld, the god of judgment, and known as the ‘beneficent’ god. He was sometimes worshiped as a bull, which is a “four-footed beast,” and was most likely the calf-god the people of Israel demanded that Aaron fashion out of their molten gold while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from Jehovah.

Many gods were also worshiped in the form of serpents—“creeping things.” Egypt itself is filled with serpent imagery. The head regalia of Tutankhamun for instance, the best-known Pharaoh in our times, is a depiction of a cobra ready to attack. What appears to be his goatee is really the cobra’s tail. And in case we have any doubts, the cobra is also carved on King Tut’s headpiece along with a *vulture*—another ominous symbol.

Notice how one Bible commentary describes the gods under the same symbols listed in Romans chapter one, verse twenty-three:

Gods in human form were common in Greek and Roman religion. The worship of all kinds of creatures, such as **bulls** [FOUR-FOOTED BEASTS], **crocodiles** [CREEPING THINGS], **serpents** [CREEPING THINGS], and **ibis** [BIRD], was prevalent in Egypt. In imitation of the idolatry of Egypt the Israelites made their golden calf [FOUR-FOOTED BEAST] (Ex. 32:4). Later Jeroboam set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel and offered sacrifices to them (1 Kings 12:28–32). Some of the more cultured pagans may have regarded the images as mere symbolic representations, but **many of the common people saw in the idols the very gods themselves**. The Bible does not take any such distinction into account, but simply condemns all image worshipers as idolaters (SDA Commentary VOL 6, p. 480, emphasis added)

Notice how the common people “saw in the idols the very gods themselves.” Who then were the gods of every generation and peoples since the fall of Adam? Were they mere pieces of art? Were they mere figments of people’s imaginations? Who does the Bible say the gods were? Notice what David says:

...but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. **And they served their idols:** Which were a snare unto them. **Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,** and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. **Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people,** insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them (Psalm 106: 35-41, emphasis added).

According to these verses, the gods were devils, demons. By sacrificing

to the gods the people were sacrificing “unto devils.” The people of God served the idols of the heathen, and the idols were representations of demons. By worshipping an idol they were worshipping demons, devils, fallen angels, and ultimately Satan himself.

From David’s words we learn that God was so “angry” at the people for worshipping these gods that “His wrath was kindled against his people, inasmuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.” Is that all? Did God simply get angry when His people worshipped the gods, was He merely furious at them? Was He being vindictive when He allowed “they that hated them” to rule over them? Is this how God reacts to those who choose to go against His will?

The quintessential question we must ask ourselves as we study the biblical “wrath of God,” then, is this: what is God’s response when human beings *depart from Him* to worship the gods? How does God, whom the Bible defines as being love, react in a situation such as this? Does He really get angry in the way we understand anger? Does He lash out? Does He lose His character of love? Does He become a dual God of Good and Evil? What role does He play in the “wrath of God”?

These questions probe at the very core of God’s character. We must find answers that harmonize with the *entirety* of the Bible, and as we already said, that harmonize with the *sole true representation of God*—Jesus Christ. How did Jesus react to those who left, rejected, and even killed Him? Jesus, the ultimate cornerstone of our edifice of understanding of the true God cannot be left out of the picture. If we do this, we fall back into the teachings of the gods, for they are the “broad” “way” on this earth. Anything outside of Jesus’ “narrow” revelation of God has been tainted by the lies of the enemy of God and man:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7: 13).

Furthermore, before we can understand “the wrath of God,” we must also realize that the phrase “the wrath of God” is a biblical *term*. Therefore, “the wrath of God” is not exactly what it appears to be. This term, as is the case with any term, should not be interpreted in a literal way. Thus, “the wrath of God” should not be understood to mean that God gets angry with sinners and then decides to destroy them.

What’s more, the term “the wrath of God” does not mean that God gets angry in the way that human beings get angry. This would be a rather shallow and pre-conceived interpretation of this term. Thus, before we can understand what the term “the wrath of God” really means we must:

1. First and foremost, allow Jesus to guide us into the proper knowledge

- of God's character.
2. Secondly, allow the Bible to define it.
 2. Thirdly, we must study the entire Bible to see:
 - a. How this term has been used.
 - b. What causes it—what factors activate it?
 - c. What happened when it was used in the past?

We must also research the word “wrath” both in Greek and in Hebrew. The Greek word for wrath is *orgē*. This is the Greek word most used in the context of “the wrath of God” in the New Testament. Strong's Concordance defines *orgē* as “properly desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind)” (Strong's Concordance). “Desire” is the primary meaning of *orgē*—it indicates a passionate, strong, extreme sentiment.

The etymology of the word *orgē* also deserves some attention. *Orgē* comes from the word *oregomai*, which means “to stretch oneself, that is, reach out after (long for): covet after, desire.” The word *oregomai* itself is “middle voice of apparently a prolonged form of an obsolete primary,” (Strong's Concordance), the “obsolete primary” being the word *oros*. If we look at this “obsolete primary” we find that it means “a mountain, hill, or mount,” (Strong's Concordance). *Oros* in turn comes from another word, *orō*, which means “to rise or rear” (Strong's Concordance).

This last word *orō*, meaning “to rise or rear” brings to mind another Bible passage related to “the wrath of God.” The verse in question is Isaiah 28: 21, which is the only reference in the Bible to God's Strange Act, in which God *rises up*:

For the LORD shall **rise up** as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth [ANGRY, NKJV] as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, his strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act (Isaiah 28: 21, KJV, emphasis added).

This verse is packed with information, and later we will examine and study it in detail, word by word, after we explain what “the wrath of God” is. The reader will then see that in this verse there is a universe of information that is extremely relevant for us who are living particularly right now, at this time in history.

There are many words for “wrath” in Hebrew, and each one of them has a distinct character, color, and flavor. We will not study each of them here except to point out that they are filled with subtlety, and shed much light on the events in which “the wrath of God” was exercised.

In the New Testament, the apostle James addressed the issue of wrath. This is what he said:

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for **the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God** (James 1: 19-21, emphasis added).

James' words are foundational, and as we study "the wrath of God" we must always keep them in mind. We must always remember that "the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." This statement is extremely important because from the start of our study on "the wrath of God" it informs us that there are *two kinds of wrath: human* wrath—"the wrath of man"—and *godly* wrath—"the wrath of God."

What James is communicating to us is that man's wrath—which comes from the flesh, from the moral system of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—is not in harmony with God's righteousness which is from the Tree of Life. Therefore, man's wrath "does not produce the righteousness of God." Hence, "the wrath of man" cannot be the same thing as "the wrath of God," and vice versa. Consequently, "the wrath of God" *must* "produce the righteousness of God."

Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi provide an excellent example of "the wrath of man" which "does not produce the righteousness of God." We learn about it from Jacob's blessings to each one of his sons. Just before his death, Jacob blessed all his sons. When the patriarch arrived at Simeon and Levi—the two brothers who had avenged their sister's honor by killing not only those who had personally dishonored her but also all the males in their city—he said:

Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Instruments of cruelty [CHÂMÂS: VIOLENCE] are in their dwelling place.
 Let not my soul enter their council;
 Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
 For in their anger they slew a man,
 And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!
 I will divide them in Jacob
 And scatter them in Israel (Genesis 49: 5-7, emphasis added).

Jacob knew that Simeon and Levi were brothers—after all they were his sons! What he meant by saying that they "are brothers" is that they were alike, similar, cut from the same cloth, so to speak. "Instruments of cruelty [VIOLENCE] are in their dwelling place." Jacob understood that Simeon and Levi's violent wrath was cruel, and as such it was not in harmony with God. Their anger, their wrath was "cursed." For that reason, he said, "Let not my soul enter their council."

Jacob did not want to join his sons in their cruel wrath: "let not my honor be united to their assembly." It seems Jacob is saying, "Let no one think that I condoned their behavior, or that I think and act like them in this regard." "Cursed be their anger [THEIR WRATH] for it is fierce." Consequently, because of their misguided sense of justice and wrath, Simeon and Levi would be divided and scattered.

"The wrath of God" then has to be a term that means something altogether

different from “the wrath of man”—from what man considers wrath. God’s wrath cannot be cruel, violent, or cursed, for then it would be like man’s wrath.

We make God into our own image when we think that God reacts in wrath to injustice as we do. We make Him into our own image when we think He reacts in the way we do when we are contradicted, or when others don’t go along with our way. Simeon and Levi’s wrath was in accordance to “man’s wrath;” and as a result, their wrath did not “produce the righteousness of God.”

As we study the “wrath of God,” we must always keep in mind that there is a cosmic spiritual war taking place behind the scenes of our everyday lives. This war is a polemic between Christ and Lucifer, and between two different and entirely separate moral laws: God’s moral law of unconditional *agape* love, with freedom and nonviolence, and Satan’s moral law of Good and Evil—the violent and *enslaving* moral law of reward and punishment. As we proceed we will see how this Good and Evil system operates when we discuss the kingdom of the gods.

“The wrath of God” is a mechanism within the war between God and Satan. This means that when something happens, then something else happens, and so forth. There is a domino effect taking place here, and Satan has a pivotal part to play in this mechanism. It is very important that we understand what part he plays in it, and what part God plays in it.

Everyone needs to understand the war between God and Satan and the mechanism of “the wrath of God”—why? Because it is possible for every human being to avoid “the wrath of God.” Everyone may escape it if they choose to do so. The operative word here is “choice.” When “the wrath of God” happened in the past, everyone involved also had the choice to avoid it. Sadly, often many chose not to do what it takes to avert it. We have the advantage of being able to learn from the mistakes of the past and of making better choices right now before the final “wrath of God” takes place again in the very near future.

The mechanism of “the wrath of God” was set in motion many times in the past, and this history is recorded in the Bible. The Old Testament is filled with verses that describe events in which “the wrath of God” was in operation. Here are just a handful:

And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; **You sent forth Your wrath**; it consumed them like stubble (Exodus 15: 7, emphasis added).

If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and **My wrath will become hot**, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless (Exodus 22: 23-24, emphasis added).

Now therefore, let Me alone, that **My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them**. And I will make of you a great nation” (Exodus 32: 10, emphasis added).

But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, **the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people**, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague (Numbers 11: 33, emphasis added).

Also in Horeb you **provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry enough with you to have destroyed you** (Deuteronomy 9: 8, emphasis added).

Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; **for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us**, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us (2 Kings 22: 13, emphasis added).

Therefore they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; **and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass** (2 Chronicles 24: 18, emphasis added).

Now therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, in that **you provoke Me to wrath with the works of your hands**, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell, that you may cut yourselves off and be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth (Jeremiah 44: 7-8, emphasis added)?

These are just a few out of many examples of “the wrath of God” in the Bible. If not understood correctly, this handful of verses would give us a picture of an arbitrary, revengeful, punishing and cruel God who overthrows and consumes those who rise up against Him. This God kills with the sword those who reject Him, leaving women widowed and children fatherless. He sends plagues against His own people for wanting to eat bird meat—“while the meat was still between their teeth”—and when further provoked, He destroys them. This is a volatile and capricious God whose wrath is ignited at the slightest provocation and greatly aroused if the people do not follow His every word.

We must ask ourselves: Is the Creator God indeed such a vindictive, vicious dictator? What would the appropriate response to a God like this be—love or fear? What’s more, is this the God Jesus Christ revealed while on earth, He who said “He who has seen Me has seen the Father”? (John 14: 9) Is this a picture of a God of pure love, as revealed by Jesus Christ? Did the meek and gentle Lamb of God— “the express image of the Father” (Hebrews 1: 3)—ever demonstrate such an arbitrary, spiteful, and despotic temperament?

And yet... these words about “the wrath of God” are clearly written in the inspired word of God. Furthermore, the events described above are all true—people did die as a result of “the wrath of God.” Obviously then, there is more to this than meets the eye. We hope this will become crystal

clear once we pull up our sleeves and start digging through the Scriptures.

The Bible predicts that there will be a final event, soon to take place, in which “the wrath of God” will be poured out in “full strength”—without mixture. The writers of this book believe that this upcoming event is imminent and will be experienced by this generation. This future “wrath of God” is prophesied throughout the Bible, but is very clearly spelled out in Revelation chapter fourteen, and is embedded in the message of the third angel:

Then a **third angel** followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of **the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength** into the cup of His indignation (Revelation 14: 9-10, emphasis added).

In Revelation chapter six, we read that this last manifestation of “the wrath of God” will coincide with Jesus’ soon second coming:

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “**Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?**” (Revelation 6: 12-17, emphasis added)

The upcoming wrath prophesied in these verses will be “poured out full strength”—which means there will be no saving grace here. This book is coming out as a warning for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear so that they may escape this terrifying, apocalyptic future which is predicted to happen soon.

It is not God’s will that we suffer “the wrath of God.” In fact, He wants us to avoid it at all costs! Thus, He shows us the way to escape it. Listen to what He inspired the apostle Paul to write:

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5: 9, emphasis added).

For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, **even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come** (1 Thessalonians 1: 9-10, emphasis added).

Before we can avoid “the wrath of God,” however, we must know what it means. We must also realize that it is real, it is coming, and it will be fierce. This is no small matter, and it will affect all who do not run to the only shelter God has provided—Jesus Christ. This is no trifling matter, and it is not to be

taken lightly. Our purpose in writing this present work is that it will somehow help the reader to escape the devastating destruction that will come upon the world seemingly like a flood due to the so-called “wrath of God.”

Finally, there are two biblical devices we want to bring to the reader’s attention that will help in understanding the study of the Scriptures. The first one is types and antitypes. The Blue Letter Bible defines them thus:

A “Type” then is some “person,” or “event,” or “ceremony” that is recorded to “foreshadow” some future “person,” or “event,” or “ceremony.” The “future” “person,” “event,” or “ceremony” is the antitype.

We have chosen one example from the Blue Letter Bible: Joseph and Jesus. Joseph is just one of the many types of Jesus. Joshua, Jonah, and Aaron the high priest, are also among the many types of Jesus. This is how the Blue Letter Bible describes the type/antitype relationship between Jesus and Joseph:

Joseph was “beloved” of his father, so was Jesus.
 Joseph was sent unto his brethren, so was Jesus.
 Joseph’s brethren refused to receive him, so did the brethren of Jesus.
 Joseph was sold by his brethren, so was Jesus.
 Joseph was unjustly accused and condemned, so was Jesus.
 Joseph was buried in prison, so was Jesus in the Tomb of Joseph.
 Joseph was resurrected from prison and exalted to sit with Pharaoh on his throne, so Jesus was resurrected and exalted to sit on His Father’s Throne.
 Joseph on the throne became the dispenser of bread to starving Egypt, so Jesus on His Father’s Throne is the “Bread of Life” for a perishing world.
 After Joseph was exalted he got a Gentile bride, so Jesus will get a Gentile Bride—THE CHURCH.

Understanding types and antitypes is a great help in understanding the incredibly complex and abundant amount of information contained in the Scriptures. Through them we gain greater understanding of spiritual truths.

The other biblical device we would like to point out to the reader is Hebrew parallelism, a literary device used throughout the entire Bible. The Jewish Encyclopedia explains Hebrew parallelism this way:

It is now generally conceded that parallelism is the fundamental law, not only of the poetical, but even of the rhetorical and therefore of higher style in general in the Old Testament. By parallelism in this connection is understood the regularly recurring juxtaposition of symmetrically constructed sentences. The symmetry is carried out in the substance as well as in the form, and lies chiefly in the relation of the expression to the thought. The same idea is expressed in its full import—that is, in its various aspects and turns—not in a continuous, uninterrupted sentence, but in several corresponding clauses or members with different words.

According to the logical interrelation of the members there are distinguished three kinds of parallelism:

(1) The synonymous, in which the same sentiment is repeated in different but equivalent words: (Ps. xxv. 5; comp. ib. exiv.; Num. xxiii. 7-10; Isa. lx. 1-3; etc.). “Shew me thy ways, O Lord; Teach me thy paths. “Frequently the second line not merely repeats but also reinforces or diversifies the idea: (Prov. i. 31); “They shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be filled with their own devices”(I Sam. xviii. 7; comp. Isa. xiii. 7, lv. 6 et seq.; Ps. xc. 2). “Saul hath slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.”

(2) The antithetical, in which the parallel members express the opposite sides of the same thought: (Prov. xi. 3; comp. ib. x. 1 et seq.; Isa. liv. 7 et seq.; Ps. xx. 8, xxx. 6). “The integrity of the upright shall guide them, But the perversity of the treacherous shall destroy them.” Frequently there are one or more synonymous elements in both members, thus making the contrast more emphatic:(Prov. xxix. 27; comp. ib. x. 5, xvi. 9, xxvii. 2). “An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, And he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked”

(2) The synthetical (called also constructive and epithetical), in which the two members contain two disparate ideas, which, however, are connected by a certain affinity between them: (Prov. i. 7; comp. ib. iii. 5, 7; Isa. l. 4; Ps. i. 3, xv. 4). “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction” (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11902-parallelism-in-hebrew-poetry>).

Having a knowledge of Hebrew parallelism will help the reader to better understand some of our conclusions, since it is through parallelism that we often arrive at them. An understanding of Hebrew parallelism will become especially handy as we study Isaiah 28: 21, which is the fundamental text regarding God’s Strange Act.

We hope this book will be a blessing to those who read it. Our whole-hearted desire is that through it, many will come to see God in a completely new light, one in which they are drawn to Him in love and not in fear, because “perfect love casts out” all “fear,” “because fear involves punishment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4: 18).

We need to understand all the points we have mentioned above before we can understand “the wrath of God.” We must also realize that there is a connection between the “wrath of God” and Satan’s principle of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In view of all this then, *what is “the wrath of God?”* What does the Bible say about it? How does the Bible define it? And what about His Strange Act? How do we harmonize it with a God of “perfect love”? Can God’s wrath operate outside of His love?



1

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

As we engage in the investigation of “the wrath of God,” we must keep in mind that everything that pertains to God must harmonize with the essence of His character of *agape* love as revealed through Jesus Christ. Thus, even His so-called “wrath” must harmonize with His *agape* love.

Romans chapter one, verses eighteen and onwards addresses “the wrath of God” specifically. But before we look at these passages, we will examine the two well-known verses that precede them:

For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power of God to salvation for everyone who believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17, emphasis added).

The gospel—*the good news* given by Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ *only*—is the “power of God” to save those who believe in it. This is “salvation” from the *bad news* that Satan has been feeding us through his Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil for the last six thousand years.

In the gospel, God’s righteousness is revealed “from faith to faith”—from a *former* or *present* faith to a *future* faith based on better understanding, better information and more knowledge. There is a sense of *progression* here—a *forward movement*, a growth in insight in regards to the God whom we are to have faith in. This means that we are to move from a former faith which was based on a misguided perception of God, to another faith altogether, one which is anchored on the truth about God as revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This truth revealed by Jesus in His gospel is the “power of God for salvation” for everyone who dares to have a paradigm shift and believe in “the only true God” (John 17:3) whom Jesus Christ revealed.

What is the “gospel of Christ?” The Greek word for “gospel”—*evangelion*—means “good news.” The “good news” of Christ is centered on what He revealed about the Father—that He loves us unconditionally and holds no condemnation toward us.

It is the “good news” about God that Jesus came to give us that “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” His “good news” is encapsulated in His words to Nicodemus: “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

The link between the gospel and salvation is clear. The good news is that God is not out to get us, to condemn us, or to kill us. God is interested in *saving* us from an enemy who would get us, condemn us, and kill us. God does this by saving us from the lies of this enemy—lies which destroy us. This is good news indeed, because “if God is for us, who can be against us?”

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:31-35)?

Where is the “righteousness of God”—God’s way of being, His law, His character which was expressed in “the love of Christ”—revealed? It is revealed “in it”—in the “gospel of Christ.” According to this verse, His righteousness is not revealed anywhere else—it is only in “the gospel of Jesus Christ.” In this revelation there is salvation, “for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” Everyone who believes in what? Everyone who believes in “the righteousness of God” which is revealed “in it”—revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what is the righteousness of God? “The righteousness of God” is the essence of His being, which is His *agape* love: “God is love” (1 John 4: 8, 16).

In the Garden, Adam lost sight of the righteousness of God—he lost sight of God’s character of *agape* love. We know this because Adam became afraid of God once he ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Bible is very clear on this—whoever is afraid of God doesn’t know God:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment [KOLASIS: PUNISHMENT]. But **he who fears has not been made perfect in love.** We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:18-19, emphasis added).

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15, emphasis added).

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7, emphasis added).

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God** (1 John 4:7, emphasis added).

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:8, emphasis added).

Adam exchanged God's righteousness—His unconditional love—for the unrighteousness of Satan's principle of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which is the conditional reward and punishment system. Adam thought this "unrighteousness" was God's righteousness. This terrible and confused situation is explained by Solomon in this way:

Moreover I saw under the sun:
In the place of judgment,
Wickedness was there;
And in the place of righteousness,
Iniquity was there (Ecclesiastes 3:16).

Through the literary device of Hebrew parallelism, we learn in this verse that "judgment" is the same as "righteousness," and that "wickedness" is the same as "iniquity." The gospel saves us from the foundational error of confusing God's "righteousness" with Satan's "iniquity," and the consequent confusion and disaster involved in making such a terrible mistake.

In the Book of Hebrews, we learn that Jesus loved "righteousness" and hated "iniquity:"

You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (KJV: INIQUITY); Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions" (Hebrews 1:9, emphasis added)

Paul goes on to say that "the power of God to salvation" is revealed to the "Jew first." Why? Because "to them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). The Jews had the Old Testament which pointed them to Jesus Christ. But how does this passage apply to us, who are living today, two thousand years after Paul wrote these words? Notice what Paul says later, in Romans chapter two:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; **but he is a Jew who is one inwardly**; and circumcision is that **of the heart, in the Spirit**, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God (Romans 2:28-29, emphasis added).

In our times, the word "Jew" must be applied to those who are *spiritual* Jews—inwardly. The person that is a Jew "inwardly" has an advantage in that he also takes hold of the blessing of accessing the oracles of God. There he can find the good news of Jesus Christ regarding the real character of

God. If the “inward Jew” believes and obeys, he is saved from wrath. If he doesn’t believe, “the wrath of God abides in him” (John 3:36). This word “abides” in Greek means “remains.” This means that “the wrath of God” was somehow already there in all of us to begin with. In order for something to “remain,” it has to be *already there*. If a person does not believe Jesus’ good news, then “the wrath of God” remains or continues to be his by default.

Just like those who are born Jews “in the flesh”—physical descendants of Abraham—the spiritual Jew also has the Scriptures, which, if he is a spiritual Jew indeed, he will study and know. This spiritual Jew will start connecting the dots, and the light will shine in his mind.

But not only for those who are steeped in biblical information this knowledge is given; it is for “the Greek” also. Paul used the word “Greek” to address specifically the Greeks and their philosophies, which they learned from ancient Egypt. The Greeks used to go to Egypt to learn “The Mysteries” of Egypt. Greek philosophy is completely antithetical to Jesus’ teachings. But by “Greek” Paul also meant anyone who is a “Gentile.” In our days we can interpret this word to mean anyone who is not a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We can then take this a step further, and say that the gospel is also for those who are not necessarily thoroughly grounded in biblical knowledge, but who, *outside of Bible knowledge* accept God’s Spirit of love (which is striving with every living person, Genesis 1:2). “The Greek” may then even refer to those who respond to God’s call to love their fellow human beings unconditionally. Those who have the moral law of unconditional *agape* love etched in their hearts are “a law unto themselves”:

for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, (Romans 2:14).

Everyone reading this book has more than likely memorized John three sixteen. But verse seventeen is also fundamental to Jesus’ message:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved** (John 3:16-17, emphasis added).

Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, a leading spiritual figure of his time. Nicodemus didn’t understand what Jesus was trying to tell him. We may be prominent spiritual figures in our own time, yet just like Nicodemus have no clue as to what Jesus is saying.

To Nicodemus, Jesus said, “You must be born again.” To use a modern, technological metaphor, Jesus was telling Nicodemus that he had to *reset* his understanding of God to *factory setting* again. Sometimes when a computer,

tablet, or phone malfunctions, the best way to fix it is to reset it to *factory setting*—to the original settings it had when it came out of the factory. Our minds need to be reset to look like Adam's original mind in the Garden before he ate of Satan's Tree. That is the only way we can see God as He truly is—as a God of *agape* love.

What Nicodemus and all of us need to be born again to, is the good news about God which Jesus came to share with us—this includes Christians who do not know the character of God through Jesus. We have to let go of all our preconceived and wrong ideas about God's character which Satan has taught the human race. We have to stop believing that God is a stern, harsh, punishing despot, and instead we need to listen to the good news being declared by Jesus.

That is why Jesus continued saying to Nicodemus, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Saved from what? Saved from the condemnation, the wrath that is integral to Satan's system of reward and punishment. This is the gospel; this is the good news! Eventually Nicodemus was indeed reborn to the truth that God is not in the business of condemning or punishing anyone, thus he became a true disciple of Jesus.

Who brings a charge against us? Satan does, as shown in Zechariah chapter three. Who condemns? Satan does—he is the accuser—as shown in Revelation chapter twelve, verse ten. But what does God do? He justifies us. "It is God who justifies."

Satan, through his principle of reward and punishment, declared us guilty and as such, *deserving* of punishment, because his system is a reward and punishment system—a merit and demerit system where some are deserving and some undeserving. But God, through His law of grace, declares us innocent, just. This means that He annuls Satan's system of reward and punishment, which condemns us. Instead, He declares us innocent according to His law of unconditional *agape* love, which holds nothing against us and gives us a completely clear slate:

for all have sinned [THROUGH THE MORAL LAW OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT—THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL] and fall short of the glory of God [FALL SHORT OF HIS LAW OF *Agape* LOVE], [ALL] **being justified freely by His grace** [BY HIS *Agape* LOVE] through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [MERCY SEAT] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness [*Agape* LOVE], because in His forbearance [*Agape* LOVE] God had passed over the sins that were previously committed (Romans 3:23-25, emphasis added)

I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, **your transgressions**, and like a cloud, **your sins**. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22, emphasis added)

As far as the east is from the west, **so far has He removed our transgres-**

sions from us (Psalm 103:12, emphasis added).

God has blotted out, removed our sins—He has *freely justified* us. This does not mean that God held our sins against us before, and now, because Jesus sacrificed Himself to appease Him, He is forgiving us. No, in God's law of *agape* love those sins *had never been held against us to begin with*. Jesus didn't come to *appease* God—He came to *reveal* Him.

What Jesus has done is this: He has removed Satan's power over us by showing us that the Father does not use the system of reward and punishment as Satan made us believe He did. In other words, by showing us the truth about God, Jesus completely removed reward and punishment out of the way and introduced God's true way, which is the way of *agape* love:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh [DEAD BECAUSE OF THE CONDEMNATION OF THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT SYSTEM], He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses [UNCONDITIONAL *Agape* LOVE], having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us [SATAN'S MORAL LAW OF GOOD AND EVIL/REWARD AND PUNISHMENT], which was contrary to us. **And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it** (Colossians 2: 13-15, emphasis added).

God's justification is not based on our own goodness—on our works from the system of the Tree of Good and Evil. His justification is based on *His law* of grace: “being freely justified by His grace.” This is good news indeed! Our hearts ought to rejoice at God's mercy and grace towards us by sending Jesus Christ to free us from the bondage of Satan's moral law of Good and Evil. We ought to be shouting from the mountain-tops this good news, which applies to every human being on this earth. He has taken the whole system of reward and punishment “out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” By doing this He “disarmed” Satan and his angels—“disarmed principalities and power, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

But there are further concepts we must understand before we fully grasp what this all means: the gospel of Christ saves us, but what does it save us from? Notice how Paul answers this question in Romans chapter five:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through Him** (Romans 5: 8-9, emphasis added).

Did you notice what we are to be saved from? We are to be “saved from wrath”! But whose wrath are we to be saved from? Is it from God's wrath?

For years we have thought that this was the case. And yet this just doesn't make sense! Did God love us so much that He had to send His Son in or-

der to save us from Himself? Is God so out-of-control that He has to ask someone else to hold Him back, otherwise, He might lash out at us in fury?

Consider again these words: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.” Is God trying to save us from His own condemnation? No! God didn’t send His Son to condemn the world! Then what? “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved” *from Satan’s wrathful reign*. It is that simple.

As we move forward, we will see how God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom are two separate jurisdictions, and we, the human race, just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, have a choice to make regarding them. This choice will determine whether or not we receive “the wrath of God.”



2

A MATTER OF JURISDICTION

Before we delve directly into the specific biblical passages that define the term “the wrath of God,” we need to put this biblical idiom into the perspective of the war—the polemic (a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something) battle that has been going on between God and Satan for the last six thousand years here on earth.

Through the reading of the Scriptures we know that the human race is in the middle of a spiritual war—the war which Lucifer has been waging against God’s moral law of *agape* love. This is and has always been a war between God’s principles—righteousness—and Satan’s principles—iniquity. (Please see our first two books, *The Demonization of God Unmasked* and *God on Trial: Have We Been Lied To? Is God a Killer?* for in-depth biblical explanations of these two principles.)

The Bible teaches us that there are two spiritual kingdoms, or two jurisdictions at play in our world—God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom. These two kingdoms are respectively symbolized by the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Notice some of the verses in the Bible that talk about God’s kingdom:

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; **a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom** (Psalm 45:6, emphasis added).

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations (Psalm 145:13, emphasis added).

How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! **His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom**, and His dominion is from generation to generation (Daniel 4:3, emphasis added).

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with **judgment and justice** from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the

Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:7, emphasis added).

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom which shall never be destroyed**; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44, emphasis added).

From these few verses we learn first of all, and extremely important, that God's kingdom is characterized by "righteousness." His kingdom is an "everlasting" kingdom. In His kingdom there will be unending "peace" because His kingdom will be established with righteous "judgment" and true "justice." We also learn that God's kingdom will never be destroyed.

Jesus explained in Matthew chapter twelve that "**Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand**" (Matthew 12:25, emphasis added). Thus, we can deduce that since God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, it therefore cannot be a divided kingdom—it will *never* "be brought to desolation." God's kingdom, therefore, is not a "divided kingdom." This means that if God is for us, He cannot also be against us. It means that God cannot act in contrary ways toward us. He cannot be both our Savior and our Destroyer at the same time.

From the beginning of His Creation, God's kingdom—and more specifically the *principles of righteousness* of His kingdom—were supposed to reign here on earth. That was the original intent of the Creator for His entire creation. But because the principles of His kingdom provide *complete and absolute freedom*, a usurper was able to come in with a *different set of principles*, and thus he managed to take God's creation captive.

From the moment Adam and Eve ate of the serpent's Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they began living by the principles of *another kingdom*—the kingdom of "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

Thus, because we are living by Satan's principles, the kingdoms of the world are in effect his kingdoms. We are all being ruled by the principles of Satan—the principles that are represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That the Devil claimed the entire world as his very own is clear by the way he offered "all the kingdoms of the world" to Jesus during the wilderness temptations:

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him **all the kingdoms of the world and their glory**. And he said to Him, "**All these things I will give You** if You will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8-9, emphasis added).

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the king-

doms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “**All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.** Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours” (Luke 4:5-7)

Satan claimed to have all authority here on earth by his words “all this authority I will give You, and their glory.” And then he goes on to show us how he came about being the ruler of this world: “for this [AUTHORITY] has been delivered to me.” Who delivered the authority over this world to Satan? It was Adam and Eve, of course, to whom God had said:

Then God said, “Let Us make man [MANKIND] in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28).

Adam and Eve gave Satan authority over the earth by eating the fruit of his Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Jesus also acknowledged Satan as “the ruler of this world”:

Now is the judgment of this world; now **the ruler of this world** will be cast out (John 12:31, emphasis added).

I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world** is coming, and he has nothing in Me (John 14:30, emphasis added).

And the apostle Paul explains how Satan and his angels are rulers of “darkness”:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this age**, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12, emphasis added).

Paul goes as far as to call Satan the “god of this age,” lower case “g”:

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds **the god of this age** has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

When Jesus came onto the scene two thousand years ago, He came to teach humanity things we had never fully heard or known before. He came to teach us what the Father is like and what the principles of His kingdom are. The good news of God’s grace had been kept a mystery since the world began, because it was overshadowed by the lies of Satan.

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery kept**

secret since the world began (Romans 16:25).

Thus, as a precursor of the One sent from God to lead us into the kingdom of God, John the Baptist proclaimed:

Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand!** (Matthew 3:2, emphasis added).

Jesus Himself said that the time had come for us to understand what God's kingdom, "the kingdom of heaven," is like. Thus, just like John the Baptist, He also said:

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" (Matthew 4:17, emphasis added).

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people (Matthew 4:23, emphasis added).

On the Sermon on the Mount, and then throughout His entire ministry, Jesus was bringing "the kingdom of heaven" to our attention:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven** (Matthew 5:3, emphasis added).

Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness' sake**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10, emphasis added).

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the **kingdom of heaven** (Matthew 5:19, emphasis added).

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will **by no means enter the kingdom of heaven** (Matthew 5:20, emphasis added).

But seek first the **kingdom of God and His righteousness**, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33, emphasis added).

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the **kingdom of heaven**, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven (Matthew 7:21, emphasis added).

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people (Matthew 9:35, emphasis added).

And as you go, preach, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven is at hand**' (Matthew 10:7, emphasis added).

Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one

greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in **the kingdom of heaven** is greater than he (Matthew 11:11, emphasis added).

And from the days of John the Baptist until now **the kingdom of heaven suffers violence**, and the violent take it by force (Matthew 11:12, emphasis added).

The kingdom of God is characterized by “righteousness,” which refers to God’s way of being, His mode of operation, His moral compass, His moral law of *agape* love. *Righteousness* means that God is impartially and unconditionally kind, generous, fair, just, honest, loving, nonviolent, freedom-giving, and especially merciful. It means that He has an unswerving integrity that will never cause harm to anyone—not even those who see Him as an enemy—even if this means losing out in some way, as He did by coming to earth and dying on the cross. The kingdom of heaven is about *goodness and healing for everyone*, no exceptions.

The kingdom of the ruler of this world, however, operates by another set of principles altogether. His principles are called “iniquity” in the Bible. The Bible is very clear that “iniquity” began in Lucifer:

You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, *till iniquity was found in you* (Ezekiel 28:15, emphasis added).

Iniquity is *another way* of being, a way that is *different and opposed* to God’s way of righteousness. Iniquity is Satan’s way, Satan’s mode of operation, *his* moral compass. Iniquity is the way of Good and Evil, the principle represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden.

Iniquity is a principle which *arbitrarily* picks and chooses who deserves our kindness, generosity, fairness, justice, honesty, love, etc. It is a *merit and demerit system of morality*. Therefore, iniquity is a conditional, partial and arbitrary principle that rewards those it sees as worthy of reward, and punishes those it deems worthy of punishment. Iniquity heals some and harms others. This moral law of Good and Evil is embedded in every fiber of our being. This is our flesh, our carnal nature, our fallen human nature.

Iniquity is filled with *punitive justice*, but this kind of justice is entirely different from God’s justice, as we have shown in our book, *God on Trial: Have We Been Lied To? Is God a Killer?*

We must realize that it is specifically over these two principles—righteousness and iniquity—that the war between Jesus and Satan is centered (Revelation 12:7).

When Lucifer rebelled against God and His law, he sought to exercise authority over the “stars of God”—over the angels of God—with this law of Good and Evil. He sought to “exalt” his throne of iniquity over them, meaning that he wanted to reign over them with his iniquitous principle of reward and punishment. His supreme desire was for them to adopt his

principle of iniquity as their moral law:

How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:
'I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God
(Isaiah 14:12-13, emphasis added).

Lucifer's rejection of God's law of unconditional and impartial *agape* love prompted him to devise another moral law that was conditional and partial, and which, as a consequence, was devoid of God's mercy (see our booklet, *A Tale of Two Kingdoms* for confirmation regarding Satan's moral law of reward and punishment). This is the moral law which the Bible calls iniquity:

Shall the **throne of iniquity**, which **devises evil by law**, have fellowship with You? (Psalm 94: 20, emphasis added).

Satan's "throne of iniquity" codifies evil into law, and "devises"—frames—evil into the confines of a law—a moral law written in our hearts. God's throne on the other hand, is the throne of righteousness:

Behold, **a king will reign in righteousness**, and princes will rule with justice (Isaiah 32:1, emphasis added).

But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; **a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom** (Hebrews 1:8, emphasis added).

But seek first **the kingdom of God and His righteousness**, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33, emphasis added).

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and **in righteousness He judges and makes war** (Revelation 19:11, emphasis added).

When Jesus reigns on the New Earth, He will reign with the law of righteousness, which is His law of *agape* love. Peter was looking forward to Jesus' reign of righteousness when he wrote:

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells** (2 Peter 3:13, emphasis added).

The scepter of Jesus' throne, meaning the *law* by which His kingdom operates, is the law of righteousness, which is the moral law of *agape* love. Therefore, everything Jesus and the Father do is done "in righteousness." This means that when they exercise justice, or judgment—and even when

they “make war”—they do it all “in righteousness”—within the parameters of righteousness. God never steps outside of righteousness! He never crosses the line into iniquity, which is entirely Satan’s domain and jurisdiction.

The Scriptures are very clear that the war between Christ and the Satan is being fought over these two principles, righteousness and iniquity. In the Book of Hebrews, these two principles are named side by side, placed as it were, on an equal footing, indicating that the entire issue between Christ and the Devil is centered on these two moral laws:

But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. **You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity**; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions” (Hebrews 1:8, emphasis added).

Quoting the Psalms (Psalm 45:6-7), Paul states that Jesus “loved righteousness” but “hated iniquity.” We must ask ourselves the question: why did Jesus hate iniquity? Hopefully by the end of this book this question will be answered satisfactorily. These two moral laws—righteousness and iniquity—are the laws of two distinct jurisdictions: God’s jurisdiction operates by the moral law of *agape* love, righteousness, and Satan’s jurisdiction functions through iniquity—the moral law represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—a reward and punishment system.

The time is coming when each and every one of us will belong to either one of these two jurisdictions, depending on what we choose to believe about God. This choice will also affect how we act towards each other, since actions are a result of our beliefs. The whole world has been deceived until now by Satan (Revelation 12:9) regarding God and the principles of His kingdom. But in our times—in these last days—God is giving us a revelation of His true character so that we may be able to make an informed decision as to what jurisdiction we want to belong to. This revelation is coming to us through His Son:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:1-3).

All of us have the right to choose which jurisdiction we want to be under. Of course, God would rather we choose His jurisdiction, because His is the only safe place for us to be, since His is the jurisdiction of life:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that **I have set before you life (TREE OF LIFE) and death (TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL), blessing (TREE OF LIFE) and cursing (TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL)**; therefore **choose life**, that both

you and your descendants may live (Deuteronomy 30:19, emphasis added).

God's jurisdiction is the jurisdiction of life, but God will never use force to make us choose Him and thus life. Satan, on the other hand, will use force and deception in order to keep us in his jurisdiction of death.

The greatest deception Satan has used is to make us believe that God is involved in death. But death is a by-product of Satan's jurisdiction. Death is a direct consequence of living by Satan's principles. Thus, the realm of death belongs entirely to Satan and Satan only, as stated in Hebrews chapter two:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [JESUS CHRIST] 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**; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15, emphasis added).

Notice that even as He destroyed the devil, Jesus did so in "righteousness." *Jesus did not kill the devil.* He did not destroy, malign, or *harm him* personally in any way. It was through his own death on the cross that Jesus destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." By becoming a victim of Satan's violence, Jesus destroyed Satan's power of deception which had told us that God is a violent God. When He was being arrested, Jesus told Peter—who used his sword to resist the mob—that He could have called upon legions of angels to protect Him. But He explained to Pilate why He did not do so:

My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; **but now My kingdom is not from here**" (John 18:36).

Jesus' principles are not the same as the principles of this world, which operates by Satan's kingdom principles. God has and will always remain true to His own principles of *agape* love—righteousness. This is as unchangeable and immovable as a solid rock. There is no compromise here. Jesus, who is God, "is the same yesterday, today, and forever," (Hebrews 13:8).

As we shall soon see, jurisdiction plays a great role in the issue of "the wrath of God," as well as the freedom we have in choosing which side we want to belong to.



3

“THE WRATH OF GOD” IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN

We have finally arrived at the verses that clearly explain to us what “the wrath of God” is. Nowhere else in the entire Bible are we given such a concise and definitive explanation of this most misunderstood biblical term as we are given here in chapter one of the Book of Romans. We will examine these verses carefully, looking at them phrase by phrase and using the Bible to explain them to us.

For the wrath of God is revealed **from heaven** against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them (Romans 1:18-19, emphasis added).

If we understand this statement in the conventional way that “the wrath of God” is typically understood—that God finally loses His patience with sinners and personally lashes out from heaven in anger to destroy them—then we will have a very hard time reconciling other verses like these:

For **God did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9, emphasis added).

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through Him** (Romans 5:9).

Does it make sense to think that Jesus would die for us so that we can be saved from His Father’s anger? Or from His own anger, since He and His Father are one (John 10:30)? And does it make sense that God would destroy us when we have already “been justified by His blood?” There is something here that does not quite add up, wouldn’t you say? Then perhaps there is another way to look at this. What does it mean, then, that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven?”

FOR THE WRATH OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN

The apostle Paul declares that “the wrath of God” is revealed from a very specific place—it is revealed from *heaven* itself. First, we ask the question: *who* is in heaven? Well, God is in heaven, of course. The God who is love, the God who is “perfect love” (1 John 4: 8,18) is in heaven. Therefore, “the wrath of God” must be revealed from the God of love Himself.

However, the word “heaven” does not always refer to a *place* only. It also refers to a way of being and thinking, a way which is practiced and lived out in heaven, a way that comes directly from God’s *principles*. Jesus brought this to light when He said:

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you **heavenly things**. **No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven** (John 3:12-13)?

If we understand the above verse’s reference to heaven as being only a *place*, then we will be confused. In the above verse, Jesus is addressing Nicodemus here on *earth*—not in heaven. Nevertheless, Jesus clearly says that He “is in heaven.” How can He say this, when He is in Jerusalem, speaking to Nicodemus?

This will no longer be confusing when we realize that Jesus is using the word “heaven” in a different way—He is referring to a *heavenly principle*—not a place. Thus, when He says that “no one has ascended to heaven” He means that no one has “ascended” to the heavenly principle except for Him—the One who came down from the place called “heaven.” When He says that He is “in heaven” it is obvious that He is not using the word “heaven” to refer to a place anymore. When Jesus says that He is “in heaven,” He means that He is in the heavenly principle—the principle from God, who is in heaven. This is confirmed in the same chapter by John the Baptist:

John answered and said, “**A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven**. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. **He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all** (John 3:27-31).

Jesus had come “from above” and therefore spoke of *heavenly things*—heavenly principles which came directly from His Father. Thus, His words have much more weight than any words that can come from human beings,

who have an earthly point of view based on the earthly principles of Good and Evil.

Paul also indicated this way of looking at the word “heavenly” when he said:

The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47-49, KJV, emphasis added).

Therefore, when we read that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” we understand that it is revealed from the heavenly principle itself, the principle or law that is the very essence of the God who is in the place called “heaven.” What is the heavenly principle, the moral law with which God rules the universe? It is the law of *agape* love. The “wrath of God” then, is revealed from *agape* love.

FREEDOM AND JURISDICTION

There are two ways in which God is involved in “the wrath of God”—two ways in which “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.” The first way has to do with an intrinsic component of God’s law of *agape* love. That component is *freedom*—freedom is an inherent element of God’s universal moral law of *agape* love.

Thus, when Paul says that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” we need to realize that “the wrath of God” is intrinsically connected to the freedom inherent in *agape* love. Freedom is the first foundational and indispensable concept we need to understand in order to arrive at a harmonious biblical understanding of what it means that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.”

The second way in which God is involved with “the wrath of God” has to do with the fact that He is our judge. It is God who judges us. But God judges us through *righteousness*—the heavenly principle—and not through *iniquity*—the earthly principle. What does this mean?

God’s judgment has to do with determining what is truly in our hearts. It is God who makes a *judgment*, that is, who determines whether or not we belong to the jurisdiction of His or Satan’s kingdom. Satan is not the judge in this process of *determination*. He is not the one who decides whether or not we have crossed the line from God’s jurisdiction into his jurisdiction. It is God who makes sure that this decision is done fairly and impartially.

We all know that Satan does not operate in a fair way. Thus, God makes sure that our enemy and accuser does not infringe on our freedom or disturbs the evidence, so to speak. It is God who determines whether we have crossed over to Satan's camp or not. Why is this so? Because only God can read our hearts and only God is just.

Notice what Paul says in Romans chapter two. He says that "in the day of wrath" God makes a "righteous judgment," that is, God decides who will and who will not suffer "the wrath of God":

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in **the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**, who "WILL RENDER TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek (Romans 2:5-9, emphasis added).

The words "righteous judgment" in this passage are expressed through one single Greek word—*dikaiokrisia*, which means "a just sentence: - righteous judgment" (Strong's Concordance). But it is the opposite, the antonym of this word that helps us understand that this is an impartial judgment. According to the Complete Word Study Dictionary the antonym or opposite of *dikaiokrisia* is *prosōpolēpsia*, which means "partiality, favoritism; falsehood." This is in harmony with Peter's statement which says "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34).

Paul's statement above in Romans 2:5-9 could be easily interpreted to show that God uses reward and punishment. We could interpret it to mean that He will personally reward those who do good with "glory, honor, and immortality" and will punish those who do evil with "wrath, tribulation and anguish." We default to this interpretation because this is our default way of thinking from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But if we understand that God operates only by *agape* love, then we will be able to see it through the principle of the Tree of Life.

From the Tree of Life principle of *agape* love, we can interpret these verses to mean that it is God, our righteous judge, who makes a truthful and impartial determination—a "righteous judgment"—based on our "deeds"—based on the way we have conducted ourselves here on earth. This verification, this "righteous judgment," has to do with whether we have chosen to live under His nonviolent jurisdiction of love, mercy and grace, or under Satan's violent jurisdiction of reward and punishment.

God, who always grants us freedom of choice, will determine what our choices have been, not based on what we profess with our mouths, but

on how we *conduct* ourselves—how we live our lives through our actions. This is so because actions speak much louder than words. This “righteous judgment” only God can do, because as we said earlier, only He knows our hearts, and only He is fair. Not even we know our hearts, for our hearts deceive us:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings (Jeremiah 17:9-10, emphasis added).

God gives “every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.” It is only fair, is it not? The “righteous Judge” allows no injustice to take place. He makes sure that everyone is placed under the jurisdiction that he or she has chosen to belong to. Jesus explained this selection process in the parable of the sheep and goats:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and **He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left** (Matthew 25:31-33, emphasis added).

This also comes to light in Revelation fourteen, when the “harvest of the earth is ripe.” Then, all living human beings will have chosen their respective jurisdictions, their side on this great polemic, and will either receive the seal of God or the mark of the beast. Then, those who have received Satan’s mark, signifying that they belong to his jurisdiction, will be thrown into the “great winepress of the wrath of God”:

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “**Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.**” So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.” **So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God** (Revelation 14:14-19, emphasis added).

God knows us inside out, and we can trust Him to be fair. If this judgment were being conducted by Satan, he would condemn the entire human race outright because as the ultimate accuser, that is his *modus operandi*:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night**, has been cast down (Revelation 12:10).

This exclamation of extreme relief—“Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come”—reverberated through the heavens when salvation came through Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection. Why? Because Satan used to go up to heaven in order to accuse us—notice how heavenly beings call us their “brethren!” The accuser was relentless—“day and night” he went before God seeking to get us convicted, trying to get God to release His protection from us so that he could lash out at us to punish and destroy us.

Satan’s persistent accusations against the human race surface in a few places in the Bible, especially just before “the wrath of God” is put into action. Notice what God said before “the wrath of God” was unleashed against both Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as Nineveh:

And the Lord said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether **according to the outcry against it that has come to Me**; and if not, I will know” (Genesis 18:20-21, emphasis added).

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; **for their wickedness has come up before Me** (Jonah 1:2, emphasis added).

Both verses above make mention of some *report* that had come up *before* God. Someone was crying out that those cities needed to be destroyed. Someone was accusing them, demanding that they be punished.

Now, we know that God knows all things; therefore, He knew the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah. He didn’t have to “go down” to “see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it” that had come to Him. The same applies to Nineveh.

But the Righteous Judge made sure that a proper investigation was conducted for the sake of *transparency*. This was done for all to see if the people of those cities had indeed passed completely under Satan’s jurisdiction. He also made sure that the people who were not yet fully under Satan’s jurisdiction had a chance to escape, as in the case of Lot and his family, or Noah and his family at the time of the flood.

This was also the case in the destruction of Jerusalem, when all those who heeded Jesus’ words found opportunity to escape, when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by the Roman armies:

But **when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies**, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea **flee to the mountains, let**

those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her (Luke 21:20-21 emphasis added).

In the case of Nineveh, when their wickedness had “come up before” God, He sent a messenger to warn the people, someone who would help them see their great danger and help them turn from their wicked and violent ways—violence being the ultimate indicator that they had chosen Satan’s jurisdiction:

And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, **let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands**. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish (Jonah 3:4-9, emphasis added)?

Once the people of Nineveh turned away from Satan’s jurisdiction of violence, notice what God did:

Then God saw their works, that **they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it** (Jonah 3:10).

We can take this verse above and interpret it in two ways. We can continue to think that God is the One who punishes wicked people, and that a time comes when He can’t take it anymore and He comes down and annihilates them. And when the people started to behave properly then God relented and didn’t want to destroy them anymore.

But when we put everything together, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and especially the message of the good news that Jesus came to bring us, we can also interpret this to mean that Satan had asked permission to annihilate the people of those cities.

God, in His mercy, sent a messenger to the people of Nineveh to see if they would leave Satan’s jurisdiction of violence, and when they did, God held the accuser and Destroyer at bay, in effect saying: “you can’t have them anymore. They are back under my protection now.” We must always remember that it is Satan who is the thief who comes but “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). He is the Destroyer (Revelation 9:11)—not God.

God, on the other hand, infinitely cares about us, and in His loving grace

has immense pity for sinners who have been held hostage in the hands of a cruel master, and who are so confused by Satan's reward and punishment system (the Devil deceives the whole world, Revelation 12:9) that according to God, they cannot even "discern between their right hand and their left." Listen to what He said to Jonah—who, by the way, was not too happy with the final outcome of his own mission—concerning the Ninevites:

And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock (Jonah 4:11, emphasis added)?

Isn't this what Jesus Himself exclaimed as He was dying on the cross?

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do**" (Luke 23:33-34).

If it weren't for God's loving care and protection, we all would have been annihilated by Satan long ago. It is because of God's loving protection that we are not consumed by the Destroyer. At least this is what Jeremiah seems to be saying in that book that records his great lamentation for his people, who had experienced "the wrath of God," and who, as a result, had been decimated by their enemies:

**Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22-23, emphasis added).**

Satan is the great accuser, the grand prosecutor who is constantly seeking to indict us. Those who accuse others don't realize what they are doing, because by doing so they are bringing condemnation upon their own heads. How so? Because as accusers, they are placing themselves in the jurisdiction of Satan. This will be confirmed by Romans chapter two as we continue.

What all of this means then, is that God, who is in heaven, is in control of whether we experience "the wrath of God" or not, based on our choices. It does not mean that He inflicts that wrath upon us; this will become more and more evident and clear as we proceed.

It would actually be far more accurate to say that *we are the ones* who are in control of whether or not we receive "the wrath of God," because God only acts based on our choices. This is better understood if we keep in mind that Satan, the enemy of mankind, is always eager to destroy us through his system of reward and punishment. If God did not hold him at bay, we

would have been already devoured by him long ago:

Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour** (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is eager to punish us because that is how he operates according to his system of reward and punishment. Many may be skeptical about our continual assertion that Satan’s “knowledge” or “wisdom” of Good and Evil is a system of reward and punishment. Where did we get this from and how did we arrive at such a conclusion? What biblical evidence do we have to show that our supposition is based on facts?

It is impossible to put down on paper everything that led to this understanding, but we have been trying to do exactly this through our books, of which this is the third. We would like to offer the reader, however, a brief study that confirms these conclusions. This study is taken from the Book of Job and it involves Satan’s answer to God’s question “From where do you come?” God asked Satan this question during a council meeting that occurred “before the Lord”:

Now there was a day when **the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.** And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come” (Job 1:6-7)?

God’s question to Satan seems almost silly— doesn’t God know where Satan has been? But God has a purpose in asking this question, because Satan’s answer is quite revealing:

So Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it” (Job 1:7)

At first glance there is nothing revealing about this answer, aside from the fact that it seems to imply that Satan has total control of the earth. “Up and down” and “back and forth” seem to point out from “north to south,” and from “east to west,” showing that his jurisdiction encompasses all the earth. Notice also how “up and down” and “back and forth” seem to trace in our minds two imaginary lines in the shape of a cross. This seems like a simple and meaningless detail, but the cross, two sticks crossing each other, has great meaning in Satan’s kingdom because it represents the two arms of his system of keeping order—Good and Evil. What is so eye-opening about “going to and fro on the earth,” and “walking back and forth on it”?

In English, these words are not revealing or eye-opening at all. And even the most popular lexicons like Strong’s and Thayer do not give us anything unusual about them. But when we look at their meaning in Jeff Benner’s Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible, they indeed become extremely revealing and eye-opening!

The first words Satan used in his reply to God are the words “going to and fro on the earth.” In Hebrew this is expressed by two words: the first is *min/minnêy/minnêy* and the second is *shût*. *Min/minnêy/minnêy* means a “part of,” “out of,” or “from.” The second word, *shût*, is the word that is eye-opening. Here the Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible gives us this explanation:

Scourge, Whip: A whipping or lashing out at someone or something out of hatred or punishment.

Right away, we see that Satan’s reply, “going to and fro on the earth” means much more than just having complete control of the earth. It means that he has complete control of the earth through something he does as he goes about ruling the earth: he rules the planet through scourging, whipping, and lashing out at human beings “out of hatred,” using punishment. This is just a part of what he does. This is the Evil part of his Good and Evil moral system, his yin and yang.

The second part of Satan’s answer, “walking back and forth on it” is also expressed through two words, the first is the same as before, *min/minnêy/minnêy*. The second is *hâlak*, which is depicted by two pictures: one is a staff and the other is the palm of a hand. The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon interprets these symbols like this:

The [FIRST] pictograph is a picture of shepherd staff, the [SECOND PICTOGRAPH] is a picture of the palm of the hand. Combined these mean “staff in the palm”. A nomad traveled on foot with a staff in his hand to provide support in walking as well as a weapon to defend against predators or thieves.

Jeff Benner interprets “staff in the palm” as something a nomad shepherd would use in his journeys to “provide support in walking as well as a weapon to defend against predators” or thieves. In the Bible, a shepherd’s staff has benign connotations, as in the famous twenty-third Psalm:

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 23:1-4).

Symbolically, a staff is the scepter held in the hands of a king. The scepter represents the king’s laws. It is also something a shepherd uses to lead his sheep. God’s staff leads us “in the path of righteousness”—His law. The staff also comforts. Jesus used the shepherd as a symbol of His role toward us: He is our Good Shepherd. Thus, the staff in the palm of God’s hand is a symbol of protection, beneficence, goodness, and righteousness.

But what does a staff in the palm of Satan’s hand represent? The staff in the palm of Satan’s hand also represents his scepter, the laws of his kingdom. It represents *goodness* also, but this brand of goodness is the Good side of

his system of rule represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is the *Good* of Good and Evil, the reward part of his reward and punishment death principle, which he uses to *bribe* his subjects into good behavior. It is the *carrot*—the counterpart of the stick.

Thus, in essence when Satan said that he was “going to and fro on the earth” he meant he was ruling the earth by punishing the subjects of his kingdom through his punitive system of justice, the *Evil* side of Good and Evil. And when he said that he was “walking back and forth” on the earth” he meant that he was using the *Good* side of his system of rule, that is, he was rewarding the subjects of his kingdom in order to keep them under his control. This is clear confirmation that Satan operates by the mixed principle of Good and Evil, which translates into a reward and punishment axis.

God is “perfect love” (1 John 4:18). He never acts under Satan’s system of reward and punishment. God’s perfect love is the underlying principle from which all His actions spring. Therefore even “the wrath of God” has to be revealed from His perfect love, not from Satan’s reward and punishment system, because God’s wrath has to be a product of His righteousness, which is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God’s righteousness, which is His law of love, always involves freedom of choice—if God used force against us in any way then His righteousness would cease to be *agape* love.

So when we read that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” we understand that God is giving us not only our right to *freedom of choice*—to choose between the jurisdiction of reward and punishment and the jurisdiction of *agape* love—but He is *also allowing us to experience all the consequences* that come under the jurisdiction we choose. Notice how He acts. He will give:

eternal life to those who by **patient continuance in doing good** seek for glory, honour, and immortality; but to those who are **self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil**, of the Jew first and also of the Greek (Romans 2:5-9, emphasis added).

Here again is brought to view the two moral laws that were represented by the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the two principles by which we may live. “Patient continuance in doing good” refers to *agape* love, the principle of the Tree of Life. “Patient continuance” is unconditional love, doing good under all circumstances, unconditionally, impartially, to friends and enemies alike. Those who live by this principle fall under God’s jurisdiction, and because they have accepted God’s grace and therefore are also filled with grace, they are then able to offer grace to

their fellow man—even to enemies. The reward of this jurisdiction of grace is glory, honor, and immortality. This is the path of blessings.

Those who “do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness” (unrighteousness refers to iniquity, which is Satan’s reward and punishment system) fall under Satan’s jurisdiction of “iniquity.” What is “the truth” that this group does not obey? The truth they do not obey is the truth of God’s righteousness, which is the opposite of “unrighteousness.” Righteousness is God’s law of *agape* love, and “unrighteousness” is Satan’s counterfeit, the moral law of Good and Evil, his reward and punishment moral law. “The truth” is that God is a God of love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness—a non-forceful, non-violent God of *agape* love.

Those who do “evil”—who obey the “unrighteousness” represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—will receive the reward of their choice: “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish” because that is the reward that is available *in that system*. Those who choose to live by the principles of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil choose to operate by *a conditional moral law*. They are conditional and partial, they reward those who please them, and punish those who displease them. They have chosen the jurisdiction of Satan, who offers them “indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish.” This is the path of curses.

This process of *judgment* will happen to every human being that has ever lived on earth, without exception. Every human being, from Adam and onwards, is an active voter in this cosmic polemic, regardless of whether they have ever sat on a church pew, ever heard about Jesus Christ, or ever paid tithes. Many of these will find themselves unwittingly protected under God’s jurisdiction. Likewise, many who have done these things we just mentioned might find themselves in the jurisdiction of the accuser, laid completely bare, without God’s protection against his attacks.

The principles of the two Trees are in the “midst” of this grand polemic in which the human race finds itself, and we all are at once perpetrators, victims, witnesses, jury, prosecution, defense and judges, for we, and only we, determine our own destiny by the choices we make in this life.

Did you notice how Paul says that the group which receives “wrath” can also include Jews? Every soul that lives by Satan’s principle of Good and Evil will receive the reward of Good and Evil—even the religious, the churchgoer, the ministers, whoever we are and whatever we profess. No one will escape this process because God is impartial, treating us all in the same way:

Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that **God shows no partiality** [NO RESPECTER OF PERSON, KJV] (Acts 10:34, emphasis added).

Now is the time for us to make a choice regarding these two jurisdictions. God does not want anyone to suffer “the wrath of God.” As we become aware of these things, we can ask God to change our way of seeing Him, which is the foundational problem we have. Then we can also ask Him to change our hearts, to change our way of thinking, being, and acting. Only He is able to do this for us. The only part we play in this is in *choosing* between Him and Satan, between His principles and Satan’s principles.

In and of ourselves we cannot live by God’s unconditional law of love. It is humanly impossible to do this in our own strength. The empowerment to live by God’s principle of *agape* love in our lives comes entirely from God, because He said that He will put His laws in our hearts:

FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS IN THEIR MIND AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. NONE OF THEM SHALL TEACH HIS NEIGHBOR, AND NONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL SHALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST OF THEM TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE” (Hebrews 8:10-12, emphasis added).

We ask the question: how does God put His laws in our mind, and how does He write them in our hearts? He does this by a non forceful way, by *revealing Himself* to us. God changes us by showing us that He is love and by convicting us of His great *unconditional* love for us. He transforms our minds and hearts of Good and Evil into minds and hearts of *agape* love by showing us His true character of love, mercy, and forgiveness.

All shall know Him, “from the least to the greatest.” And they shall know that He is merciful and that He does not hold our sins and lawless deeds against us. When we know God in this way and when God’s law of unconditional love is written in our hearts, then Satan, the reward and punishment god, will no longer be our god. The Creator, the God Jesus Christ revealed, will be our God. The Creator has been waiting, yearning, for us to make Him our God.

We must always remember that God will never act against our will. Thus, we must ask for help even in regards to our will, for the human heart is deeply at enmity with God since it is so imbued with the moral law of Good and Evil. But if we ask God to give us the right will and the empowerment to live by His principle of *agape* love, He will speedily answer our request, for God wishes that no one would suffer the wrath of the Oppressor.

“The wrath of God” comes upon us because God gives us complete freedom to choose between His jurisdiction of unconditional *agape* love and Satan’s jurisdiction of reward and punishment. If we use our freedom to choose Satan’s kingdom, we automatically leave God’s kingdom and come under Satan’s jurisdiction. We not only leave the principles of God’s kingdom, but also leave behind the inherent blessings of His kingdom. Once we do that, we become fully subject to Satan’s arbitrary system of reward and punishment and God is no longer able to protect us. That is when all hell breaks loose, because as we mentioned before, Satan wants to prove his system of order at all costs, and he uses violence to accomplish it—even to the point of killing us, if need be.

God, our Father and protector, is keeping this vicious, punitive enemy away from us for as long as He possibly can. But the moment we step fully into the enemy’s jurisdiction—through our choices—God, whose *agape* love principle always involves freedom of choice, has no recourse but to let us go. In other words, he has to let Satan have us and do with us as he pleases. This is how “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.” Further confirmation is right ahead.



4

UNGODLINESS

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven **against all ungodliness** and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them (Romans 1: 18-19, emphasis added).

The first thing “the wrath of God” is revealed against is “ungodliness.” What exactly is “ungodliness?” Not according to our own definition of the word, but according to how does the Bible define it? What is “unrighteousness?” How does the Bible define these two very important words?

One would logically think that ungodliness is anything that is *un-God*, in other words, that is *unlike* God. Anything that is *opposed* to, or the *opposite* of God. Anything that has to do with thinking and doing in a way that is different from God’s way of thinking and doing. In this case, ungodliness would have to do with thinking and living by the principles of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil instead of the principles of the Tree of Life. In this interpretation, ungodliness would be centered on our goodness or rather, *our lack of it*. The Greek word used for “ungodliness” used in this passage is *asebeia*, which means:

impiety, that is, (by implication) wickedness: - ungodly (-liness) (Strong’s Concordance).

Asebeia comes from the word *asebēs*, which means:

irreverent, that is, (by extension) impious or wicked: ungodly (man).

In the Hebrew Old Testament there are a few words translated as “ungodliness.” Take for instance the word *rāsha*, which connects ungodliness with morality, with a person that is condemned and guilty:

morally wrong; concretely an (actively) bad person: condemned, guilty, un-

godly, wicked (man), that did wrong.

Yet another word—*aveel*—meaning “moral perversion,” gives this word a connotation of moral distortion because its root word means to “distort morally,” to “deal unjustly.” In *God on Trial: Have We Been Lied To? Is God a Killer?* we saw these very characteristics being applied to the word “iniquity” itself—the moral perversion that Lucifer started in heaven. One thing is clear: ungodliness definitely refers to iniquity, the moral law of reward and punishment, which was a distortion and perversion of God’s moral law of *agape* love.

In Psalm forty-three there is another word used for “ungodly:”

Vindicate me, O God,
And plead my cause against an **ungodly** nation;
Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man
(Psalm 43: 1, emphasis added)!

In this verse, the word “ungodly” is a compound word made up of the word *lô’ lô’ lôh*, which is a primitive particle meaning “not,” and the word *châsîyd*, which means:

kind, that is, (religiously) pious (a saint): godly (man), good, holy (one),
merciful, saint, ungodly.

Accordingly, this Hebrew word for “ungodliness” in Psalm forty-three, verse one, refers to a person who is not kind, not pious, not good, not holy, not merciful. In essence, not like God, who is kind, pious, good, holy and merciful. Ungodliness then, appears to have to do with thinking and doing in a way that is completely different from God’s *agape* way of thinking and doing.

On the other side of the spectrum, what is “godliness?” Godliness would seem to be anything that is *like* God. Jesus is godly—He is Michael, which means “who is like God?” Thus, we would normally think that godliness has to do with the fruits of the Spirit, those godly attributes that can make us have characteristics which are more in line with God’s *agape* love:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5: 22-23)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in **all goodness, righteousness, and truth**), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord (Ephesians 5: 8-10, emphasis added).

While all of these are correct ways of understanding what “ungodliness” and “godliness” mean, we believe there is yet another layer of understanding in the Bible that needs to be addressed—a layer that tackles this problem at a *root level*. We can tap into this deeper meaning only when we keep in

mind the fact that we are in the midst of a spiritual war in which the enemy has clouded our minds as to God's true character. With this in mind, notice what the prophet Isaiah states:

For the foolish person will speak foolishness, and his heart will work iniquity: **to practice ungodliness, to utter error against the Lord**, to keep the hungry unsatisfied, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail (Isaiah 32: 6, emphasis added).

In this verse we see, through Hebrew parallelism, that besides having the conventional meaning which we first discussed above, the word “ungodliness” also has to do with something else: with uttering or speaking “error against the Lord.”

By speaking “error” regarding who God is—regarding what His true character is really like—we keep “the hungry” soul “unsatisfied”—we keep “the Bread of Life” away from them. And we “cause the drink”—Jesus, the water of life, the truth about the character of God—“of the thirsty to fail.” Thus, having a wrong knowledge of God is the root cause of ungodliness. Because if we have a wrong understanding of God's character, then all our actions will be in harmony with our wrong concept of Him.

The fact that “ungodliness” has to do with knowing or not knowing God's true character is confirmed by the apostle Paul in the very chapter we are studying—Romans chapter one. Immediately after saying “for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” Paul says: “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” What “truth?” “The truth” about what or whom? Again, Paul quickly gives us the answer to these questions:

because **what may be known of God** is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them (Romans 1: 19, emphasis added).

We will discuss this statement in more detail later on, but for now we simply want to stress that “ungodliness” definitely has to do with *not knowing God as He truly is*. We could simplify this verse and simply say that “the wrath of God” is revealed from heaven against the people that don't know God—against the people that have exchanged the truth about God for the lie about Him.

Ungodliness, then has to do with knowing God through Satan's portrayal of God—which is the lie. Satan has given us a false picture of God through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the moral law it represents, and if we hang onto this false picture of God, we will inevitably remain “ungodly.”

As pointed out earlier, the Old Testament uses different words for “ungodly,” but one in particular caught our attention, and that is the word *beliyaal*. Notice what *beliyaal* means in Hebrew:

without profit, worthlessness; by extension destruction, wickedness: Belial,

evil, naughty, ungodly (men), wicked” (Strong’s Concordance).

The word *Belial* is used only once in the New Testament:

And **what accord has Christ with Belial?** Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6: 15)?

According to Strong’s Concordance, in Greek, *Belial* is an epithet of Satan:

Belial: Of Hebrew origin; worthlessness; Belial, as an epithet of Satan: Belial.

It is interesting to note that both in Hebrew and Greek *Belial* means “worthlessness,” as well as being a name for Satan. What is this “worthlessness” all about? We believe it is the same thing that Paul addresses a little further in Romans chapter one through the word “reprobate:”

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 1: 28, emphasis added).

The word “reprobate” helps us to understand what Belial’s worthlessness is, because it too is defined as “worthless.” Here is the definition of the word reprobate, *adokimos*, taken from Strong’s Concordance:

unapproved, that is, rejected; by implication worthless (literally or morally):
- castaway, rejected, reprobate.

We could interpret this in an accusatory way through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This interpretation would say that the people who are “reprobate” are so worthless that they are indeed deserving of being “unapproved,” “rejected,” and castaways. The people spoken of here are so “worthless” that they are the rejects, the outcasts of society. But that is not primarily what this is saying.

What this means is that people who are “worthless,” people who are the “sons of Belial,” do not receive from their “father Belial” any sense of approval, of belonging, of worth, or affirmation. They have no sense of how precious they are, how loved they are, how important they are to the One who really matters—to God.

“Sons of Belial,” those who are “reprobate,” have no positive self-respect or self-esteem. Anyone that has lived in the world without God understands what this feels like. It is a life filled with fear, darkness, hopelessness, uncertainty, negativity, restlessness and depression. Without the knowledge of God’s love for us, our lives are cursed by a sense of futility, a foreboding of defeat. Being in the world without God gives us indeed a feeling that we are worthless. This is a very painful condition to be in, and filled with emotional and physical anguish.

Those who have chosen to follow Belial are given over to a “reprobate mind.” It is not that God wants this to happen, but that He has no power

to override our choices because of our freedom of choice. As painful as this is to Himself as well, God has to let it happen.

Those who are “given over” to a “reprobate mind” act according to their state of mind. Their actions reflect their mind-set. They behave in ways that are socially unacceptable. And then the world, which operates by the reward and punishment system, pushes them further down through disapproval, contempt, rejection, and punishment. It is a vicious cycle from which only God can save us. Most everyone has experienced this to a certain degree.

It is God who gives us our true sense of worth. It is God who shows us that we are infinitely loved! It is God who tells us that we are His sons and daughters and as such we are indeed very special. It is God who lifts up our self-esteem, who assures us that we even have an inheritance—something many know nothing about. It is God who gives us a reason to live, who gives us hope, assurance, purpose, victory, peace, and rest in our hearts. *Belial* pushes us down to the point of despair. But *Belial's* work of destroying us is turned around when we come to know the truth about God, when we come to know the true God of unconditional love. With all this in mind, note then what the Bible says about the sons of Eli in the Old Testament:

Now the sons of Eli were **sons of Belial**; they knew not the LORD (Samuel 2: 12, emphasis added).

Eli's sons were “sons of Belial” because “they knew not the Lord.” This is an extremely important point. It is very important to God that we have a correct knowledge of His character of *agape* love. So important, in fact, that Jesus had to come down here to give us the truth about Him. Why does this matter so much?

Satan has painted God in a false light. He has attributed his own character traits onto God, including his own sense of what justice should look like, i.e. *punitive* justice. But God's character and Satan's character are as distinct as distinct can be, and have absolutely nothing in common—they are as far apart as light and darkness are apart from each other.

“Sons of Belial”—sons of Satan—know God through what Satan has taught them—not through what Jesus has taught them. The sad implication here is that if we don't know the true character of God, we are in essence worshipping the Devil. We may be sincere in our worship but that doesn't change the fact that we are worshipping the wrong person and learning the wrong principles from him.

Every human being who does not know the only true God as revealed by Jesus Christ is a “son of *Belial*.” We can even be Christians and be “sons of *Belial*.” This may seem really extreme and far-fetched. But the truth is, once Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Satan became the “god of this age.” He has deceived us all in regards to God's true character. And God is now calling us to come out of that wrong mind-set. The time has come.

Satan has interposed himself between God and us, and as a result, instead of seeing God, we see him. The principles of reward and punishment of Satan's kingdom are embedded in our entire being. It is only by beholding the true God of *agape* love which Jesus revealed that we can escape this cursed condition.

Satan's deceptions are like a veil made of his lies, a veil which is interposed between the true God and us. This is not far-fetched at all, but is exactly what the Scriptures tell us. Take a look at the following verses written by Paul:

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. **But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.** Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3: 12-18, emphasis added).

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. **But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.** For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. **For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Corinthians 4: 1-6, emphasis added).

Did you notice the "veil"? What is the meaning of this veil? Isn't Moses' veil a *type* of something much greater? Isn't the *antitypical* veil something that *blocks* our view, something that *blinds* our understanding of something else? What does the veil block?

The veil blocks our view of God. It blocks our view of the *gospel*, of the *good news about God* which Jesus Christ came to give us. Who has blinded our minds? It is "the god of this age." What has he blinded our minds about? About "the knowledge of the glory of God." And who removes this blindness from us? It is Jesus Christ, "who is the image of God," whose face gives us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."

And what happens if the blindness is not removed from us, if our minds continue being veiled? "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing...who do not believe." We are "perishing" if we do not believe the good news about God which Jesus brought to us. We are dying

in that mind-set that tells us that we are worthless, that we are condemned and cast away—we are dwindling away in hopelessness.

And what does Paul say happens even today, when we read the Old Testament? He says that “the same veil,” the same blindness regarding God’s glory—which is His character, His goodness—“remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament.” Why does the veil remain “unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament?” Because only Jesus Christ can take the veil away. Jesus, the personification of the principles of the Tree of Life, came two thousand years ago, after the Old Testament was written. He gives us the truth about the God of life. If we don’t pay attention to what He taught us about God’s true character, we will read the Old Testament through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The writers of the Old Testament could not give us something they didn’t have or had not yet seen. They had prophesied about the Messiah that was to come, but they hadn’t seen Him yet. The Old Testament is a record of the story of God’s church on earth prior to Jesus’ first advent. It is an accurate record of the history of the children of Israel because it was through their lineage that the Messiah would come to this world. The purpose of the Chosen People is made clear in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation:

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: **a woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. **Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth** (Revelation 12: 1-2, emphasis added).

This “woman” with a “garland of twelve stars” represents Israel, the Chosen People. The purpose of the Chosen People was to deliver a “child” to the world, a “child” who was God in human form.

Since the call of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans, God had a special purpose for the Chosen People. He had chosen them to “give birth” to this heavenly Child who was going to teach the whole earth the truth about God. They were *not* chosen to give us the *full truth about God*. They were chosen to give us *the One who would give us the full truth about God*.

Thus, because they did not yet know Christ, even the prophets of the Old Testament couldn’t deliver a completely true report regarding the character of God. This is in effect how Paul opens the Book to the Hebrews. It is as though the apostle is telling his kin: “Listen, we had the fathers, the prophets, and that is all fine, they had their role and they fulfilled it. But they were mere *human* beings, therefore they could not have a clear knowledge of the God of heaven. Only His Son has that, therefore only He can give it to us.” Listen to Paul’s words:

God, who at **various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets**, has in these **last days spoken to us by His Son**,

whom He has appointed **heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds**; who being the **brightness of His glory** and the **express image of His person**, and **upholding all things by the word of His power**, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much **better than the angels**, as He has by inheritance obtained a **more excellent name than they** (Hebrews 1: 1-4, emphasis added).

Paul not only establishes Christ's supremacy over the fathers and the prophets who were *of the earth*, "earthly," but over *heavenly* beings too—the angels. This means that *even angels* could not have given something they didn't have—the pure, unadulterated knowledge of God.

There is no doubt that the Old Testament can also give us a picture of a loving God. Many of its passages are filled with comfort and inspiration. The problem with the Old Testament's portrayal of God is that it gives us a portrait of a *mixed* God, a *dualistic* God of love and wrath, a Good and Evil kind of God. In essence, a God who is not "one," as Moses had written:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deuteronomy 6: 4)!

According to Jesus these were the most important words out of the entire Old Testament:

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "**Which is the first commandment of all?**" Jesus answered him, "**The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12: 28-31, emphasis added).

This is where the writers of the Old Testament had gone wrong, but they cannot be blamed, for Jesus had not yet come. According to Jesus, God does not have a mixed character—He is "One." The mixture of Good and Evil—duality—belongs to the character of the god of this world. Thus, for this reason the people in the Old Testament were still sitting in darkness as far as God's character of *agape* love was concerned.

Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, after being dumb during his wife's pregnancy finally spoke on the occasion of his son's circumcision, eight days after his birth. When his mouth was opened, he spoke the following regarding John, Jesus, and God's people:

And you, child [JOHN THE BAPTIST], will be called the prophet of the Highest [GOD THE FATHER];
For you will go before the face of the Lord [JESUS] to prepare His ways,
To give knowledge of salvation to His people
By the remission of their sins,

Through the tender mercy of our God,
 With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace”
 (Luke 1: 76-79, emphasis added).

John the Baptist would go before Jesus in order to prepare *God's people* to receive Him. He would pave the way, bring *God's people* to the awareness that the Messiah—the Child they had for centuries been eagerly waiting to *birth*—had finally arrived! And the Messiah “would give knowledge of salvation to *His people*,” letting them know that all their sins were forgiven. This whole passage is addressing *God's people*. So when we read that Jesus would “give light to those who *sit* in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace,” what people is this talking about? This is talking about *God's People*.

It was God's People who were sitting “in darkness and the shadow of death.” Why were they sitting in “darkness and the shadow of death?” Because they were looking at God as if He were a *dual* God: a God of love and destruction, a God of life and death, a God of Good and Evil.

Jesus came to reveal the “living God,” the God who is *only* love, *only* life, *only* good. This is the fundamental, most important message He came to give us. And this is exactly what the Apostle John declares in his first epistle. John literally sums up the core of Jesus' message in these verses:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning **the Word of life—the life was manifested**, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. **This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.** If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1: 1-7, emphasis added).

What is the message that the apostle John heard from Jesus? What is the fundamental, quintessential message that Jesus came to give us? The message is this: “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” God is not a mixture of light and darkness, of Good and Evil, of life and death. God is *only* light, *only* good, and *only* life. In Jesus “the life was manifested.” In Jesus the following words were fulfilled:

Hear, O Israel, “the Lord your God is one,” (Deuteronomy 6: 4).

No, God does not have a dual character, as it was previously believed in

the Old Testament. So if we want our blindness about God to be taken away, we need to turn to the Lord of *agape* love, to the God who is only life, whom Jesus revealed. That is the only true God.

God knows that if we follow Satan and his mixed principles of Good and Evil we are destined to perish. But He loves us to such an extent that He cannot just sit and watch this happen. He had to come and give us the truth, which He did, in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ.

Because this issue of *knowing* the true God is so important to God and to us—that we know His true character—He addressed it four times in His very own law, which He gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The first four commandments warn us against ungodliness—against *uttering error* about God, against having a false knowledge of God. If we understood these four commandments properly, they would steer us in the correct knowledge of God. They would guide us into *godliness*.

We might ask the question: why did God center the first four Commandments on Himself? Is there a reason or purpose to this order? Our answer would be a resounding “Yes, absolutely, yes!” God knows that the root problem of the human race is having a wrong understanding of who He is. Thus, once the root cause is fixed, once we accept the truth about Him, the rest—our behavior towards one another, which is addressed in the remaining six commandments—will follow.

We are going to look at the first four Commandments now, and as we do so, we ask the reader to keep in mind that here we are on holy ground. The law of God reveals the essence of the Creator of this vast, fathomless and mysterious universe. We are now talking about “the living God”—the God who deals only in life and who is the Creator of all life. This God stooped down to reveal and share with us the mystery of His very being. What a privilege we have to be able to enter into this knowledge!

And as we continue, let us also keep in mind that we need to understand all biblical things in the context of the war—the great controversy between Christ and Satan. The war is between their respective laws, righteousness and iniquity, which are the two moral laws represented in the midst of the Garden by the two Trees—Satan’s “law of sin and death” and God’s “law of the Spirit of life.”



5

UNGODLINESS – THE PREAMBLE AND FIRST COMMANDMENT

THE PREAMBLE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The preamble to the Ten Commandments given in Exodus states:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Exodus 20: 2).

God's words are full of such meaning, we could take each word individually and write an entire book on each one, so complex is God's mind—which should not come as a surprise, considering how complex His creation is.

First of all, notice that the “I am”—the self-existing One—says of Himself that He is *our* God. God chooses His words very carefully to make this point very clear that He is “the Lord your God.” He is *ours!* The whole human race can say this: God is our God! He is not some far removed, distant judge waiting to condemn us. He is intimately involved in helping us to survive Satan's reign of terror here on earth.

Our God is for us, not against us (Romans 8: 31). He is on our side; He wants to help us and save us from the destruction of the enemy. He wants us to stop running away from Him as if *He* were the foe, as if *He* were the enemy. It is to this intent that He goes to great extremes—even the extreme of the cross—in order to reveal to us who He truly is.

When our God gave the law to Moses, He had already brought Israel out of Egypt, where they had been slaves in a literal sense. Interestingly, the original meanings of the word “Egypt” are “black land” and “house of the soul.” In the Bible, “black,” “darkness” and “night” are all used metaphorically in association with the Devil, deception, and death, because it is the Devil who “had the power of death:”

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2: 14-15).

Paul's careful choice of words are important: the Devil "*had* the power of death." How do we know that the devil *had* "the power of death?" Death is clearly tied up with his Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. God had told Adam regarding Satan's Tree: "the day you eat of it you will surely die." Satan's power is the power of deception. Thus, "the power of death" is related to all the lies he taught us about God through the principles represented by his Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Paul places Satan's power of death in the past—he "*had* the power of death." Satan no longer *has* the power of death because of Jesus. His "power of death" has been broken by the good news Jesus came to bring us about who God really is. Jesus has released us from the "bondage" of fear—the bondage to the "fear of death."

Through Jesus we no longer need to be afraid of God. Through what Jesus taught and revealed about God, we no longer need to believe that the Father is violent. We no longer need to believe that He is a destroyer. We no longer need to believe that God is the One who punishes us. Through Jesus we no longer need to fear even death itself, for He has told us that God's commandment regarding us is eternal life (John 12: 50). Now Satan no longer has the power of death over those that believe the good news—who believe all these things which Jesus taught.

"Egypt" also means "house of the soul." The doctrine of the immortality of the soul taught extensively in Egypt by the gods was the first lie the serpent told Eve: "You shall not surely die." This is not only contrary to empirical evidence—we can see death all around us—but to biblical truth also, which teaches that God "alone has immortality" (1 Timothy 6: 16).

Thus, even the word itself connects "Egypt" with Satan. We cannot write here about the horrendous things that were really going on in ancient Egypt and how Satan used Egypt as a prototype of what he really wants his kingdom on earth to be like—especially in our day, the last days. If the reader decides to research and study this subject carefully, he/she will conclude that we are actually living in a modern-day version of Egypt run by the serpent (a symbol used extensively in Egypt as well as in our days) and its moral law of reward and punishment.

God wants to metaphorically bring us out of Egypt because Egypt represents absolute bondage to satanic power and control. The bondage the descendants of Abraham experienced in Egypt is a type—just a shadow, an example of the tyrannical kind of rule Satan wants to fully implement here on earth before his time runs out.

Satan has been ruling on earth—there is no question about this. But he can

only fully institute his system as we allow him. As we move toward Jesus' Second Coming, he will achieve greater control because Jesus said that in the last days "iniquity" would "abound" (Matthew 24: 12), and iniquity is Satan's tyrannical system of rule through reward and punishment. This is his merit and demerit system, a social credit system which is already taking over parts of the world as we speak.

God's statement that He is the One who brought the Israelites "out of the house of bondage" applies not only to that past event—the type—but to a much grander future phenomenon—the antitype—which is to take place just before this great controversy over the two laws can finally end. The exodus from Egypt to Canaan—the Promised Land—is an example to us, who are living in the last days, just before Jesus' Second Coming:

Now all these things [THE EXODUS] happened to them **as examples**, and they were written for our admonition, **upon whom the ends of the ages have come** [OUR DAYS] (1 Corinthians 10: 11, emphasis added).

Therefore, the opening phrase, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," is also a prophetic statement that God will bring us out of everything that Egypt represents. Notice that it is God who will bring us "out of the house of bondage"—not we ourselves. We are like sheep who follow a shepherd. Our job is to follow—to have an open heart to receive, accept, and obey the truth.

We ask the question: If Egypt was the type—the typical house of bondage—what is the antitype? What is the antitypical house of bondage that God needs to bring us out of?

Again, keeping in mind that the central issue in the great controversy between God and the Devil is the law, we can conclude that the antitypical house of bondage is Satan's moral law of Good and Evil and all its fallout (which includes death). We are to come out of his merciless and cruel reward and punishment system and enter the Promised Land where *agape* love—righteousness—is the law of the land:

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and **a new earth in which righteousness dwells** (2 Peter 3: 13, emphasis added).

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the reward and punishment system it represents is the "house of bondage" which envelops the whole world.

To God, who is not bound by the confines of time, bringing us out of Egypt's slavery is already a *done deal* because He knows that this *will happen*—in His mind He has already brought us out of the bondage of Egypt. With all this in mind, let us then look at the Ten Commandments given in Exodus chapter twenty.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

1. Exodus 20:3: Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Isn't it interesting that the very first commandment God gives us tells us to stay away from "other gods"? And if God, in the very first of His Ten Commandments says that we are to stay away from "other gods," ought we not to find out who and what the gods are? But before we do, let's find out what it means to have other gods before God.

Literally, "before me" means "before my face," which is an idiom. Notice how one commentary explains it:

This Hebrew idiom often means "besides me," "in addition to me," or "in opposition to me" (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, p 601).

The actual Hebrew words mean above, over, upon, or against my face, presence or person. To have other gods before God then means to have other gods besides Him, in addition to Him, or in opposition to Him. Think also of a mask against someone's face. The mask hides the true person and gives a false impression. The idea is that we are not to put the gods as a mask over God's face because that would give us a false impression of who God is.

Who then are the gods mentioned here? Some might interpret this to mean that a god is anything that supplants God's place in our hearts. Things such as money, love of pleasure, career, cars, etc. While it is true that these things can gain control of our *affections*, God is talking about something very real and specific here—he is talking about the gods that humanity has worshipped throughout history. The Hebrew word used for "gods" here is *elohim*, a word which has nothing to do with money or idols of the heart. *Elohim* is a word that refers either to God or to gods—in other words, to the Deity or to a deity.

Thus, *elohim* in this context refers to pagan gods such as Baal, Ash-toreth, Hermes, Jupiter, Zeus, Osiris, etc. It refers to the gods that nations have worshipped throughout human history. The gods humanity has worshipped are varied and numerous, but in essence they are all the same: they are all an expression of Satan's principle of Good and Evil—the reward and punishment moral code. The gods are real beings in the sense that they are in effect Satan and his fallen angels.

The Christian reader at this point might think to move on, perhaps; skip this section, as this obviously does not apply to Christians who believe they worship the true God. After all, Christians worship the God who distinguishes Himself from the gods by pointing out that He is the Creator of heaven and earth.

But before you move on, Dear Reader, we suggest you keep on reading a little longer. For soon it will be seen that many a modern-day Christian is worshipping just as false a god as Baal and the whole retinue of gods. Paul

suggested as much, when he pointed out that those who are living in a works-based system (Good and Evil, a merit demerit system) are followers of Baal:

Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, “Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?” But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who **have not bowed the knee to Baal.**” Even so then, at this present time there is a **remnant according to the election of grace.** And if by **grace**, then it is no longer of **works**; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work (Romans 11: 2-6, emphasis added).

Elijah thought he was the last of God’s followers, but God tells him that He had reserved for Himself “seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal.” Those seven thousand men were a “remnant,” and the reason they were a “remnant” was because they believed in the God of grace—“according to the election of grace.” Thus, if they were a *remnant*, all the others who were in the *mainstream* were still worshipping Baal—the god of *works*.

There are only two kingdoms, two thrones, and two ways: there is God’s way of grace and Satan’s way of works, which is the reward and punishment system. The remnant are “according to grace,” and those who bow their knees to Baal are still operating in the system of works. They think salvation is based on their works—if they do good, God will reward them with eternal life, and if they do evil, God will punish them with eternal death.

This theology was taught to the ancient Egyptians by the gods, and most religions have carried on the torch as if it were truth. The problem with this is that it ascribes a duality to God, making Him a Good and Evil character. But God has no duality. He is “One.” God’s kingdom operates solely by grace. He has freely justified all of us based on the *unconditional* grace of His kingdom of *agape* love.

for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **being justified freely by His grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because **in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness**, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3: 23-26, emphasis added).

All have sinned, all have fallen short of God’s glory, and all have been *freely justified* by God’s law of *agape* love—declared innocent as if they had never sinned. This is the grace-kingdom of the true God. What we are saying here is that one does not need to bow down to a wooden statue in order to worship a false god. All we need to do is think God operates by Satan’s Good and Evil system of reward and punishment and we will be in reality worshipping Baal.

So then, who really are the gods? Are they a creation of human imagination? Are they simply mythology and folklore passed down through the ages? Are

they real? Many do not believe they are real. They argue that all those stories, those myths are just that, myths; and as such the gods cannot be real.

But then let us ask this question: why would God, in the very first Commandment, tell us not to worship the gods? Is God someone who can't be trusted either? Does God know what He is talking about? Can He be deceived by human folklore?

According to the Bible, the gods are much more than mere figments of our imagination. Notice the following passage from the Book of Deuteronomy:

But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;
 You grew fat, you grew thick,
 You are obese! Then he forsook God who made him,
 And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
 They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods;
 With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
**They sacrificed to demons [NKJV SAYS DEVILS], not to God,
 To gods they did not know,
 To new gods,** new arrivals that your fathers did not fear.
 Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful,
 And have forgotten the God who fathered you
 (Deuteronomy 32: 15-18, emphasis added).

Did you notice how in the passage above, the gods are clearly shown to be demons, devils? This is further confirmed in Psalm one hundred and six:

They [ISRAEL] did not destroy the peoples,
 Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them,
**But they mingled with the Gentiles
 And learned their works;
 They served their idols,**
 Which became a snare to them.
**They even sacrificed their sons
 And their daughters to demons,
 And shed innocent blood,
 The blood of their sons and daughters,
 Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;**
 And the land was polluted with blood.
 Thus they were defiled by their own works,
 And played the harlot by their own deeds.
 Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people,
 So that He abhorred His own inheritance
 (Psalm 106: 34-40, emphasis added).

Israel, the people of God, was sacrificing their own children to the gods, who are represented by idols and who are actually demons. The gods are not an illusion or fairy tale—they are as real as real can be.

Did you notice in the above verse that Israel was supposed to “destroy the peoples, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them?” Doesn't this verse seem

to contradict all we have been saying about God's character, that He is not a Destroyer? It may appear that way, but once we start digging, we will see what this really means. We address this in detail later, in the chapter "Utterly Destroy Them."

Satan is the chief of the demons, and the demons are the fallen angels that came down to earth with him:

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. **His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth** (Revelation 12: 3-4, emphasis added).

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; **he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him** (Revelation 12: 9, emphasis added).

These fallen beings comprise one third of the total number of angels that were in heaven. We don't know exactly what their number is, but we know it is a significant number. Demons, posing as gods, interact with human beings in supernatural ways. They influence people. They are involved in the affairs of mankind. And most importantly, they rule the earth through the reward and punishment system of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Notice what Paul says about them:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6: 12).

Our war is not against each other, not against human beings—"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood." Our true warfare is against the gods—"principalities," "powers," "rulers of the darkness of this age," "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." There are spiritual armies, legions of wicked fallen angels "in the heavenly places." What does it mean that they are "in the heavenly places"? Does it mean that these angels are in heaven? How can they be, if they were cast to the earth as we just read above in Revelation 12:9?

This vast army of fallen angels are "in the heavenly places" in a very specific sense: they sit in the seat of God, pretending to be God:

The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord God:
 "Because your heart is lifted up,
 And you say, '**I am a god,**
I sit in the seat of gods,
 In the midst of the seas,'
 Yet you are a man, and not a god,
 Though **you set your heart as the heart of a god**
 (Ezekiel 28: 1-2, emphasis added).

Satan and his angels take the seat of God by making us believe that their wicked law of reward and punishment is God's law. The moral law of the fallen angels is the same as Lucifer's: they operate by the moral law of Good and Evil. Fallen angels are mean, intolerant, implacable and merciless. Like the dragon, their leader Lucifer, they also believe punishment is the best way to keep order. They devise horrific punishments for those that dare to place themselves under their jurisdiction.

Plutarch, the Greek biographer and essayist (AD 46 – AD 120) states that the gods were not Gods nor men, but “grand Daemons,” and that they themselves undergo severe punishments:

Typhon, Osiris, and Isis were not the events of Gods, nor yet of men, but of certain **grand Daemons**, whom Plato, Pythagoras, Zenocrates, and Chrysippus (following herein the opinion of the most ancient theologists) affirm to be of greater strength than men, and to transcend our nature by much in power, **but not to have a divine part pure and unmixed...**For there are **divers degrees, both of virtue and vice [GOOD AND EVIL], as among men, so also among Daemons...**Empedocles saith also that **Daemons undergo severe punishments for their evil deeds and misdemeanors...**(William Watson Goodwin, Plutarch's lives, vol. 4 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1874), 86-87, emphasis added).

Who were Typhon and Osiris? They were Egyptian gods. What Plutarch is saying here is that these Egyptian gods were not a manifestation of the true God nor were they mere human beings: they were “grand Daemons.” Then he informs us that the Greek philosophers Plato, Pythagoras, Zenocrates, and Chrysippus believed that demons were much stronger and transcendently more powerful than mankind.

Next, Plutarch reveals a profound truth. He touches on the very core, the very foundation of the kind of understanding we all need to have about God, because this is what differentiates the true God from all the false gods. He says that demons do not have “a divine part pure and unmixed.” What this means is that the true God, the truly divine God, does have a “divine part pure and unmixed.” What does it mean to have “a divine part pure and unmixed?”

The key to understanding this is to think of the words “pure” and “unmixed” in the context of the two Trees in the Garden of Eden. These two words complement each other—they explain each other. Something pure is something that has no mixture in it. Something unmixed with any foreign substance is something pure.

God is pure and unmixed. There is no mixture in Him—no mixture of Good and Evil in Him. Therefore, if God is light, there can be no mixture of light and darkness in Him. And if He is life, there can be no mixture of life and death in Him. God is the Tree of Life, and He is “pure” and “unmixed.” Both Paul and

John addressed this same foundational truth in their own words. Paul said:

For we know **in part** and we prophesy **in part**. But when that which is **perfect** has come, then that which is **in part will be done away** (1 Corinthians 13: 9-10, emphasis added).

To “know in part” means to have a knowledge of God that *has mixture* in it. We have shown in God on Trial that biblically speaking, the word “perfect” means to be *entire*—having no division or mixture. To see God as having a mixture in His character is to have an imperfect knowledge of Him; this is to “know in part,” that is, to think that God is “part” Good and “part” Evil. John explains the same thing in different words:

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is **no darkness at all** (1 John 1: 5, emphasis added).

John is saying the same thing as Plutarch and Paul: God’s divine character is pure and unmixed. To fully understand this, we need to keep the two Trees in the Garden of Eden as our frame of reference. The Tree of Life is pure and unmixed, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is impure and mixed, because it has a mixture of Good and Evil, light and darkness.

Notice the word “pure” in the following passages:

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has **clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol**, nor sworn deceitfully (Psalm 24: 3-4, emphasis added).

For then I will restore to the peoples a **pure language**, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord (Zephaniah 3: 9, emphasis added).

Blessed are the **pure in heart, for they shall see God** (Matthew 5: 8, emphasis added).

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (James 3: 17, emphasis added).

God’s “divine part pure and unmixed” is also portrayed in the Bible by the spotless, pure, entirely white lamb, which represents Jesus Christ. It is also represented by the word “holy,” which means clean, pure, unmixed.

As we have already shown, there is another verse in the Bible that addresses this, a verse which Jesus characterized as the most important commandment—“the first commandment.” And why is it the most important commandment? Because it tackles the root of all our problems—having a false knowledge of God—and it also offers the root for the solution for all our problems:

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, per-

ceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: **‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12: 28-31, emphasis added).

“The Lord your God is One.” This oneness represented by the above statement has to do with God’s singleness of character, with His character of *agape* love, which by nature is absolutely untainted by any darkness, wickedness, evil, and death.

Have you ever wondered why in the Bible demons are often called “unclean spirits”? Could it be that it is because they do not have that singleness of character that characterizes God? Could it be that is because they have that mixture of Good and Evil, referred by Plutarch obliquely as “vice and virtue”?

Plutarch says something that is quite eye opening. He says: “For there are divers degrees, both of virtue and vice, as among men, so also among Daemons.” What does he mean? Plutarch is referring to the principle of Good and Evil—“virtue [GOOD] and vice [EVIL].” What he is saying is that, just as human beings have various degrees of Good and Evil in them, so do these demons or fallen angels. This makes sense, because if both humans and fallen angels are operating by the same principle of Good and Evil, then they would have the same mixed characters.

Did you also notice how according to Plutarch, the gods themselves suffer “severe punishments for their evil deeds and misdemeanors”? This is so because they are dealing in the reward and punishment domain. Reward and punishment—virtue and vice—is the law of their kingdom. Satan sits at the head of this kingdom of darkness as its supreme ruler, as the autocratic judge who arbitrarily parcels out rewards and punishments to fallen humans and fallen angels alike—and he does it arbitrarily, that is, as he sees fit. We all belong to this kingdom that mixes Good with Evil—that uses reward and punishment. This means that even the fallen angels are suffering through his system of Good and Evil, just as we are.

Having “no other gods before” God, then ultimately means to not put any of these gods and the mixed laws and principles they teach ahead of the pure God and His unmixed law of *agape* love—pure, unmixed, unconditional love and mercy.

The gods teach lies; their wisdom is the opposite of the wisdom of God, and they lead us to death, not life. All the gods are Satanic—they all lead to Satan and his principle of Good and Evil. They are altogether the expression of this principle which Satan believed was greater than God’s law of *agape* love.

Furthermore, the gods are violent. Jesus revealed that the true God never uses violence, which is what Jesus demonstrated while on earth.

Isaiah clearly says this about Jesus:

He had done no violence (Isaiah 53: 9).

Jesus was like a “Lamb to the slaughter”—He never opened His mouth to curse those who were killing Him. He forgave His destroyers. He blessed those who hurt Him. He never used violence for anything: whether to teach a lesson, or to save Himself. Satan had nothing in Jesus because Jesus never once operated by Satan’s violent death-system of reward and punishment.

Thus, when God asks us to put no other gods before or above Himself, He is in essence pleading with us to choose the way of life and to shun the way of death. The gods are violent, revengeful, cruel, wicked, false, and misleading. By contrast, God is non-violent, forgiving, faithful, merciful and just; He is love, truth, and life.



6

UNGODLINESS: SECOND TO FOURTH COMMANDMENTS

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

2. Exodus 20: 4-6: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in 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 thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The second commandment is similar to the first. In essence, it is a warning against falling for Satan's deceptions through the idols by which the gods are represented. Evil angels have always fooled people into making images in the form of created things, the most common being animals like birds: (Thoth, Horus, Isis, Hermes), cattle: (Osiris, Baal), snakes: (Kaliya, Degei, Quetzalcoatl), and fish: (Dagon, Dakuwaqa). These are just a few examples. These gods are in the "likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

The gods, no matter what their appearance or physical expression, always teach the same thing: the moral law of reward and punishment (Yin and Yang, Karma) and the immortality of the soul. When the Creator, the "I am," who is the true God, says that we are not to bow down to them nor serve them, He is warning us to stay away from Satan and the merciless principles of his kingdom. God's next words, which on the surface appear like a threat, are actually a reference to "the wrath of God:"

...for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

Children learn from their parents and ancestors. Generations follow their parents' gods simply because of tradition. They learn from their ancestors the

gods' way of thinking and being—the reward and punishment way.

God grants us all the freedom to worship whomever we will, but eventually we must reap what we sow. The consequences of our choices and actions cannot be ascribed to an arbitrary act of God. Three or four generations is not an arbitrary number put out there by God either. Apparently, three or four generations is what it takes for a group of people to become solidified in their ways.

God shows mercy unto “thousands” of those who love Him and keep His commandments. How are we to interpret all this? Does this mean that God shows favoritism toward His followers, and shuts off those that turn away from Him? Or... could it mean that God shows mercy to all, but only those who choose to follow His principles of mercy, live in a state of mercy—they receive it from God and in turn give it to their fellow human beings?

When God says that He visits the “iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation,” could He be describing a generational curse that is passed on to us from our ancestors and which, if we don't end the cycle, we will pass on to our descendants as well?

Those who hate the God of grace that Jesus revealed cannot help but to fall into this category, since there are only two choices in the world: God's way of grace or Satan's way of reward and punishment.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

The third commandment has been grossly misunderstood by most believers. But as we delve into it, we will see that it is, again, a warning to stay away from the gods.

3. Exodus 20: 7: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

What does it mean to take God's name in vain? Many have interpreted this to mean that we are not to use the word “God” as a swear word, or to use His name carelessly, disrespectfully. This is very true, and anyone who truly comes to see God's goodness will cease to do that. But there is a much deeper meaning here. Understanding the meaning of two Hebrew words will help us see it. We need to know what the words “name” and “vain” mean in a biblical context—again, allowing the Bible to define its own words for us.

In Hebrew, the word “name” refers to position, character, authority. Thus, to take the “name” of God in vain not only has to do with using the actual word “God” in inappropriate ways, but it also has to do with doing something that shouldn't be done to the character of God—that something is to take it in “vain.” What then, does the word “vain” mean in the Bible? Strong's definition reads:

Vain—in the sense of desolating; evil (as destructive), literally (ruin) or morally (especially guile); figuratively idolatry (as false, subjectively), uselessness (as deceptive, objectively; also adverbially in vain): - false (-ly), lie, lying, vain, vanity.”

The Hebrew word “vain” has virtually nothing to do with our modern understanding of what “vain” is. In the Bible, “vain” is not sitting in front of a mirror looking at oneself, or taking endless *selfies*. Rather, the word “vain” is connected to the desolation, evil, moral ruin, falsehood and lies that come with idolatry.

Psalm 139: 20 explains very well what it means to take the name of God in vain in a biblical sense. It says:

For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain (Psalm 139: 20).

The apostle Paul also knew the Biblical meaning of the word vain. In Acts chapter three we see him ministering in Lystra. While there, he cures a man who had been a cripple from his mother’s womb, saying “Stand up straight on your feet!” And he leaped and walked” (Acts 14: 10). Notice what happens next:

And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. **And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.** Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, **and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God,** which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them (Acts 14: 11-18, emphasis added).

Paul told the people to turn from “vanities” to the “living God.” The vanities he was referring to were the gods Jupiter and Mercurius, who were Roman versions of the ancient gods of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, etc. In Greece these gods were called Zeus (Jupiter) and Hermes (Mercurius).

We have already seen the meaning of the Hebrew word for “vanity.” The meaning of the Greek word used here, *mataios*, is similar:

empty, that is, (literally) profitless, or (specifically) an idol: - vain, vanity (Strong’s Concordance).

Therefore, to speak “wickedly” “against” or about God, which means to confuse His character with that of the gods, is to say things about Him that are not true—this is what it means to take His name in vain. Biblically speaking then, to take the name of God in vain means to ascribe to God a

character that does not belong to Him. It means to cast Him in a false light, to attribute to Him the evil, wicked, destructive, mixed character traits of Satan and his angels. It means to get Him confused with the reward and punishment character of the gods who are worshipped through idolatry. It means to ascribe to Him the character traits of the idols which represent the gods, who ultimately are manifestations of Satanic principles.

Wherever the gods are worshipped there is violence, chaos, ruin, desolation, destruction and falsehood. To take God's name in vain is to ascribe all these negative traits to Him and to His kingdom of righteousness. The truth is, that in contrast to the effects of Satan's kingdom, which are desolation, chaos, ruin, destruction, and death, wherever the true God is worshipped there is order, life, love, joy, hope, and happiness.

Many Christians believe they worship the "true God." But historically, Christians also have worshipped a false god and not the true God. The evidence is in all the destructive behaviors Christians have exhibited towards other people. The worshippers of the "true God" will never engage in such destructive behavior towards others.

Notice how "guilt" is somehow involved in this Third Commandment: "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Again, we can look at this in two ways, through the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil or through the Tree of Life.

In the first case, we would understand this to mean that the Lord literally will not forgive those that take His name in vain. This, however, goes contrary to what the Bible says elsewhere about God's forgiveness:

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who **justifies the ungodly**, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4: 5, emphasis added).

For when we were still without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly** (Romans 5: 6, emphasis added).

If God "justifies the ungodly" and if "Christ died for the ungodly"—which means us, the entire human race that doesn't know Him—then He must also forgive those that take His name in vain, for it is the ungodly who take His name in vain. We have all been ungodly and have taken God's name in vain at some point. It is only when we believe what Jesus taught about God's character that we cease to take His name in vain.

How do we understand the statement then, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain?" There is a good and logical explanation to this from the Tree of Life perspective.

Those that have a wrong understanding of God's character *can't know that God has already forgiven all their sins*—they don't know that God "justifies

the ungodly.” Why? Because they believe the lie from the reward and punishment system. They think they are still under condemnation—and they are, but their condemnation is coming from the Accuser, not from God.

Those who don't know God's true character don't know the forgiveness that Jesus came to reveal to all of us. If we gain our knowledge of God's character from any other source other than Jesus Christ we are bound to take His name in vain, and it is not a case that God doesn't forgive us, but a case in which we are deceived by our own false understanding of God and His forgiveness.

If we don't know God's true character, we also don't know that we are already forgiven. God does not hold us guilty through His law of *agape* love, but if we don't know what His *agape* love is like, then we won't know this. And if we think God operates by reward and punishment, then we will think that God does not forgive us. It is in this way that “the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

The gods have taught and conditioned humanity through the Knowledge of Good and Evil to look at the Creator as a stern, unforgiving, condemning dictator. Those who listen to the *vain* words of the gods remain in their guilty state because they don't know the only true God and therefore cannot see or understand the unconditional forgiveness of God. They don't understand what grace or unmerited favor means, because in the reward and punishment system everything is based on merit or demerit. John wrote about Jesus' grace:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth**. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1: 14-18, emphasis added).

No one can find rest for their guilty souls outside of Jesus Christ's gospel, which is the revelation of God's character of unconditional grace and love—this is the good news. Notice how the apostles described Jesus:

Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, **to give repentance** [METANOIA: A CHANGE OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT GOD] to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5: 31, emphasis added).

Jesus gives us repentance—again another concept that sadly has been severely misunderstood. The Greek word for repentance—*metanoia*—means to have a *change of mind*. Jesus gives us a change of mind in regards to God's true character. He shows a different, kinder, gentler, more gracious God. He also reveals to us God's forgiveness of sins, because He teaches us about a forgiving God of grace—a God who has never held anything against us.

Through Jesus we know that we are all freely justified, freely forgiven.

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins** (Acts 13: 38, emphasis added).

Through Jesus is preached to us that God had always forgiven us.

...to open their eyes, in order to turn them **from darkness to light**, and **from the power of Satan to God**, that they may **receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance** among those who are sanctified by faith in Me⁷ (Acts 26: 18, emphasis added).

The power of Satan keeps us in bondage to guilt and to the condemnation of his reward and punishment system. But God gives us forgiveness, which we are to receive, accept and believe. This forgiveness is not something we need to beg for. It has already been given to us. It was always there; it was always ours. Now, all we need to do is believe it, accept it. It is not given to us according to whether or not we deserve it or merit it, but “according to the riches of His grace”:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, **the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace** (Ephesians 1: 7, emphasis added).

In Jesus we have forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace—not according to our own goodness.

...in whom we have **redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins** (Colossians 1: 14, emphasis added).

Paul also puts it this way:

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? **Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns** (Romans 8: 31-34, emphasis added)?

God justifies us—he does not condemn us. Then who indeed is against us? Who indeed is he who condemns us? Paul doesn’t answer his own question but the Scriptures are full of evidence that there is someone who is against us:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and **Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him**. And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” (Zechariah 3: 1-2, emphasis added)

In this passage Jesus is about to inform Joshua that he has been justified—Joshua as a high priest stands in for the entire human race as its representative. But Satan is standing at Christ’s right hand ready to *accuse and condemn* Joshua and to stop God’s work of justifying him—the work of removing Joshua’s guilt away through God’s free gift of forgiveness.

Notice what Jesus does: He rebukes Satan and his accusatory spirit, and He goes ahead and clears Joshua of all accusation and guilt. And in Revelation chap-

ter twelve verse ten, we can witness all heaven uttering the following words:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, **for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down** (Revelation 12: 10, emphasis added).

The answer to Paul’s question, “who is he who condemns?” is a simple one: it is Satan, the serpent, the great red dragon, and his angels, the many gods. They condemn through their moral law of Good and Evil, just as we do the same on our human level through the same law. We are accusers too. But we make a grave mistake when we ascribe our fallen human character traits onto God. By doing that, we take His name in vain.

Only Jesus has the right to define God, for only Jesus is from above. And Jesus showed a God in whom there is no condemnation toward us—at all.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him (John 3: 17).

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Lastly, the fourth commandment calls us to remember that God is a Creator, a life-Giver:

4. Exodus 20: 8-11: Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The study of the fourth commandment takes us all the way back to the beginning of the earth’s history—to creation week: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” What is it about the seventh day, the Sabbath, that is so special? Why did God make such a big deal about a *day*? Should we care about it and if so, why?

Throughout the ages many have kept the Sabbath and even today many are still keeping it without really understanding why. In fact, we would dare say that the Sabbath is pivotal in the cosmic polemic that has been taking place between God and Satan, and that if we are not aware of the true significance of the Sabbath, we will always default into keeping the Sabbath *in the flesh*—through Satan’s system of works from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This means that many keep the Sabbath simply in order to make sure they are keeping the commandments so that they can be saved—to be

rewarded—and not because they grasp the deep spiritual meaning of the Sabbath. Thus, most are not keeping the Sabbath “in spirit and in truth.”

At the end of the week of creation God had said: “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.”

There are seven words here that we would like to focus on and explore. They are: “remember,” “sabbath day,” “holy,” “work,” “seventh day,” “rested,” and “blessed.” Once we dissect these words, we will begin to see a picture filled with the true beauty of the Sabbath.

What are we to remember? What is God calling us to do when He says “remember”? According to the Ancient Hebrew Lexicon (AHL), the word “remember” means “a recalling of events of the past or to act upon a past event.” Thus, here the thing we are to remember from the past is the Sabbath day, which again according to AHL means “the ceasing of work or activity in order to rest.”

This takes us right back to the story of creation in the Book of Genesis where God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. This is what we are to remember: that last day, that seventh day, the day at the very end of the six days of work.

The Commandment says that we are to “keep the sabbath holy,” and according to Strong’s Concordance, “holy” means “to be (causatively make, pronounce or observe as) clean (ceremonially or morally).”

The words “clean” and “holy” in the Bible convey the same meaning: they are adjectives that describe something or someone that is absolutely pure, without mixture, completely untainted. Furthermore, they also convey the same meaning as the word “light” as used by John in 1 John chapter one, verse five: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

The same message is given through the symbolism of a spotless lamb, which is holy and clean, without any blemishes. If we juxtapose the Tree of Life against this concept, we will see that it also is pure, clean, unmixed, spotless, without blemish, having “no darkness at all.”

That the words “holy” and “unholy” are synonymous to the words “clean” and “unclean” is made evident in the Book of Ezekiel:

Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; **they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy**, nor have they made known **the difference between the unclean and the clean**; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them (Ezekiel 11: 26, emphasis added).

Here, through Hebrew parallelism, “holy” is shown to be the same as “clean,” and “unholy” the same as “unclean.” The difference between the “holy” and the “unholy” and the “clean” and the “unclean” can be seen

when we compare the two Trees in the midst of the Garden: the Tree of Life was pure, with no mixture, clean; but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil has a mixture of opposites—Good and Evil. It cannot be said of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that it has “no darkness at all.” Thus, it is impure, mixed, “unholy,” “unclean.”

In the Bible, “images” or “idols” are characterized as “unclean”:

You will also defile the covering of your **images of silver**,
 And the ornament of your **molded images of gold**.
 You will throw them away as an **unclean thing**;
 You will say to them, “Get away” (Isaiah 30: 22, emphasis added).

Likewise, the prophet Zechariah says:

“It shall be in that day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the **idols** from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the **unclean spirit** to depart from the land” (Zechariah 13: 2, emphasis added).

Jesus Himself used this language when He spoke of demons:

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over **unclean spirits**, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease (Matthew 10: 1, emphasis added).

The Complete Word Study Dictionary adds on a new layer of understanding when it says the following about the word “holy”:

The verb, in the simple stem, declares the act of setting apart, being holy (i.e., withdrawing someone or something from profane or ordinary use).

So we see that the word “holy” also means to “set apart.” Why was the Sabbath set apart? Even more importantly, *from what* was it set apart? What is God trying to tell us through all this?

We need to look beyond the literal meaning of the creation week if we are going to understand its greater significance. We need to realize that the entire week of creation is *not only* literal, but also *symbolic* and even *prophetic*. Each day represents a millennium in the seven thousand years involved in the great controversy between God and Satan, and every detail of that week has symbolic meaning. This is a position that was understood by many of the Bible writers, as we shall soon see.

If the Sabbath is holy, and if “holy” means to be “pure” and “set apart,” then we can logically say that whatever the Sabbath was set apart from has to be the opposite of “pure” and “clean”—it has to be *impure* and *unclean*. Well, the Sabbath is a *day*, the seventh *day* of the creation week. If we are going to compare the Sabbath with anything else, we must compare it to another *day* or other *days*.

As we continue this exploration, please keep in mind that we are now exploring *spiritual* things through *symbolism*, and more specifically, symbolism regarding the seven days of creation week. Thus, consider this: the first six days of creation had two things in common with each other, things that the Sabbath does not have. The first, is that each of the six days ends with the words “*evening and morning.*” There is nothing said about “evening and morning” regarding the Sabbath. Second, *work* was to be done only in the first six days. *No work* was supposed to be done on the seventh day. These two details set the Sabbath apart from the other six days of the creation week.

Can we go beyond the literal and open our eyes to see the grander spiritual vistas that unfold right in front of us? Can we connect the dots and put symbols and words together? Follow the path of associations with us: “evening and morning,” night and day, darkness and light. Then, follow “darkness and light:” falsehood and truth, ignorance and knowledge, death and life. Already a whole spiritual scenario has opened up before us. These words are used symbolically in the Bible to describe *spiritual truths* that are at the core of the spiritual battle taking place between God and Satan. Jesus and all the Bible writers used them symbolically and so should we. Take a look at some examples:

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the **light** of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in **darkness**, but have the **light of life**” (John 8: 12, emphasis added).

The **night** is far spent, the **day** is at hand. Therefore let us **cast off the works of darkness**, and let us put on the **armor of light** (Romans 13: 12, emphasis added).

Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you **light**” (Ephesians 5: 14, emphasis added).

For it is the God who commanded **light to shine out of darkness**, who has shone in our hearts to give the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Corinthians 4: 6, emphasis added).

If the Sabbath and the greater spiritual truth it symbolizes is *holy*, and holy means *clean* and set *apart*, then wouldn't it be fair to say that the first six days leading to the seventh day of creation represent *symbolically* something that is *unholy* and *unclean*?

At this juncture, the reader may ask, “How can you insinuate that the first six days of creation represent something unholy and unclean when sin had not even surfaced yet?” But hadn't Satan already rebelled in heaven when God created the earth? Wasn't his Tree of death already in the Garden before Adam and Eve sinned by eating its fruit?

And what if the first six days of the creation week represent a period of time in which Satan would rule the earth with a *mixed* principle, Good

and Evil, which is the works system? And what if that mixture of light and darkness represented by “evening and morning” are there to help us see the difference between Satan’s impurity and God’s holiness?

We must look beyond the literal meaning of the week of creation if we are to understand its true meaning. Yes, *it was and is a literal week* but there is much more to it. There is a much greater *symbolic* meaning attached to that week.

No work was to be done on the seventh day, while on the six days work was to be done. Furthermore, the seventh day was to be a rest from the work done on the previous six days. What’s the significance of all these things? What does it mean to keep the Sabbath day holy? Does it simply mean to cease from all physical work and labor and to physically rest? Or is there a greater spiritual significance to it?

The Bible indicates that there is much more to this than simply resting. Consider what Paul wrote about this in the Book of Hebrews:

Therefore, since a promise remains of **entering His rest**, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; **but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith** in those who heard it. For we who have believed do **enter that rest**, as He has said:

“So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not **enter My rest**,’ ” although the **works** were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God **rested** on the seventh day from all His works”; and again in this place: “They shall not enter My **rest**.”

Since therefore it remains that **some must enter it**, and those to whom it was first preached **did not enter because of disobedience**, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them **rest**, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God**. For he who has **entered His rest** has himself also **ceased from his works** as God did from His. Let us therefore be **diligent to enter that rest**, lest anyone fall according to the same example of **disobedience**. (Hebrews 4: 1-11, emphasis added).

Paul’s focus here is on one thing and one thing only: he is focused on the act of entering into “rest” and on ceasing from “works,” and he compares all this to the creation week, where the first six days were meant for work and the seventh day for rest. Can you see that Paul is using creation week as a *type, an example, as a template* for a much greater spiritual reality? Can you see that if we get stuck in the *type*, we will miss out on the greater lesson altogether—we will miss out on the *antitype*?

Paul makes a very interesting point on the passage above. He states that

Joshua, who had led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, had not “given them rest.” And his logic is that if Joshua had given them rest “then He [GOD] would not afterward have spoken of another day.” If they had already received that rest then there would not be “another day” in which they would receive that “rest.”

Furthermore, Paul gives us the reason why the people could not enter into that rest that God wanted them to enter: “the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” It was lack of faith, unbelief, which Paul characterized a few verses later as “disobedience”—”Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.”

We ask the question: why couldn’t Joshua give them “rest”? The answer is that Joshua was only a *type*; he was not the antitype. Jesus, the antitype, is the only one who can give us that “rest.” As He said:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest** (Matthew 11: 28, emphasis added).

Notice that Jesus is offering “rest” from “labor,” from work, which is a heavy, burdensome load. Is it a coincidence that Jesus’ words harmonize completely with what we have been talking about here? It is no coincidence, Friends. Jesus knew exactly what He was talking about. He knew that “works,” Satan’s system of reward and punishment, was a problem for us human beings. He knew it all the way back from the beginning, when He exposed the problem at creation week by prophesying that during six thousand years we would be toiling under Satan’s works system from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And He also knew that on the seventh millennium we would finally find “rest.”

We hope that it has become quite clear that keeping the Sabbath does not necessarily mean just a literal resting from a hard week at work, or performing age-old traditions and rituals on the seventh day. There is a much greater spiritual application and meaning to all of this, one which affects every human being.



7

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE SABBATH

We have seen that in creation week God set the seventh day apart to be holy, clean, a day in which no work was to be done. The only thing to set it apart from the rest of the week—the first six days. What is the significance of the seventh day being set apart from the work week—the first six days of creation?

Take the example of the lamb again—we all know that it represents Jesus. The lamb is the type, Jesus is the antitype. The white, spotless lamb represents purity and holiness. The opposite of a spotless lamb is one which has spots, blemishes. Spots and blemishes would cause a lamb to no longer be white, and therefore no longer pure. Instead, those spots and blemishes would cause a lamb to have a mixture of black and white, light and darkness. What do these things mean? What is the principle the spotless lamb and the Sabbath share in common? Is there a bigger picture here that we have not yet seen? What is the greater significance of the seventh day, which is supposed to be kept holy, clean, and in which no work was to be done?

According to the commandment, “in six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall do no work.”

When contrasted against the holy Sabbath, the first six days of creation week, those “work” days, must be “unholy,” they must be “unclean” because the Sabbath is set apart from them, and the Sabbath is holy, and clean. The message here is that the spotless lamb has no spots, and the Sabbath has no works—therefore they are both pure, clean.

In the Old Testament, if a lamb had spots, it was considered unholy and unclean. The work week is unholy and unclean because the Sabbath, which is holy and clean, is set apart from it. Thus, the first six days of the week are unholy and unclean. We hope the symbolic picture being painted here is coming into focus, but the real test is this: will we find anything that suggests a *mixture* of light and darkness in the first six days of creation? If so, then all of this will

be confirmed and all the pieces will fall into place.

Before we delve any deeper into the answers to these questions, we need to observe something about how the Creator uses economy in his creation. Take for instance the skeleton: how many different forms and shapes are adapted to that simple structure? God takes one concept and stretches it to the max. Another creative process which God seems to enjoy using is the fractal. In mathematics a fractal is:

a curve or geometric figure each part of which has the same statistical character as the whole” (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/fractal>).

Another definition of a fractal states:

A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop. Driven by recursion, fractals are images of dynamic systems – the pictures of Chaos. Geometrically, they exist in between our familiar dimensions. Fractal patterns are extremely familiar, since nature is full of fractals. For instance: trees, rivers, coastlines, mountains, clouds, seashells, hurricanes, etc (<https://fractalfoundation.org/resources/what-are-fractals/>).

Broccoli has a fractal structure—a tiniest piece has the same structure as the largest piece. Romanesco broccoli is a fractal—“the self-similar conical protrusions are composed of spiral on spiral of tiny buds” (<https://thesublimeblog.org/2020/02/19/fractals-everywhere/>). A leaf vein network is a fractal structure. A chambered nautilus shell is another example of a fractal found in nature.

The same type of structures can be found in the Bible. There it is called types and antitypes: these are like biblical fractals. As we have seen, a type is a person, thing, or event that foreshadows a future person, thing, or event. An antitype is the person thing or event that is foreshadowed or represented by the type or symbol. Here are some more biblical examples of types and antitypes.

PHARAOH

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is an example of a type—Pharaoh is a type of Satan—he is the antitype of Pharaoh. Here are the parallels between them: Pharaoh made the people serve in hard bondage (Exodus 1: 14)—Satan keeps the human race in bondage to sin and death (Isaiah 14: 3). Pharaoh would not let the people go (Exodus 5: 2)—Satan does not release his captives (Isaiah 14: 17). Pharaoh perished in the Red Sea (Exodus 15: 4)—Satan will perish in the lake of fire (Revelation 20: 10).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Nebuchadnezzar is another type of Satan. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon (Daniel 1: 3)—Satan is the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14: 3, 12). In the book of Daniel Nebuchadnezzar took God's people captive (Daniel 1: 3)—Satan took the earth captive (Matthew 4: 8-9). Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was symbolized by a tree (Daniel 4: 20-22)—Satan's kingdom is symbolized by a tree (Genesis 3: 1-4). Nebuchadnezzar made all people bow to him (Daniel 3)—Satan will attempt to make all bow to him (Revelation 13: 11-17).

MOSES

Another example of a type is Moses—he is a type of Jesus. Moses spent forty years in the desert before he started his ministry—Jesus spent 40 days in the desert before he started his ministry. Moses led the children of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt—Jesus leads his people out of the slavery of sin and death. Moses said: “the Lord will raise up another prophet like me”—Jesus was that other prophet. God gave Moses the law—Jesus fulfilled the law. Moses led the people to the promised land—Jesus leads the people to the new earth “in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3: 13).

CREATION WEEK

Seeing then how God's mind works in such ways, it is not surprising that God set creation week as a type of the Earth's history. We can look at the seven days of creation and see them as a fractal, where the seven literal days are equivalent to seven thousand years. This idea that the literal week is a type of the history of the earth may sound absurd to some, but its symbolic meaning is confirmed in the Book of Genesis:

these are **the generations of the heavens and of the earth** when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth in the heavens (Genesis 2: 4, emphasis added).

The Hebrew word for “generations” is the word *tôledôt*. Here is how Strong's Concordance describes this word:

This key Hebrew word carries with it the notion of **everything entailed in a person's life and that of his or her progeny** (Gen 5: 1; Gen 6: 9). In the plural, it is used to denote the **chronological procession of history as humans shape it**. It refers to the **successive generations in one family** (Gen 10: 32); or a broader division by lineage (Num 1: 20 ff.). In Gen 2: 4, the word accounts for **the history of the created world** (emphasis added).

The Apostle Peter showed that he understood that the week of creation was a

type of the world's history when he wrote the following in his second epistle:

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 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 creation**" (2 Peter 3: 1-4, emphasis added).

Notice that what scoffers are bringing into question here is the *timing* of the Lord's second coming. He also takes us back to "the beginning of creation." Peter goes on to explain:

For this they **willfully forget**: that **by the word of God** the heavens were of old, and **the earth standing out of water and in the water**, [A REFERENCE TO THE SECOND DAY OF CREATION] by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water [A REFERENCE TO THE SECOND MILLENNIUM WHEN THE FLOOD TOOK PLACE]. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. **But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3: 5-8, emphasis added).

What Peter just did here was confirm that creation week is a fractal and that the seven literal days of creation equal seven thousand years of the history of the earth. What he in essence said is this: these scoffers who say that Jesus is far off in the future "willfully forget" that the second day of creation—that day when by the word of His mouth God divided the waters from the waters, and therefore the earth was "standing out of water and in the water,"—is a type of the flood—the second millennium, "by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water."

Peter is opening our eyes to the fact that the literal creation week is a type and the antitype is the seven thousand years of the earth's history. Therefore, the creation week is not only literal but also *prophetic*. And the prophetic creation week is and has always been right on schedule! This means that Jesus' Second Coming is not going to happen in some far off unknown time, but He will come just before the beginning of the Sabbath, at the end of the *sixth day—the sixth millennium*. There is plenty of evidence for this in the Bible.

The prophetic meaning of the creation week has already been explained by Peter: on the second day God divided the waters from the waters, and on the second thousandth millennium the flood came. On the fourth day God created the sun, and Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, came at the end of the four thousandth year. In the sixth day God created man in His image, and at the end

of the six thousandth year the hundred and forty four thousand will have the Father's name written in their foreheads, being recreated in God's image.

Thus the second coming of the Lord will happen right on time as prophesied. He will come at the end of the sixth day, and the Sabbath, the Lord's day, the seventh day, will be the seventh millennium, the thousand years of rest for the earth.

So we ask the question: where are we in this time line since Jesus came two thousand years ago? We are right at the end of the six thousand years, just before the beginning of the seventh millennium! In the fourth commandment God had stated: "six days you shall labor and do all your work," and we have always understood this as applying to the literal six-day week. And the seventh day "is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work, you nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates."

There is no question that there is a literal weekly application of this commandment, but as the type always points to the antitype, then the literal week of creation points to a much greater picture, which is the 6000 years of Satan's works system from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It points to the reward and punishment works system, which is the iniquity that was found in Lucifer when he rebelled against God's universal order of *agape* love.

The Sabbath represents an age in which there will be no works from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It represents God's kingdom of grace which according to Peter will be "a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells."

Earlier we talked about what the real test regarding the work week was—will we find in the first six days of creation a mixture of light and darkness? Embedded in the account of creation there are clues that help us understand the issues involved in the controversy between God and Satan. One of these clues is that after each day of creation the words "evening and morning" are added. For instance, "the evening in the morning were the first day," or, "the evening in the morning were the second day" and so forth. This pattern repeats itself until the sixth day, and one cannot help but notice that "evening and morning" are a mixture of light and darkness.

When it comes to the seventh day however, there is no mention of "evening and morning." Is this significant? Or is it a mere oversight on Moses part? That this is significant is evidenced by the fact that in the Book of Revelation, when speaking of the new heavens and the new earth, John the Revelator says that the gates of the New Jerusalem "shall not be shut at all by day, *for there shall be no night there*" (Revelation 21: 25, emphasis added).

The great message of the seventh day, the Sabbath, or the rest of the Lord, is that in His kingdom there is no mixture of light and darkness. This then is the message which John heard of Jesus and declares unto us, "that God is

light and in him is no darkness at all.” This also harmonizes with the symbolism surrounding Jesus Christ whose garments are as white as snow whose principles are represented by the Tree of Life—a single principle—and who is also represented by a spotless, unblemished lamb.

When God asks us to keep the seventh day holy, He is pointing us to something very important. He is bringing to our attention that this day represents something that is clean, having no mixture of light and darkness. The Sabbath is a day set apart from the rest of the week which contains a mixture of light and darkness, a mixture which makes it unholy, unclean.

And related to this is the fact that there are no works involved in the Sabbath. But the six days of the week are related to works. These are the works of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which is unholy and unclean, having a mixture of light and darkness.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was placed right at the center of the Garden—at the center of the controversy between God and Satan. Right in the midst of the Garden were the two trees which symbolize two separate types of government based on two different principles and run by two different rulers.

The Sabbath was given to mankind to help us differentiate between the ruler of the six days—Satan, who has been ruling the earth for six thousand years—and the ruler of the seventh day—the Creator. It was given to us so that we can tell the difference between the lowercase god of works, and the uppercase God of grace. The Sabbath should help us to pull apart the confusion regarding the god of reward and punishment and the God of unconditional love. It also should help us see that the god of this world has brought death for six thousand years, but that the Creator God will renew all things—will bring life back to our planet. This is evident by the fact that most of Jesus’ works of healing took place on the Sabbath.

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him (Luke 13: 10-17).

Satan has kept the earth “bound” for six thousand years, but the Lord will

“loose” the earth “from this bond on the Sabbath”—the day that belongs to the Lord. The prophet Isaiah is pointing to the seventh millennium when he says:

It shall come to pass **on that day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and from the hard bondage in which you are made to serve**, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon and say: how the oppressor has ceased, the Golden City ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers; **he who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the nations in anger**, is persecuted and no one hinders (Isaiah 14: 3-6, KJV, emphasis added).

Throughout six thousand years Satan has struck the peoples of the earth “in wrath with a continual stroke” through his law of Good and Evil. He ruled the nations in anger through the moral law of reward and punishment—this is “the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers.” Isaiah goes on to say:

the whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing. Indeed the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the Cedars of Lebanon, saying, ‘since you were cut down, no woodsman has come up against us’ (Isaiah 14: 7-8).

The six thousand years of Satan’s rule reveals his character as a *destroyer*. The Sabbath reveals the character of God as a *Creator*. The Sabbath is the culmination of the first three commandments in which God is trying to tell us not to confuse Him, the Creator, with the Destroyer.

And so, after His work of creation, the Lord rested on the seventh day. The Hebrew word for “rested” used in the Ten Commandment in the Book of Exodus is the word *nûach*. The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon explains what *nûach* means:

The shepherd would guide his flock to a place of water. Here is water for drinking as well as green grass for pasturing. Once the flock arrives, they are free to rest after the long journey. A guided journey to a place of rest. A sigh of rest (Ancient Hebrew Lexicon).

This reminds us of the promise that our Good Shepherd will guide us, His flock, to “a place of water”—the “water of life.” There, we will have “water for drinking as well as green grass for pasturing.” Once we arrive, we will be free to rest “after the long journey” of six thousand years, “a guided journey to a place of rest.” Isaiah prophesied “the whole earth” will be “at rest and quiet” and we will “break forth into singing.” This is the meaning of the Sabbath rest. The earth will rest from Satan’s work system because God’s grace will reign on the earth.

This brings us to the last word, the word “blessed.” The Lord “blessed” the seventh day as a prediction that one day God’s grace, which is the “path of blessings” will be law of our land. God also blessed the Sabbath because in it He will present us the gift of life through the resurrection that will take place at Jesus’ Second Coming, at the beginning of the seventh thousandth year.

This is the deeper spiritual significance to the Sabbath. But this meaning

cannot be grasped unless we put it in the context of the great controversy between God and Satan. We need to see it in the context of the cosmic polemic.

We have devoted an entire chapter to the Sabbath in the first book of our God on Trial series, *The Demonization of God Unmasked*. There is much more to the meaning of the Sabbath. This commandment directs us to remember something extremely important about our God: He is the Creator. He is not the Destroyer. Rather, He is our Savior and Redeemer—the One who sets us free from the slavery of the Destroyer.

God is all that Jesus revealed: He is the friend of humanity. He is the only true friend of sinners. He is compassionate, merciful, forgiving, self-giving. He is not an accuser. He is the life-giver, the redeemer and the healer. There is no darkness in Him, no evil trait in Him, no violence in Him, no punishment in Him. He is the Prince of Peace. He has forgiven us all sins. The Sabbath was given to us so that we would never forget that God is our Creator and not our ruthless, cruel, punishing Destroyer.

“The wrath of God” is revealed against anyone who continues to see God in the false light that Satan shed on Him from the moment Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why? Because as we believe, so it shall be done unto us. By believing in the false god, we give ourselves into his hands.

Again, take special notice of the following words: this wrath is *not an arbitrary punishment from God*—rather, it is a natural consequence of what we believe about Him. Our belief about God determines what jurisdiction we fall under—whether in God’s jurisdiction or Satan’s jurisdiction. In God’s camp there will be love, light, and life. In the camp of the accuser there will be destruction, darkness, and death.

How we see God will determine what we expect from Him. It will determine how we relate to Him and how we relate to each other. It will determine which moral law we live by. It will also define who we are at our very core, because we inevitably model ourselves after the God we believe in. If we see God as a Destroyer, we will become destructive people. If we see God as unforgiving, exacting, and cruel, we will become the same. If we see God as punishing, we will punish those around us.

Ungodliness, then, is the root of all evil. Ungodliness is to misrepresent God, to ascribe to Him a false character and to commit the ultimate blasphemy: to ascribe to Him Satan’s destructive character.



8

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN

THE LAST SIX COMMANDMENTS

We have seen what the word “ungodliness” means according to the Scriptures. But Paul’s next statement goes on to say that “the wrath of God” is not only revealed from heaven against ungodliness but also against all “unrighteousness of men.”

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and **unrighteousness of men...** (Romans 1: 18 emphasis added)

What is “unrighteousness of men?” We saw how “ungodliness of men” referred to the first four commandments and it had to do with uttering “error” against God. “Unrighteousness of men” is related to ungodliness—it is the *consequence* of ungodliness. It is all the things men and women do to *each other* as a result of uttering error about God, as a consequence of not knowing Him, of having a false concept about Him. We are imitators of God—like it or not. This means we will be just like the God we believe in.

So, what is unrighteousness? Unrighteousness is manifested in all the ways in which we emulate a god that looks more like Satan than Jesus Christ. All the punishment we lash out, all the anger, mercilessness, the abuse; all the violent ways in which we harm one another, ways that are contrary to God’s pure and unmixed character of *agape* love. All of these fall under the category of “unrighteousness”—even when we use violence and think we are doing the right thing. Everything that is not in harmony with God’s character of unconditional, impartial, non-violent, freedom-giving love as revealed by Jesus Christ, is “unrighteousness of men.” Everything that stems from Satan’s principle of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is unrighteousness.

The apostle Paul is a great example for us. Before he met Jesus, Paul was a Pharisee, a zealot who was persecuting and harming people *in the name of*

God. Listen to his own words:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although **I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man**; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that **in me first Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life** (1 Timothy 1: 12-16, emphasis added).

Paul's life has become the best example for us to see the consequences of believing in a destroyer God versus the God of peace that Jesus came to reveal. In his own words, Paul became "a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life." What Paul considered right-doing before he met Jesus—using force to eradicate perceived error—turned out to be wrong-doing—unrighteousness. "Unrighteousness of men," then refers to the last six of the Ten Commandments:

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's (Exodus 20: 12-17).

Jesus summarized God's law as love for God and love for mankind. He said that on these two things the entire law hangs. But the first four precede the last six. It is only when we know the true God and His principles of love which Jesus Christ revealed that we can truly love each other.

...WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

Notice again what "the wrath of God" is revealed against:

For the wrath of God is **revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness**, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, **for God has shown it to them** (Romans 1: 18, emphasis added).

Those who are ungodly and unrighteous cannot have regard for God or for humanity. Their whole way of being is in direct opposition to God's law of *agape* love, which is expressed through the Ten Commandments. Both the ungodly and

the unrighteous “suppress the truth” about God’s true character of *agape* love in “unrighteousness.” What does this mean? How do they suppress the truth?

The ungodly and unrighteous *exchange* the truth for the lie. They believe Satan’s moral law of reward and punishment is a good and right way of doing things, and so they think that God’s righteousness is based upon reward and punishment. They suppress the truth of His law of unconditional love by using the conditional law of works which was “found in” Lucifer, in the beginning of his rebellion. This is how they “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

Those who ascribe falsehood to God’s character suppress the truth about Him “in unrighteousness.” In other words, unrighteousness, which is Lucifer’s iniquity, takes the place of righteousness, and thus it suppresses “the truth in unrighteousness.”

...because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

According to this last verse, “the wrath of God” is revealed against those that exchange the truth for a lie because they know what they are doing. They are choosing a path which they know to be contrary to the truth. Why? Because “what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.” If they did not know what they were doing, “the wrath of God” could not be revealed against them. But since they know what they are doing, God is honoring their choice and allowing them to reap the consequences of that choice. This is the same thing the prophet Isaiah said in a different way:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5: 20)!

Why does Isaiah say “woe to those” who can’t tell the difference between good (*agape*) and evil (Good and Evil)? Perhaps it is because if one can’t tell the difference between the two, one might find oneself in dire straits. This is like saying, “Woe to those that can’t tell rat poison from baking soda!” Why? The answer is obvious. If you think you are worshipping God, but you are really worshipping a god with the character traits of Satan—you will find yourself in a really bad place.

Righteousness is God’s *agape* love—unconditional, non-condemning, impartial love. Mercy, kindness, gentleness, nonviolence, honesty, trustworthiness, unshakable integrity, truthfulness—these are all part and parcel of righteousness. Most importantly, righteousness is never violent, controlling, forceful or punitive, and freedom and respect for life are intrinsically entwined in the underlying spirit of the law of *agape* love.

Ultimately, “unrighteousness” is the iniquity that was found in Lucifer, which is the moral law of Good and Evil. In both the Old and New Testaments, the word “unrighteousness” is interchangeable with the word “iniquity.” Thus, those that suppress the truth about God are exchanging His pure, holy, uncorrupted character of love represented by the Tree of Life for Satan’s

corrupted duality of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—reward and punishment—which is the counterfeit to God’s moral law of *agape* love.

The reason given for God’s wrath being poured upon all “ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” is this: “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.”

Can you see that what is involved here is *having a correct knowledge of God*? “What may be known of God”—what may be known of God’s true character—“is manifest *in them*, for God has shown it to them.”

What this verse seems to be saying is that God has revealed who He is to every human heart—“what may be known of Him is manifest” *in us*, in our very hearts. In each one of us there is a basic understanding that God is only good. There is a basic knowledge that He is pure and loving. Even atheists know what God is all about because they are quick to point out how believers can be so inconsistent with the true God. How often have we, believers, been called hypocrites by atheists?

This verse also seems to be telling us something else that is very significant: that “the wrath of God” is never poured out against those who are in ignorance. Those upon whom wrath is poured out, deep down know who God is. But they have rejected His principles for Satan’s counterfeit. This is a conscious, deliberate decision—and this is an important point.

In Micah, God speaks to every one of us through the prophet:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6: 8)?

To do justly, to love mercy—this is what it means to walk humbly with God, and God has shown us this. The Psalmist states:

Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, and on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name (Psalm 79: 6).

This verse tells us that knowing God is extremely important. But doesn’t it also seem to be contradicting what Paul just said above “what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them”? After all, it is telling us that God’s wrath will be poured out on those who *do not know God*. But if God has revealed Himself to everyone, then who doesn’t know God? How do we make sense of this apparent contradiction?

We must understand the biblical language involved here. In a biblical sense, to know someone is to have an intimate relationship with them. And so, the answer to this paradox is given in the verse itself, which follows that wonderful rhetorical device called Hebrew parallelism, in which one line—through contrast or intentional repetition—defines the other: “Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You”—first line; second line:

“and on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name.”

“To not know” God and to “not call on” His name are one and the same thing. So, the meaning given here is that not knowing God means not calling on His name. Thus, deep down they may know Him, for “God has shown it to them.” They know that God is just and merciful. But the problem is that they choose not to follow His principles, which is the same as choosing not to have an intimate relationship with Him. And even more important, they choose to not call on His “name,” and “name” refers to *character*. What we see here is that instead of imitating God’s character of mercy, of *agape* love, they choose to follow the unjust and unmerciful ways of the gods—their severe and cruel moral teachings from the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

You may ask, “Why would anyone make such a choice?” According to Jesus, it is because “their deeds were evil.” Notice how Jesus addresses what is involved in rejecting the truth—the light—about God:

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil**. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3: 19-21, emphasis added).

Those who choose to not “call upon God” and His just and merciful principles do not do so because they prefer to operate within the realm of punishment, which is the realm of the gods—the realm of Good and Evil. This is their preferred mode of being because it suits the natural instincts of the flesh—anger, punishment and revenge. This is why they turn a blind eye—or rather, a blind heart—to what God has shown them about His principles of peace, goodness, forgiveness, mercy and love. They feel that justice must be punitive.

Again, note very carefully: the wrath which is poured upon those “nations that do not know” God and who “do not call on” His name is not an *arbitrary act* of God—it is *not a punishment* from God for not knowing Him. Rather, it is *cause and effect*. By staying within the jurisdiction of Satan—through living by his law of sin, which is the moral law of Good and Evil—they incur the *wrath of the oppressor*—they suffer the consequences of living by the principles of *his* realm. They suffer the desolation, ruin, chaos, and destruction which are built into Satan’s oppressive and cruel system of violence, and which has become a part of them.



9

ALTHOUGH THEY KNEW GOD...

As we move into the next verse of our study on “the wrath of God” in Romans chapter one, we will see how the knowledge of God is paramount here. And as we go on, we will see just how God has shown to us who He really is.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God,** nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1: 20-21, emphasis added).

Earth—God’s beautiful Creation, is in a fallen condition, no doubt; but even so, it still reveals who God is. The underlying principles of creation as a whole are still present, even though sin and sinners have marred everything.

Life itself, along with everything needed for the sustenance of life—sunshine, air, water, food, love, beauty, joy—all of these and more have been “clearly seen” “since the creation of the world.” God created us to survive disease, tragedy, pain, sorrow; and the proof is that we are still here after six thousand years of Satan’s reign of fear, disease, pain and terror.

God’s “invisible attributes”—the attributes of His character—can be understood by the things that He has made to keep us healthy, happy, and alive. “His invisible attributes are clearly seen.” What are His invisible attributes? They are the attributes of His *character*—they are “clearly seen” by the things that God has created. They are “clearly seen” by how He provided for us as a loving parent would provide for his or her children, and by how He has been protecting us from complete annihilation.

As believers, we know that the things God created for our well-being did not spring up on their own through zillions of years of evolution. They were lovingly planned out, carefully engineered to suit our physical and spiritual

needs. According to this verse then, those who suffer “the wrath of God” have no “excuse”—they knew Him or should have known Him because “His invisible attributes are clearly seen.”

The picture we are getting here is that those who receive “the wrath of God” were given the truth about God through creation. Everything God creates is an expression of His mind, His heart, His Spirit, His character. Therefore, God’s mind, heart, Spirit, and character can be clearly seen by the things that He made.

Creation tells us first and foremost, that God is the *Creator*. Think of the endless life forms on earth—many now already extinct—and the diversity of sizes, shapes, textures, colors, tastes, smells, both in the mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. This immense variety is the work of a master Creator, not a hot-headed Destroyer. Not only that, but God sent His Son, “His eternal power and Godhead”—to show us His eternal power of life as seen through Christ’s creation and resurrection:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For through Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (Colossians 1: 15-17).

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live (John 11: 25).

All things were created “through” Jesus Christ. Period. Visible and invisible, it was all done “through” Christ and “for” Christ. Regardless of whatever pre-conceived ideas we may have had about God, Christ debunks them all. Christ does not show us a wrathful, vindictive, or destructive God. Rather, He shows the Creator back at work healing and putting back together what the enemy had damaged and broken.

Throughout His entire ministry Christ showed to us a “living God”—a God of life and life only, who was putting back together people’s lives.

Thus, those who reject the God of life “are without excuse, because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God.” Although they knew Him to be the Giver of life, they chose to believe that He was the Destroyer of life. They did not listen to the life Giver, did not pay attention to Him and did not take to heart His nonviolent character. His pure goodness—His meek, gentle, humble, and loving ways, they rejected. Instead, they chose a god of force, violence, retribution, revenge; a god that looks more like what we have become under Satan’s Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We have made Him into our own image. And this is basically what the next verses say:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man**—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1: 22-23, emphasis added).

“Professing to be wise.” The reader will recall how, when Eve saw that the Tree was good to make one “wise,” then she ate the fruit. What this verse is really saying is that Satan’s so-called “wisdom” of Good and Evil is really foolishness. And “professing to be wise” through the so-called wisdom of Good and Evil, we have broken the first four commandments by corrupting God’s glory, which is His character. We corrupted His character by making Him into something that He is not. As a consequence, we cannot help but break the other six Commandments as well.

Most of us know from the Bible what God’s glory is. When asked by Moses, “please show me Your glory,” the Lord responded:

I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion (Exodus 33: 18-19, emphasis added).

God’s glory is His unchanging goodness, His grace, His love, and His compassion. Those who profess to be wise but who think God’s goodness is like the goodness of mankind, have become “fools,” according to the Apostle Paul.

The word “fool” is an interesting choice of words in this context. Paul, a student of the Old Testament, was not using this word flippantly, or using it to attack or insult his readers. No, he chose this word very carefully and used it in the same way as the prophets of the Old Testament did. Notice how Jeremiah uses the word “foolish”:

For My people are foolish, They have not known Me. They are silly children, And they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, But to do good they have no knowledge (Jeremiah 4: 22, emphasis added).

Therefore I said, “Surely these are poor. **They are foolish; For they do not know the way of the Lord,** The judgment of their God (Jeremiah 5: 4, emphasis added).

‘Hear this now, **O foolish people, Without understanding,** Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not (Jeremiah 5: 21, emphasis added).

To Jeremiah, *foolishness* seems to mean *not knowing God*, having *no understanding* of who He really is. The “wisdom” of the people Jeremiah is addressing only lead them to do evil and not good because they were modeling themselves after an evil god—the god of Good and Evil. These foolish people “do not know the way of the Lord, the judgment of their God.” They have eyes that don’t see and ears that don’t hear.

Paul is essentially saying the same thing about those who eventually suffer

“the wrath of God”: they don’t know God because they have done something to Him. That “something” is that “they have changed the glory of the incorruptible God.”

Now, we need to understand what “incorruptible” means. How does the Bible use it? What is the meaning of the Hebrew word that Paul was referring to? Moses used this word, and not surprisingly, also in the context of worshipping idols, false gods:

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: **lest ye corrupt yourselves**, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day. (Deuteronomy 4: 15-20, KJV, emphasis added).

Moses’ warning was this: if you start worshipping these gods which look like people, animals, birds, creeping things, sun, moon, stars, etc, you will become corrupted—“lest ye corrupt yourselves.”

But it is that word “corrupt” that will help us understand what this really means. It is no coincidence that Paul uses the word “corrupt” in the context of “the wrath of God.” Moses used the same word to describe the same situation in the Deuteronomy passage we quoted above. The Hebrew word for “corrupt” is *shâchath*, and according to the Ancient Hebrew Lexicon, it means “to destroy, corrupt, mar, destroyer, corrupter, waster, spoiler, batter, corruptly, fault.”

The idea here is that if something is corrupted from its original pure form, it becomes destroyed, marred, spoiled. So, what was God really trying to tell the children of Israel? He was telling them that if they started worshipping these gods of Good and Evil who were corrupted from their original pure form, they would be entering the jurisdiction of the Destroyer, and as a natural consequence, they themselves would become corrupt, and would indeed be destroyed by the Destroyer.

God even said to the children of Israel: “Look, I took you out of Egypt, where you were slaves to a people who treated you cruelly and harshly, because they followed the gods of Good and Evil. “I brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even Egypt.” “And now, if you go back to the gods, you will be jumping from the ‘frying pan into the fire’! Stop! Don’t do it!”

The real question we have to ask is this: why is Satan the destroyer? The answer is again in the word “corrupt.” Satan operates by a corrupted system, that is, a system that is “mixed.” The mixture in Satan’s system is the Good and Evil principle—a dual, contradictory system, which supposedly is both Good and Evil at the same time. He has a “divided” kingdom, which Jesus said could never last because it destroys itself—“it will be brought to desolation”:

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand (Matthew 12: 25).

God, on the other hand, is not corrupted by the mixture of Good and Evil. There is “no darkness in Him at all”—only light. There is no duality in God. God only is good:

No one is good but One, that is, God (Mark 10: 18).

God only is good because He is *always* good. His goodness is *absolute*, *unchanging* and *everlasting*. God’s goodness does not sway back and forth between kindness and cruelty, between love and hate, patience and impatience, love and wrath. God does not vacillate between peacefulness and violence, creation and destruction, healing and harm, reward and punishment. As the Psalmist repeats twenty-six times in Psalm 136, to drive the point home: “His mercy endures forever.” And James puts it plainly like this:

Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?
Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus, no spring yields both salt water and fresh (James 3: 11-12).

God does not “send forth” both “fresh water and bitter water.” He does not “send forth” both blessings and curses. God, who is the spring of all life, does not yield “both salt water and fresh water.” He does not give us life and then take it away. We may interpret the Scriptures that way, but when we do so, we are getting confused with the *warning*. Often God is warning us of danger, and just as often we interpret the warning to be a threat. *God’s warnings are not threats*—they are warnings.

Like Lucifer, those that suffer “the wrath of God” have rejected God’s “oneness”—His singleness of *agape* love. They see God’s principles of love as being *weak and foolish*, and as a consequence, they themselves “became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

For the **message of the cross** [GOD’S NONVIOLENT *AGAPE* LOVE] is **foolishness to those who are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Where is the wise [WISDOM OF THE WORLD]? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age [SATAN]? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world [THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL]? For since, in the wisdom of God [*Agape* LOVE], **the world through wisdom [GOOD AND EVIL] did not know God**, it pleased God **through the foolishness of the message [*Agape* LOVE] preached to save those who believe**. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but **we preach Christ crucified [*Agape* LOVE]**, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks **foolishness**, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. Because **the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men** (1 Corinthians 1: 18-20, emphasis added).

God's *agape* love is seen by many as foolishness and weakness. But God's love is the only power that God exercises. Those who see God's unconditional love as foolish and weak show that they prefer violence and force rather than peace, destruction rather than life, injury rather than healing, and punishment rather than mercy. This will be seen even more clearly as we progress with the study of Romans chapter one.

Those who *corrupt* the glory—the goodness—of the incorruptible God may profess to be wise, but they do not have the wisdom of God, which is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, they have the wisdom of Good and Evil, and hold it as something superior to God's wisdom of *agape* love. Thus, they become fools and change “the glory of the incorruptible God”—His incorruptible, unchanging character—into a corruptible character like that of man's and Satan's—a dual mixed character of Good and Evil.

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1: 23).

The Book of Genesis says that when God created Adam, He created him in His own image:

Then God said, “**Let Us make man in Our image**, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” **So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them** (Genesis 1: 26-27, emphasis added).

What is the image of God? Certainly, this passage is not talking about a physical image. Rather, this is talking about *character*. God created us with the same character as His—with a character of *agape* love. When Adam ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he was changed into the image of the serpent—his character was no longer *agape* love but Good and Evil. Thus, when Paul says that we “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man,” He is saying that we have ascribed to God our own fallen mixed characters of Good and Evil.

The incorruptible God has a single, pure, unmixed character of *agape* love. His character is not divided in any way. But these *worldly-wise* “fools” “changed the glory” of the unchanging God “into an image made like corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

Mankind became corrupt from the moment Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam’s character was no longer pure because he internalized the corrupt moral law of Good and Evil right away. God has shown us that we make a grave mistake in thinking He is like us:

These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes (Psalm 50: 21).

Mankind is clearly Good and Evil—corrupt. But what are these “birds and four-footed animals and creeping things?” What do animals have to do with all of this? Nothing really, unless they are being used here as symbols. This is *symbolic language* pointing to the gods. A fallen angel is a “bird” of sorts— according to the pattern of Moses’ sanctuary, a covering cherub has wings. A Gold Calf is a “four-footed animal;” and a serpent is a “creeping thing.” Who, then, is Paul referring to through these *symbols*?

These symbols used in idol worship all point to Satan and his angels—the *gods*. Paul equates them to man’s fallen nature—it is demonic, dualistic. Those who suffer “the wrath of God” have exchanged God’s single, pure, holy character of love and grace for the schizoid dual character of Satan—an arbitrary ruler who forcefully brings order through a forceful moral law of reward and punishment.

Thus, “the wrath of God” is revealed against those that choose Satan’s jurisdiction of Good and Evil over the Creator God’s jurisdiction of *agape* love. In fact, if we search the Bible for the word “wrath,” we will soon realize that most verses about “the wrath of God” have the same theme: the people had left the true Creator God for the gods.

Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read— **because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger** with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched’ (2 Kings 22: 16-17, emphasis added).

Therefore they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and **served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass** (2 Chronicles 24: 18, emphasis added).

Now therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, in that **you provoke Me to wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense to**

other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell, that you may cut yourselves off and be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth (Jeremiah 44: 7-8, emphasis added)?

Who are the gods after all? What do we know about them? Is it possible that we are worshipping them—following their teachings—without realizing that we are doing so? We are going to take a look at these gods next, especially Baal and the gods of Egypt. Why? Because God Himself keeps bringing them up.

Egypt is highly symbolic in the Bible: it is a *type* of Satan's kingdom, of his system of ethics, his laws, his societal order that is run through the principle of Good and Evil. And we are in luck, because through the recent work of many Egyptologists, the world has a wealth of information about the gods of Egypt.



10

THE KINGDOM OF THE GODS

At the present time—or in this *age*, as the Bible language often expresses it—we are living in a world that is being *ruled* by the gods. Adam and Eve were given dominion over the earth and were supposed to rule the earth through the *image of God*, through the moral law of *agape* love. But they abdicated the dominion of the earth to Satan when they ate of the Tree that represented his principle of reward and punishment.

The gods—Satan and his angels—began ruling here on earth six thousand years ago when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam's single act of not following a single directive from God opened the doors for Satan and his fallen angels to begin ruling the world through their system of Good and Evil. This means that ever since, they have been using the system of reward and punishment to create and keep *order* here on earth.

GOING TO AND FRO AND UP AND DOWN

The first piece of evidence we have provided that Satan is a god of reward and punishment is found in chapter three of this book, where we showed how his “going to and fro on the earth” and his “walking back and forth on it” reveals that he rules the earth through a system of reward and punishment. That is also the symbolism of the crook and the flail—the two instruments which Pharaoh holds in his hands, with arms crossed over his chest. Good and Evil, reward and punishment, was revealed in the Garden of Eden by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

BAAL, THE CANAANITE GOD

The next piece of evidence we will provide is a brief study on the Canaanite god “Baal,” of whom the Bible speaks about over one hundred times.

Baal is historically a god of fertility, a god of the weather. In the Bible the word “Baal” is translated as lord, master, possessor, owner. It can also mean “a husband,” or it can refer to the lords of a city or a *lord* or *possessor* of a “thing.” Strong’s Concordance defines this word like this:

a master; hence, a husband, or (figuratively) owner (often used with another noun in modifications of this latter sense):— archer, babblers, bird, captain, chief man, confederate, have to do, dreamer, those to whom it is due, furious, those that are given to it, great, hairy, he that hath it, have, horseman, husband, lord, man, married, master, person, sworn, they of.

There is no question that God tried to keep His people away from the god Baal. The Bible is filled with His warnings in this regard:

So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel (Numbers 25: 3).

So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs (Judges 3: 7).

And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: They prophesied by Baal and caused My people Israel to err (Jeremiah 23: 13).

I found Israel Like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers As the first-fruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, And separated themselves to that shame; They became an abomination like the thing they loved (Hosea 9: 10).

Why was God so concerned with Baal and Baal worship? What is it about Baal that is so abhorrent to Him? What is Baal’s character like? Below is a brief description of Baal by Mary M. Saurer, taken from her book *A Comparison of World Religions, Ancient to Modern Day*. She says:

During the time period of 1600 B.C. to 1200 B.C. the Phoenicians were a very advanced race, but their lands had become dry and infertile. Phoenician explorers, in search of fertile land to inhabit, sailed along the shoreline of the Mediterranean. On shore they separated into tribes that migrated from place to place, carrying with them their alphabet and their religion. These Phoenicians, whose ancestors had visited this region to practice trade, promote the concept of the **God of the Sea**, and introduce their Astrology concepts, now spoke of **Baal as the God of Rain, Storms, Lightning, Earthquakes and all manner of things that impacted the earth**. They said that **Baal rides on clouds and wind to watch his people, and judges them in order to punish and reward them**. Baal had created a **multitude of lesser spirit-gods, who were under Baal’s command, and assigned to different agricultural tasks**. These Baal worshippers made **stone statues or idols wherever they settled, to represent Baal and each of the spirit-gods**. They **prayed to the idols for fulfillment of their desires, and practiced appeasement and sacrifice of animals and good to Baal to show their loyalty and worship of Him**. We recall that these Phoenicians were the same race of people who

had brought the concept of Anemon, or **desire gods**, to this region centuries before [Mary M. Saurer, *A Comparison of World Religions, Ancient to Modern Day* (USA: Exlibris Corporation, 2006), 91., emphasis added]

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) gives us a wealth of information on this god. The following paragraphs are found under the entry for Baal, and all words in bold are our added emphasis:

The god Baal met in the ot is the West Semitic storm god, b'1 (sing.) and b'lm (pl.), encountered in Egyptian texts (from fourteenth century b.c. on), Tell Amarna Letters (fourteenth century b.c.), Alalakh Tablets (fifteenth century b.c.), Ugaritic texts (fourteenth century b.c.), Amorite proper names from Mari, Tell al-Rimah, and Chagar Bazar, and later in Phoenician and Punic texts. Both within the Bible and outside it the name appears either absolutely or in construct with place names; e.g. Baal-peor (Num 25:3, 5), Baal-berith (Jud 9:40), Baal-zebul (II Kgs 1:2). (Baal-zebul, "lord of flies," is a parody on his name found elsewhere, b'1 zbl, "Prince Baal.") These names do not denote various gods with the epithet "lord," but local veneration of the same West Semitic storm and fertility deity called simply Baal, "Lord."

Scholars used to think that the plural form with the article, "the Baalim" denoted different local numina, but the plural form of the name occurs outside the Bible and the mention of "lovers" and "strangers" (Jer 2:25) suggest another use of the plural than that of a numerical plural. The article occurs frequently in Hebrew with proper names whose meaning is transparent.

Since the biblical writers did not intend to teach the Canaanite religion, we know more about Baal's roles, consorts, and cult from the extra-biblical literature than from the ot; but the picture of Baal presented in the ot comports well with the extra-biblical sources.

He was also called Haddu (=Hadad). He is above all the **storm god who gives the sweet rain that revives vegetation**. Dry years were attributed to his temporary captivity or even death. But at his revivification fields, flocks, and families became productive. In addition, **he is a war god and fertility deity who consorts with Anat** (is later equated with Astarte). Both by reciting the myth of his role in **reviving life at the autumn new year festival and by magical ritual of sacred marriage** represented in the cult by the king, the queen and a priestess, the West Semites hoped to ensure the earth's **fertility**, (The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, pages 119, 120, emphasis added).

And Wayne Jackson, M.A, in his article *The Ras Shamra Discovery* published in Apologetics Press, INC, wrote the following regarding the existing mythology which surrounds the beginnings of Baal. Apparently, Baal was one of the seventy offspring of the Ugaritic god El:

The religion of Ugarit was similar in many ways to the Canaanite system that the prophets of God consistently denounced. The chief god was El, who was believed to be the father of seventy gods and goddesses that comprised the Ugaritic pantheon. El was "a shadowy figure who apparently takes little part in the affairs of men" (Wright, 1962, pp. 106-107). El's wife, the mother of the pantheon's gods and goddesses, was Athirat or Elat. Her name appears in the form "Asherah" in

the Old Testament (rendered “groves” in the KJV; cf. Judges 3:7). Of El’s sons and daughters, **Baal was the most popular. He was the storm god who brought rain and fertility, and who frequently was in conflict with Mot, the god of death.** El appears to have been a schizophrenic sort of character who at times was “of mild character, good humored,” never refusing what was asked of him, yet at other times, he might kill his father, or his son, or cut off the head of his daughter (Wright, 1962, p. 107). Though Baal was the offspring of El and Asherah, Ugaritic texts indicate that eventually Baal drove El from the leading place and took both his position and his wife (Kapelrud, 1952, pp. 77-78). Significantly, **the Bible represents Baal and Asherah as counterparts** (cf. 1 Kings 18:19). Accordingly, the Asherim (plural of Asherah) of the Bible were the female cult objects that corresponded to the male objects of the Baal cult (Wright, 1962, pp. 29-32). Though there was some similarity in the sacrifices offered in the Canaanite system (both in the names and kinds of animals offered) to that of the Israelites, the former was highly **polytheistic, extremely sensuous, and not infrequently violent.** Thompson observed: “In the temples of the Canaanites there were **male and female prostitutes** (‘sacred’ men and women) and all sorts of **sexual excesses** were practiced. It was believed that in some way these rites caused the crops and the herds to prosper” (1975, p. 84). Also, “**from numerous biblical and Roman allusions we know that child sacrifice was occasionally practiced,** the story of the Moabite king, Mesha (2 Kings 3:27) immediately coming to mind” (Wright, 1962, p. 112) “**Funerary jars have been found with the bodies of young children distorted by suffocation as they struggled for life after having been buried alive as a sacrifice to Canaanite gods**” (Wilson, 1973, p. 85) (<https://www.apologeticspress.org/tr/reprints/Ras-Shamra.pdf>, emphasis added).

This is the same demonic force that attacked Job and his family through wind, fire, and also human beings. The Sabians, who had given themselves over to Satan’s jurisdiction, were used as his agents of destruction. We see this god of reward and punishment at work all throughout human history under many aliases and across various cultures. But regardless of his name, the essence of his character is still the same: he is a volatile, violent, cruel god of reward and punishment.

Baal is still working today in our world, using all kinds of natural phenomena to destroy human lives. Baal judges human beings in order to either punish or reward them; that is his principle of keeping order, which is represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

THE GODS OF EGYPT

Before we start this section, we would like to state right up front that we cannot include in this book all the research available on the gods of Egypt. Therefore, we encourage the reader to access some of the research we have already done, in particular Denice Grant’s thesis on Mozart’s last opera, *The Magic Flute*. The thesis, *Die Zauberflöte and the Moral Law of Opposing Forces*, can be downloaded from our websites, www.grace-unlimited-ministries.org and www.godontrial.org. There the reader will find a wealth of information regarding the gods of ancient Egypt and their connection with

the moral law of reward and punishment.

Also of great value will be a reading of one of the articles which inspired Mozart to write *The Magic Flute*, *Über die Mysterien der Aegyptier* (About the Mysteries of Egypt). This article was written by a fellow Freemason and contemporary of Mozart, Ignaz von Born. In the article in question, von Born compared Freemasonry with ancient Egypt, in particular as it pertained to their mutual code of ethics, the moral law of reward and punishment, merit and demerit. This article which promotes the thesis that Freemasonry inherited all its moral values from ancient Egypt can also be found on our website mentioned earlier.

If the reader chooses to go through this material, we advise him or her to always keep in mind that everything they are about to read is from the so-called *wisdom that the gods taught*. In these articles we are able to see how they lied and twisted everything in order to deceive humanity, including making their moral law of Good and Evil appear to originate from God, and to be the *order of the cosmos*—the eternal law of the entire universe.

In the Bible, the slavery under Satan's kingdom is typified or symbolized by Egypt because Egypt was ruled by the gods. Who are the gods? Some would say that they are *mythical* figures—unreal. But when we looked at what the word “ungodly” means we see that the gods are very real. The greatest proof of this is that God Himself warns us about them in the first four commandments, as well as throughout the entire Bible.

The gods, which come in a myriad of names across different cultures, are really a *front* behind which Satan and his fallen angels interact with human beings. *Satan and his fallen angels are the gods*. It is through the gods that Satan has taught us his so-called wisdom, which is the moral law of reward and punishment—the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In ancient Egypt, the gods dictated their teachings and *wisdoms* directly to the pharaohs and priests. These in turn ruled Egypt through the law of reward and punishment, which they learned from the gods.

There is much in Egyptian mythology that confirms that the gods operated by the moral law of reward and punishment. Take for instance, the Egyptian goddess Maat. Maat was sometimes depicted as a feather (from a fallen angel perhaps?) and was considered to be the personification of the law of order, justice. Order and justice are wonderful concepts, but as far as Egypt is concerned, these two words are simply euphemisms for the idea of *punishment*. Notice, then, what The Oxford Companion to World Mythology states about Maat:

In Egyptian mythology, the goddess Maat (Ua Zit), the wife of **Thoth, a god associated with wisdom**, and daughter or aspect of the high god Atum, is **at once a goddess and an idea, the personification of moral and cosmic order, truth, and justice** (maat or mayet, like the Mesopotamian me or Indian dharma) that was as basic to life as breath itself, which in the Coffin Texts Maat also seems to personify. Pharaohs held small models of Maat to signify

their association with her attributes. Maat gives breath itself – life – to the kings, and so is depicted holding the symbol of life, the ankh, to their noses. Maat represents the proper relationship between the cosmic and the earthly, the divine and the human, the earth, the heavens, and the underworld. It is **she who personifies the meaningful order of life** as opposed to the entropic chaos into which it might easily fall. In some stories it is the sun god Re who displaces Chaos with Maat. When a person died his heart was weighed against Maat's feather. A heart 'heavy with sin' would not join the gods [PUNISHMENT]. Maat was essentially in all Egyptian gods and goddesses as **the principle of divinity itself**. The goddess Isis acknowledges the qualities of Maat, as signified by the maat (ostrich feather) she wears behind the crowns of upper and Lower Egypt. Maat might be seen as a principle analogous to the Logos, **divine reason and order**. As Christians are told 'In the beginning the Word [Logos] already was' (John 1:1), Atum announces that before creation, "when the heavens were asleep, my daughter Maat lived within me and around me." (David Adams Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 243., emphasis added)

The Egyptian goddess Maat represented "a moral and cosmic order, truth, and justice." This is Satan's moral and cosmic order enforced through his system of reward and punishment. "Pharaohs held small models of Maat to signify their association with her attributes," because Pharaohs were personally taught by the gods. Every aspiring Egyptian ruler was initiated in the Mysteries of Egypt, and this included direct communication with the gods (theurgy) who taught them their law of Good and Evil.

Did you notice how it is claimed that Maat, represented also by the ankh, is a symbol of life? But isn't this system of Good and Evil in reality a symbol of death, according to God? Maat also is said to personify "the meaningful order of life as opposed to the entropic chaos into which it might easily fall." Isn't this what Satan claimed? That his way of keeping order was superior to God's way—the moral law of *agape* love—which in his own wisdom he considered foolish and weak according to 1 Corinthians 1?

The goddess Maat is continually addressed as "the principle of order" in the literature on ancient Egypt. This is because Maat represents Satan's punitive justice—Satan's way of keeping *order*. Here are a few more examples:

Maat is right order, divinely established order and as such is 'the Egyptian concept of the arrangement and relationship that underlies and governs all aspects of existence, somewhat akin to the western notion of natural law' (Allen 1988, 26). Moreover, '[i]t extends from the elements of nature...into the **moral and social behavior of mankind.**' Maat as '**order is the principle which makes the whole of existence possible.**' At the same time, it is a life-generating principle and force (Maulana Karenga, Maat, *The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8, emphasis added).

Maat, as a principle and force constitutive of creation itself, comes to mean, then, **an order of rightness** which permeates existence and gives life. Thus, Siegfried Morenz (1984, 113) states, '**Maat is right order in nature and**

society, as established by the act of creation and hence means according to context, **what is right, what is correct, law, order, justice and truth.** Anthes (1954, 23) also stresses the centrality of **Maat as a divinely constituted order**. He observes that '[the] idea of Maat primarily means the **divine order of the world**, including the **political, theological and social order of Egypt**' (Maulana Karenga, *Maat, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8, emphasis added).

In the next quote, a scene of judgment in the Hall of Double Righteousness is described. We ask the question: what is Double Righteousness? Could this be a reference to Good and Evil? It would seem to be so, because when the word "balance" is used it is referring to the supposed balance between Good and Evil, the balance between reward and punishment:

A feeling of rightness pervades the Hall! The concept of **divine balance** flows from the Complete One. **Justice and Order** are the watchwords that Atum must maintain. Atum has appointed his daughter, the Goddess **Maat to be the personification of this wonderful concept of balance in the universe**. A feather, a simple plume, is her symbol. With the lightest touch Maat controls the **balance between opposing forces of good and evil to the finest degree**. No individual human strength or weakness dominates for very long. The Goddess applies her feather-light touch to **restore divine justice and order** in the Ancient land (Anthony Holmes, *Tutankhamun-Speak My Name* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 8, emphasis added).

Another writer states that "Maat is an order resulting from opposing powers" (which we believe are the opposing powers of Good and Evil):

Maat was not an abstraction for the Egyptians but **an actual order resulting from opposing powers** (Anna Mancini, *Maat Revealed, Philosophy of Justice in Ancient Egypt* (Buenos Books America, 2004), 13, emphasis added).

Another author states that Maat was an "implicit moral code," "a moral system," that is, a code of ethics:

While the maat precepts, ankh-em-maat, 'living by maat,' primarily meant respecting the **primeval order of the universe and of society**, at least from the time of the Wisdom Texts (c.2550 BC), they could also be understood as **living decently**, as **'doing the ethical thing.'** As such, it put the ethical justification for a Paradise into the hands of the Egyptians. It even put the link between everyday life, ethics and religion into their hands, since much in the **maat was an implicit moral code for this life** and not just a criterion for universal and societal order and entry into the afterlife. **The ethical aspects of the maat in the negative confession in 'The Hall of Two Truths' constituted a moral system**, or rather it would have constituted such a system if was not assumed that the afterlife assessors could be tricked by claiming innocence of all wrongdoing and that magic and fraud were the omnipotent passport to the afterlife (Simson Najovits, *Egypt, Trunk of the Tree*, vol. 2 (Algora Publishing, 2004), 42, emphasis added).

The same author goes on to say that through the concept of Maat, the Egp-

tians “posed some of the most fundamental problems faced by man – what is correct behavior? What is ethics? Is there a reward or a punishment?” (Simson Najovits, *Egypt, Trunk of the Tree*, vol. 2 (Algora Publishing, 2004), 43).

In the following excerpt from a book titled *Oldest Books in the World: An account of the Religion, Wisdom, Philosophy... of the Ancient Egyptians*, Isaac Meyer describes an Egyptian judgment scene. He openly states that the judgment and punishment taking place is done by a demon. And again, Maat is said to be the “order” which is “believed to be the norm of the entire universe”:

The scene of the Psychostasia or Trial of the earthly conduct of the dead, in the Future-world is very important because of the knowledge it gives of the religion of the Ancient Egyptians. It shows the existence with them of a belief in a judgment, after death, of the soul or conscience; for man’s actions committed whilst in life upon this earth; that his good and evil deeds were thought to originate and reside in his heart; that man had while on earth free will in his actions; that his heart, emblem of his conscience, was after death, mystically weighed by Thoth, symbol of the intellectual part of his spiritual nature; **that he was subject to the accusation and opposition of a demon, for actions done while in life on this earth, and after a decree against him to punishment by such demon and his followers.** That there were certain specific faults and crimes for which he was liable to such punishment, and these his Ka was obliged to state and show his freedom from, before the Forty-two assisting judges of Osiris, the death of the dead; that these faults and crimes are mentioned in the Confessions, in the Book termed by Dr. Lepsius, No. cxxv of the Book of the Dead, of which Chapter or Book the scene of the Psychostasia is part; and that in number they were not less than forty-two. **The Ma or Maat i.e. Harmony, Law, Truth, Righteousness**, likely including an idea similar to the modern idea of the Kosmos, and of that **order** which is conspicuous in the movement of the heavenly bodies, was believed to be the norm of the entire universe; that the principal desire of the Ancient Egyptian was for his spiritual resurrection from the dead, and an eternal future happy spiritual life in the Egyptian heaven, with perfect liberty to go where he desired: an absence of all punishment, and especially freedom from the danger of annihilation of his spiritual existence, by the ‘Second death’ (Meyer, *Oldest Books in the World*, 415, emphasis added).

These are just some of the many evidences tying Egypt with Satan’s moral law of Good and Evil. Maat represents that duality of Good and Evil, the *moral order* with which Satan thought he could achieve a model society.

Another clear proof that Egypt represents Satan’s system of reward and punishment is that symbol found at the hands of ancient Pharaohs—the crook and the flail. A photograph of King Tut, for instance, will reveal that his arms are crossed, one hand holding a crook and the other a flail. Notice the meaning of the crook and the flail:

The crook and flail are sometimes thought to represent two of the functions of the king: **the crook stands for the shepherd, carer of the people, while the flail as scourge symbolizes the punishments deemed necessary to sustain society** (Carol Andrews, *Amulets of ancient Egypt*, University of Texas Press, 1994, p. 75, emphasis added).

This reveals much light about what the gods of Egypt taught the Egyptians.

Through the gods' wisdom, Egypt was governed through these two functions:

1. The crook, symbolizing the Good of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—the reward principle, which Satan likes to call *beneficence*. This is the supposed “caring for the people” through supposedly good means, the reward arm of Good and Evil.
2. The flail, symbolizes the Evil of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—the punishment, or the necessary violence which according to Satan is needed in order to “sustain society,” that is, in order to sustain societal *order*.

It is for this reason that in the Bible, Egypt is a *type* or a *symbol* of sin and slavery. The horrific methods of torture and cruelty committed in the name of good in this system are unfathomable. The history of the Israelites in the Book of Exodus is a type of the six-thousand-year-history of the human race under Satan's system of reward and punishment:

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly (Exodus 1: 8-14).

The “new king” over the human race is Satan—we mean nothing to him. He deals with us “shrewdly,” he and his angels are “slave masters” over us and they “oppress” us with “forced labor” through reward and punishment. They work us “ruthlessly” and they have made our lives “bitter with harsh labor” in the *works system*—this is what brick and mortar means. “Brick and mortar” are not naturally occurring elements in nature, they are *man-made*, and so they represent human “works” of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The literal exodus from Egypt typifies a future spiritual movement which will take place in the last days. Notice how this is explained by Paul in the following verses:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all **our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and**

in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now **these things became our examples**, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and **were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come** (1 Corinthians 10: 1-11, emphasis added).

The Exodus was a type, and we “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” are its antitype. This means that a substantial sector of the human race will *exit* Egypt—in other words, they will leave behind this reward and punishment type of thinking, this dual moral law of the gods, and will enter the Promised Land which represents God’s law of unconditional and impartial love, *agape* love.

Notice what Paul also says about the gods in the Book of Ephesians:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6: 12).

The “rulers of the darkness of this age” are ruling, that is, they are using a ruler, a guideline, a law, in order to control human beings. This *ruler* or measuring system is the “law of sin and death” by which all the actions of the gods are aligned and conformed. The gods are “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places,” “wickedness” being the same thing as “iniquity,” that principle, moral law, or way, that was “found” in Lucifer:

You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you (Ezekiel 28: 15).

Lucifer’s “ways” were no longer “perfect” once “iniquity was found in” him. We too were living by the same imperfect rule of law, until Jesus came and gave us a better alternative. Jesus opened to us the principle of life, the moral law or way of life. This is what the Apostle Paul learned from Jesus:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh [BECAUSE WE WERE LIVING BY THE MORAL LAW OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT, THINKING IT WAS FROM GOD], He [JESUS] has made alive together with Him [ALIVE THROUGH HIS MORAL LAW OF LIFE, *Agape* LOVE], having forgiven you all trespasses [THROUGH *Agape*, GOD’S CHARACTER OF GRACE, THE OPPOSITE OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT], having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us [HAVING WIPED OUT THE LAW OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT, WHICH IS

NOT “FOR US” BUT “AGAINST US,” BY SHOWING US THAT GOD IS A GOD OF ABUNDANT GRACE]. And He has taken it out of the way [REMOVED IT COMPLETELY, BECAUSE WE USED TO THINK THIS WAS GOD’S LAW, BUT NOW HE HAS SHOWN US THAT GOD DOES NOT OPERATE BY THE MORAL LAW OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT], having nailed it to the cross [WHERE HE GAVE US THE GREATEST REVELATION OF GOD’S *Agape* LOVE FOR US]. Having disarmed principalities and powers [SATAN AND HIS ANGELS, THE GODS, WHO LIED TO US AND MADE US THINK THAT GOD OPERATES BY REWARD AND PUNISHMENT], He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:13-15, emphasis added).

The Apostle Peter also mentions Jesus’ victory over the gods of this age:

[JESUS CHRIST] who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him (1 Peter 3: 22, emphasis added).

The Good and Evil kingdom of the gods is characterized by pain, sorrow, calamity, stress, distress, fear, and anything negative one can think about because it is ruled by reward and punishment. The Psalmist writes the following about those that run “after” the gods:

Their sorrows shall be multiplied [OF THOSE] who hasten after another god; their drink offerings of blood I will not offer (Psalm 16: 4, emphasis added)

“Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god.” Not only do they inflict on us a multiplication of “sorrows,” but they inflict death upon us because theirs is the kingdom of death.

We blaspheme God when we say that He takes part in the kingdom of death. When we worship God thinking that He is responsible for any death or killing, we are in reality worshipping a god of darkness. God’s kingdom is the kingdom of life, light only. This is indicated by the fact that when God begins to reign upon His throne, only the Tree of Life will be there. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is the curse, will be no more:

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. **And there shall be no more curse**, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him (Revelation 22: 1-3, emphasis added).

The “curse” in Revelation twenty-two is a reference to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This cursed system, responsible for death, will no longer exist. The “curse” is Satan’s “throne of iniquity” (Psalm 94:20). “And there shall be no more curse”—no more “throne of iniquity”—“but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it.”

Just as we cannot “serve two masters” (Matthew 6: 24), neither can we belong to two kingdoms—the kingdom of life and the kingdom of death. The same applies to God and Satan. They also cannot belong to or act in harmony with each other’s jurisdictions. They must be in one or the other so that we can clearly choose between them. If God and Satan had anything in common, then we would not have a clear choice between the two masters. Therefore, God cannot operate by reward and punishment as we previously believed.

If we serve God, we must put away everything that pertains to the kingdom of Satan and his angels, the gods of this world. Before the children of Israel entered Canaan, Joshua gave them a clear command to put away the gods:

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord** (Joshua 24: 14-15, emphasis added).

The above verses have as much relevance for us today as they did in Joshua’s time. The gods spoken of here are Satan and his demons, who operate by the law of reward and punishment represented by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He and his angels were the gods of Egypt, under various names. Those gods were horrible, cruel, vindictive, punishing. If we “serve” God as a god of reward and punishment who is horrible, cruel, vindictive and punishing, we are still in effect serving the gods of Egypt, and not the true God; we have not put the gods “away.”

Satan’s moral law of reward and punishment was represented on earth by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. This moral law is the “iniquity” that was “found” in him. God had said that death would come into the world if Adam and Eve ate of this Tree. Thus, anything pertaining to “death” has to do with this Tree, which represents the death principle referred to as “the law of sin and death” in Romans 8: 2. This “law of sin and death” is the moral law, which is now in our very “members:”

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to **the law of sin which is in my members** (Romans 7: 23, emphasis added).

Lucifer’s moral law of reward and punishment is the opposite of God’s moral law of *agape* love, which is unconditional love. Lucifer’s law is a *conditional* law. According to his law, conditions are necessary for *order* to exist. His conditions are: if we do good works we shall be rewarded, and if we do evil works, we shall be punished. Or we might be arbitrarily rewarded or punished in or-

der to be motivated to be good. This law of reward and punishment is focused on works. By nature, this law is fraught with fear, guilt, and condemnation.

Reward and punishment is the opposite of God's law of *agape* love which is based on grace and which is freely given to all. If God's grace is freely given to us, this means that we don't need to deserve it. In fact, we cannot do anything in order to deserve grace. It is unconditionally and impartially given to all. The only part we play in this gift of grace is how we exercise our choice. We have the freedom to accept it or reject it. If we reject it, we remain in Satan's jurisdiction of death into which we were born due to Adam's choice to eat of the Tree.

Order in God's system of *agape* love is kept through love, not desire for reward or fear of punishment. In God's kingdom of love there is freedom, joy, and peace. Jesus came to save us from the destructiveness, the guilt, and condemnation brought upon us by Satan's moral law of "sin and death." He does this by revealing to us God's law of life, His *agape* love:

For **God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world**, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3: 17, emphasis added).

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8: 1-2, emphasis added).

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1: 4, emphasis added).

For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Proverbs 6: 23, emphasis added).

As human beings, our freedom of choice positions us either on God's jurisdiction of *agape* love—righteousness—or Satan's jurisdiction of reward and punishment—iniquity. There is no escaping this reality—we are all either on God's side or on Satan's side. According to the Scriptures, the leaders of these two jurisdictions are clear:

And war broke out in heaven: **Michael and his angels** fought with the dragon; and **the dragon and his angels** fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12: 7-9, emphasis added).

Yet **Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil**, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 1: 9, emphasis added)

The two sides—righteousness and iniquity—are respectively headed by Michael (which means who is like God?) and the Devil, Satan (which means the

adversary, the accuser) who is symbolized by the dragon, the serpent. This war is a war of ideas, a battle of ideology centered upon these two moral laws, “the law of the Spirit of life” and the “law of sin and death.” These two sides have taken two distinct positions on what should be the ruling moral compass of all intelligent beings. Michael, on the side of God, promotes unconditional love, impartial treatment of all beings, and freedom of conscience:

But I say to you, **love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you** (Matthew 5: 44, emphasis added).

For there is **no partiality with God** (Romans 2: 11, emphasis added).

And if you call on **the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work**, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear (1 Peter 1: 17, emphasis added).

Stand fast therefore **in the liberty by which Christ has made us free**, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (Galatians 5: 1, emphasis added)

Order that is enforced by violent means is of no value to God. Reward and punishment are coercive and forceful; therefore, reward and punishment are of no value to God. Love is the foundation of God’s government, and God’s love is unconditional, impartial, and freedom-giving—in fact, love without freedom is not love. It was for love that God created us. God wants us to love one another—even those who see us as their enemies, for a Christian should have no enemies—and it is love itself that will produce order among us.

The foundational principle of righteousness behind Michael’s law of *agape* love is mercy. Mercy and forgiveness work much better toward the overall good of society than cruel and destructive punishment.

And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness (Isaiah 16: 5).

Lucifer, on the other hand, strongly advocates keeping order through force. Thus, he promotes the coercive means of reward and punishment to achieve his order-keeping goals. Believe it or not, Satan’s ultimate goal is to have order. But the difference between him and God is that he thinks that all intelligent beings must be compelled, coerced, forced into good behavior through external motives such as reward and punishment. As a result, he doesn’t believe that freedom is a viable state for intelligent human beings. In his kingdom all must fall into line—like it or not—otherwise we pay a severe penalty for our misdoings. That he rules his kingdom with violence is evident by the biblical language surrounding him:

How the oppressor [LUCIFER] has ceased, the golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers; he who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke. He who ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted and no one hinders (Isaiah 14: 4-6, emphasis added).

Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?’ (Isaiah 14: 16-17, emphasis added).

Satan is an “oppressor;” he strikes the people of his kingdom (the human race) “in wrath,” and what’s more, “with a continual stroke.” We are beaten by him—and by each other, because we too use his principle of reward and punishment in our daily lives. He rules us “in anger” because that is the nature of his law of reward and punishment. He gets furious when we don’t obey him. He makes the earth “to tremble” with his violence, he shakes kingdoms, and makes “the world as a wilderness and destroys its cities.” He keeps us prisoners inside his violent kingdom of reward and punishment. In order to understand what the term “the wrath of God” means, then we must know these things about Satan and his kingdom.

God must go through much pain when we choose Satan over Him, but what is His reaction according to the Scriptures? Does He become furious at us? Does He decide that it would be better to kill us than to allow us to worship these gods? This would indeed be an appropriate reaction for a human being who uses force to make others conform to his will. But this is not how a God of *agape* love reacts to our rejection of Him and His ways.

As human beings, we have one inalienable freedom: the freedom to choose between these two platforms—Good and Evil and *agape* love. Once we decide for one or the other, there are a whole set of consequences that come along with our choices under each respective jurisdiction. These consequences are outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight as the blessings and the curses. The blessings are inherent to God’s kingdom, and the curses are inherent to Satan’s kingdom. The curses are “the wrath of God.” The term “the wrath of God” can only be understood when viewed within the context of these two jurisdictions. So, the next question we ask is this: how does a God of infinite love react from heaven when we trade Him for the gods?



11

THEREFORE...

We asked the question: How does a God of infinite love react from heaven, that is, from the *heavenly principle of agape* love, when His creatures decide to leave Him in order to serve the gods?

First, we would like the reader to see again why God's wrath is "revealed from heaven." The reasons for "the wrath of God" are given in verses eighteen to twenty-three, and we have highlighted all the words that indicate why God's wrath is revealed:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **because** what may be known of God is manifest in them, **for** God has shown it to them. **For** since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **because**, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1: 18-23, emphasis added).

Verse eighteen begins by saying "For the wrath of God..." and then all the way until verse twenty-three Paul clearly explains why "the wrath of God" is revealed from heaven. In these verses he uses words such as "for," "because," and then later on in verses twenty-four, twenty-six and twenty-eight he says "for this reason," "and even as," to give the reasons as to why "the wrath of God" is revealed from heaven.

So then here are the reasons Paul gives for "the wrath of God": First, "because what may be known of God is manifest in them." Second, because "since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen." Third, "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

In verse twenty-four Paul changes his tone and uses a very special word: the

word “therefore.” This word “therefore” expounds on how God’s wrath is revealed from heaven. “Therefore...” because the people did not know God, even though God’s attributes were clearly seen, and because they knew God but didn’t glorify Him as God.... “Therefore...” God is going to have to do something.

What this word “therefore” in verse twenty-four means is this: because the people had done or not done the things which were stated in verses eighteen to twenty-three, therefore, as a result, God is going to have to do something about it. The word “therefore” has to do with God’s *reaction* to the stated problem. It has to do with God’s *solution* to the situation in question. And this is what we are going to explore next. What did God have to do as a result of the “for” and “because” that was stated earlier? What is His reaction and solution?

We ask: What does God do to those who completely ignore all the things He has given them to lead them into His ways of life? In other words, how is God going to deal with those who have chosen to follow the gods? How is His wrath going to be manifested upon them from “heaven”? Does He get angry with them? Does He punish them? Does He destroy them? Does He send lightning down from heaven upon them? Does He send a *destroying angel* to punish them?

As we continue reading Romans chapter 1, this foundational chapter that explains “the wrath of God,” we will finally get the answer to these questions. Below we will see what this biblical term “the wrath of God” really means. And we will see why it is revealed straight “from heaven”—straight from God’s *throne of righteousness*.

We now highlight three places where Paul explains what God has to do to those who are ungodly, who “suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” who don’t know God, or who don’t “glorify Him as God,” who are not thankful to Him, who become “futile in their thoughts.” Here is what God does to them:

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1: 24-25, emphasis added).

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Romans 1: 26-27, emphasis added).

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over** to a debased [REPROBATE] mind, to do those things which are not fitting being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving,

unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1: 28-32, emphasis added).

Nowhere else in the Bible is so clearly stated what God does to those who reject Him. God *gives them up*, and most important, God *gives them over*. *Giving up* and *giving over* are two different concepts, but they are expressed by the same Greek word, *paradidōmi*. Notice how Thayer defines this Greek word. It pretty much explains exactly what God has to do:

- 1) to give into the hands (of another)
- 2) to give over into (one's) power or use
 - 2a) to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, manage
 - 2b) to deliver up one to custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death
 - 2c) to deliver up treacherously
 - 2c1) by betrayal to cause one to be taken
 - 2c2) to deliver one to be taught, moulded
- 3) to commit, to commend
- 4) to deliver verbally
 - 4a) commands, rites
 - 4b) to deliver by narrating, to report
- 5) to permit allow
 - 5a) when the fruit will allow that is when its ripeness permits
 - 5b) gives itself up, presents itself

Strong's Concordance says that *paradidōmi* means "to surrender, that is, yield up, intrust." When the Bible says that God is giving up someone or giving them over, it is literally saying that He is handing them over to someone else, delivering them over into someone else's power, surrendering them to someone else, permitting and allowing someone else to have jurisdiction and power over them.

It means delivering them up to the custody of the god who, because he does not have God's *agape* love, will judge, condemn, punish, scourge, torment, and put them to death. This is what God does; this is what He *has to do* because He is a God who sacredly guards our freedom. And He does it in agony and pain as will be confirmed by a multitude of scriptural passages as we go on.

This often raises the question of God's reason for doing this. Does God use someone else to do His punitive work? Does He use someone else to do His *dirty work*, as some say? Is that what is happening here? We will address this very shortly from the Bible, as we continue.

THEREFORE, GOD ALSO GAVE THEM UP

God's response to our leaving Him for another god, master or husband, whatever the metaphor we want to use, is simple: God lets us go to that

master. He gives us the freedom to do just what we want to do. The words used above, “Therefore God also gave them up” and “God gave them over,” are clear. God gives us up. He gives us over to whatever or whomever we have chosen to follow. This is an expression of freedom. God gives us the freedom to go wherever we want to go.

It is as if God says: “I have tried all I could to save you from the fate that awaits you. But you would not hear my warnings. I’ve gone as far as I could go to save you without infringing upon your personal freedom, which I prize highly. Therefore, since there is nothing else I can do for you, I’m letting you be free to live with your choice. You have the freedom to do as you choose. The master of the jurisdiction you have chosen is cruel, punishing, and destructive. If you happen to change your mind, I’ll still be right here for you. Please change your mind and come back to Me before it is too late. I take no pleasure in witnessing the death of anyone!”

This is exactly what God says in places like Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two, in the Song of Moses. This text is too lengthy to insert here, but read it with new eyes and see that, even though the language of the text says that God will heap disasters on them, what He is really saying, is that because they have given themselves over to the gods, then He also has to give them up to those same gods who themselves will heap disasters upon them. The same idea is laid down in Hosea chapter eleven:

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.
**As they called them,
So they went from them;
They sacrificed to the Baals,
And burned incense to carved images.**

I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them by their arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
I drew them with gentle cords,
With bands of love,
And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.

I stooped and fed them.
He shall not return to the land of Egypt;
**But the Assyrian shall be his king,
Because they refused to repent.
And the sword shall slash in his cities,
Devour his districts, And consume them,
Because of their own counsels.
My people are bent on backsliding from Me.**
Though they call to the Most High,
None at all exalt Him.

How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
 How can I make you like Admah?
 How can I set you like Zeboiim?
 My heart churns within Me;
 My sympathy is stirred.
 I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;
 I will not again destroy Ephraim.
 For I am God, and not man,
 The Holy One in your midst;
 And I will not come with terror
 (Hosea 11: 1-9, emphasis added).

In the passage above, God says to a people who are clearly returning to the gods, who are sacrificing to the Baals (to whom they were sacrificing their own children): “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?” Can you see the parallel between this passage and Paul’s explanation of “the wrath of God”? Notice what was going to happen to them:

But the Assyrian shall be his king,
 Because they refused to repent.
 And the sword shall slash in his cities,
 Devour his districts, and consume them,
 Because of their own counsels
 (Hosea 11: 5-6, emphasis added).

Israel had chosen another god, another jurisdiction, the jurisdiction of Baal. God was going to have to let go of them, He was going to have to “deliver” them, hand them over to Baal. As a consequence of being let go, they lost God’s protection and were going to be conquered by another king, the Assyrian king, whose army was known for its cruelty and ruthlessness.

Terrible things happen to a people who leave the protection of God. In particular, there are two main consequences for leaving God and His principles of righteousness. The first is that the people are then left completely open to strife and destruction among themselves because of their own unrestrained and violent passions. And the second is that they are left completely open and vulnerable to the vicious attacks of Satan and his agents as well. Below are some examples of both consequences:

The burden against Egypt.
 Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud,
 And will come into Egypt;
 The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence,
 And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.
“I will set Egyptians against Egyptians;
Everyone will fight against his brother,
And everyone against his neighbor,

City against city, kingdom against kingdom.

The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst;
I will destroy their counsel,
And they will consult the idols and the charmers,
The mediums and the sorcerers.

**And the Egyptians I will give
Into the hand of a cruel master,
And a fierce king will rule over them,”**

Says the Lord, the Lord of hosts
(Isaiah 19: 1-4, emphasis added).

Isaiah describes above the unrestrained and violent passions of a people who have been following the wisdom of Satan’s reward and punishment system rather than surrendering their carnal natures to God. They are fighting among themselves, punishing each other, “Egyptians against Egyptians; everyone will fight against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.” There is no love, no forgiveness, no grace here.

The world is very near to being exactly in this condition. This is the state of the world right now, as we speak. People are consulting the “idols and the charmers, the mediums and sorcerers” who teach them fables and evil principles of revenge and so-called “justice.” And by the way, these idols, charmers, mediums and sorcerers are not only those who are looking through their crystal balls. These idols, charmers, mediums and sorcerers are everywhere. They are in the media, movies, cartoons, video games, news, churches, governments, world organizations, corporations, and the list goes on and on. There is no safe haven from these evil spirits outside of Jesus Christ.

So then what is God’s reaction to all of this? He will give those that are seeking Satan’s wisdom into the hand of Satan, who is “a cruel master,” “a fierce king.” This “cruel master” and “fierce king” will “rule over them” with fierceness and cruelty. He will rule over them with his reward and punishment system.

Does God do this because He Himself wants these people to learn a lesson? Does He use Satan to do His dirty work? Absolutely not! God is giving them their freedom because they chose to live under Satan’s jurisdiction. God cries out in anguish at the thought of the horrors Satan will inflict upon His beloved children—the entire human race.

The people whom God hands over to Satan show by their behavior that they are living by Satan’s principles. This is expressed by the words “Egyptians against Egyptians,” “everyone will fight against his brother,” “and everyone against his neighbor.” Jesus prophesied that this would also be happening in our days—the last days:

For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24: 7).

Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death (Mark 13: 12).

Those described in these verses are filled to the brim with Satan's principle of reward and punishment; that is why they behave in this way. Their characters have become sealed, molded by his *modus operandi*.

If we examine further in the Old Testament concerning "the wrath of God," we will see that this is exactly what takes place when God exercises "the wrath of God." Here is another passage from the Psalms:

Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you!
 O Israel, if you will listen to Me!
**There shall be no foreign god among you;
 Nor shall you worship any foreign god.
 I am the Lord your God,**
 Who brought you out of the land of Egypt;
 Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
 But My people would not heed My voice,
 And Israel would have none of Me.
**So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart,
 To walk in their own counsels.**
 Oh, that My people would listen to Me,
 That Israel would walk in My ways
 (Psalm 81: 8-13, emphasis added)!

Can you feel God's anguish, almost panic, in the words "Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me! Listen to me, I am the One who is your God!! I am the One who will take care of you! Just 'Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it' with good things! Why do you need to go to Satan for your *food*? Is there any need to go seek spiritual food, wisdom and understanding from another god, the one who will destroy you with his violent principles?"

Israel chose to follow a "foreign god," the god of this world. The people would not listen to God's admonishments and warnings. So they walked right into the mouth of the dragon. God's lament is like a cosmic cry of pain and anguish: "Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! Oh, that the people would walk in My ways of *agape* love, of grace, of forgiveness, of life! Instead they 'walk in their own counsels' of reward and punishment, destroying each other!" Do these words sound like God is pleased to hand any of us over to Satan? Do they sound like He is a sadistic ruler who is pleased to hand us over to the torturer?

As we continue, we will take a look at a few more examples from the Old Testament. And as we explore these events further, we will continue to understand *when* God gives us up, *why* He gives us up, *whom* He gives us up to, and *what* happens when He gives us up.

1. HEZEKIAH

In 2 Chronicles chapter thirty, king Hezekiah attempted to bring the people back to God. Thus, he sent a proclamation to them:

Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: **“Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.** And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that **He gave them up to desolation, as you see.** Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but **yield yourselves to the LORD;** and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and **serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion** by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; **for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him”** (2 Chronicles 30: 6-9, emphasis added).

Hezekiah pleaded with the people to return to God. Only a remnant, a younger generation, had escaped the kings of Assyria. Hezekiah pleaded with the children to not follow the example of their parents. What had happened to their fathers? They had “trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation.” They were experiencing tragedy, destruction—“the fierceness” of God’s wrath.

But was God was inflicting all these things upon them? Absolutely not! God had let go of them because they had chosen to follow another god. It may have appeared that God had turned His face from them, but we will soon see that *it was they who had turned their faces away from God.*

What was the *trespass* of the people? Why were they in such a situation? Notice what Hezekiah had stated in the previous chapter:

Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and **carry out the rubbish from the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering,** as you see with your eyes. For indeed, **because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity.** “No wit is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us (2 Chronicles 29: 5-10, emphasis added).

The people had put “rubbish” in the Holy Place, because Hezekiah in-

structed the Levites to carry out the “rubbish” from the Holy Place. The KJV uses the word “filthiness” instead of “rubbish,” which in Hebrew is the word *niddâh*. This word means:

properly rejection; by implication impurity, especially personal (menstruation) or moral (idolatry, incest): far, filthiness, flowers, menstruous (woman), put apart, removed (woman), separation, set apart, unclean (-ness, thing, with filthiness) (Strong’s Concordance).

The Levites had brought the moral impurity of the idols, idolatry, which is compared to “menstruation.” They had brought the principles of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—their own works, their own righteousness—“rubbish”—into the Holy Place, and by doing so, they were in effect worshipping Satan! The idea is that this “rubbish” was as impure as a woman’s menstrual cloth, and as such, it was a useless item that needed to be thrown. It also seems to point to the shedding one’s own blood for cleansing, instead of allowing oneself to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. God doesn’t play around with His metaphors; He tells it like it is!

God uses the same metaphor in the Book of Isaiah also:

But we are all like an unclean thing,
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64: 6).

The word “filthy” here is the word *’ed* which means “to set a period, the menstrual flux (as periodical); by implication (in plural) soiling: - filthy (Strong’s Concordance).

The people had uprooted God, expelled Him from His rightful place in the Most Holy Place, and replaced Him with a useless idol that represented Satan’s impure, mixed principle of Good and Evil. They were the ones who had “forsaken” God, and “turned their faces away” from Him. How could they do this? But before we condemn them, we need to realize that we do exactly the same thing when we ascribe Satan’s dual character of Good and Evil unto the Holy God whose character is pure, uncorrupted, untainted by iniquity or evil!

It is highly meaningful that these idols were in the Holy Place, because the Holy Place is God’s place! Only God is holy because only He has no mixture of Good and Evil. Notice what the Word Study Dictionary says about the Hebrew word *qôdeš*, translated as Holy Place:

The word is also used when referring to holy places. **God’s presence is what makes any place, anything, or anyone holy** (Exo 3:5). The Holy Place in the Tabernacle (Exo 26:33; Exo 28:29) was separated from the Most Holy Place by a curtain (Exo 26:33); **it refers to the Most Holy Place in the Temple as well** (1Ki 6:16). This word with the definite article refers to the entire Tabernacle (Exo 36:1, Exo 36:3-4; Exo 38:27) and later the Temple Solomon built (1Ki 8:8); literally, the Holy Place (Psa 60:6[8]; Psa 63:2 [3]) (Word Study Dictionary, emphasis added).

The Most Holy Place is where God used to come and communicate with the high priest, between the two covering cherubs who were stationed above the mercy seat. The mercy seat represents God's throne of mercy and grace. The Most Holy Place is where God's law—the law of *agape* love embodied in the Ten Commandments—was stored inside the Ark of the Covenant, under the mercy seat. Everything about the sanctuary has a symbolic meaning pointing us to the great truths and stages of the plan of salvation, and especially pointing us to God's law of *agape* love, which is the essence of His character.

The sanctuary is no longer standing on earth; therefore, it's meaning for us is chiefly symbolic. The Most Holy Place represented God's holy character, the mercy seat represented His throne of mercy, and the law inside the ark again represented His holy and pure character of *agape* love, which is the everlasting moral law of the universe. When we look at the sanctuary in this light, we realize the enormity of what they had done!

They themselves perhaps had not grasped the full meaning of their actions in placing a corrupt idol which represented a mixture of Good and Evil where only the incorruptible, pure and holy God, the Creator and giver of life—whose character is singularly love—should be. This then was their great *trespass*, and in doing so, they aligned themselves with Lucifer, who had sought to replace the unconditional law of love with the conditional law of reward and punishment.

What was God's response to their trespass? What was His response to their worshipping other gods, to their turning their faces away from Him? His response was a response that is in line with His righteousness, with His *heavenly* principle: it was simply “to give them up,” that is, to give them their freedom. And in giving them freedom, He, who had been holding back the Destroyer from them, had to allow Satan full access to them. Their heavenly protection gone, Satan used them and turned them against each other. He also used other human beings—their enemies—to oppress and destroy them. The result of God giving them up was “desolation.” Hezekiah himself explains what happened to the people:

He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity (2 Chronicles 29: 8-9, emphasis added).

God gave them up to what happens when we position ourselves under Satan's jurisdiction. They were now in Satan's “path of curses” outlined in Deuteronomy twenty-eight, and as a result they were experiencing “trouble,” “desolation,” “jeering,” “the sword” and “captivity.” And yet, God's unconditional, impartial, unending *agape* love still stretched out a hand to the people:

Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you (2 Chronicles 30: 8).

What had the people done to deserve “the wrath of God”? They had forsaken their Creator and turned to the gods. What was God’s response? God’s response was to honor their choice, and in so doing He had to give them up to the ruthless ruler they had chosen.

Had the people suffered wrath? Yes, they certainly had. Their land was brought to utter desolation. But who had brought destruction upon them? The Assyrians. And who was behind the Assyrians? Not God. Why not? Because God is not the Destroyer; He is the Creator.

Here is the character of God: “the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him” (2 Chronicles 30: 9). God is the only absolute. He is always there, as an unmovable rock. We are the moving objects that either turn towards or away from Him.

2. EZEKIEL TWENTY

We are now going to look at another passage that sheds further light into what it means that God gives us up when we turn from Him to follow idols. The following is an exchange between Ezekiel and “certain of the elders of Israel.” Notice how God becomes a part of this conversation:

It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live,” says the Lord God, “I will not be inquired of by you.”’
 ‘Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Then **make known to them the abominations of their fathers** (Ezekiel 20: 1-4, emphasis added).

What we are about to witness is a very interesting and informative exchange between the prophet, the leaders of the people, and God. God Himself begins to explain why the people find themselves in their present condition. He lays before them their entire history:

Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, ‘I am the Lord your God.’ On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ the glory of all lands. Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, **throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt.** I am the Lord your God.’ But **they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their**

eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, **‘I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt** (Ezekiel 20: 5-8, emphasis added).

What is God referring to in the above text? Isn't He bringing their minds back to the Exodus from Egypt? Do you remember Horeb and the Golden Calf? At the same time that God was giving His law on top of Horeb, the people were molding an Egyptian idol for themselves—the Gold Calf—which represented the Egyptian god of fertility, Osiris.

Osiris is one of the major figures in Egyptian mythology along with his wife, Isis, and along with another god called Typho. These three gods formed the Egyptian godhead. They represented diametrically opposed principles, but they ruled as one. Osiris was the sun god. He was also the ruler of the underworld. He was said to embody “benevolence.”

Some Egyptian historians claim that the myth surrounding the god Osiris indicates that he came to be considered the benefactor of mankind, a major influence on his contemporaries. He travelled through the countryside and charmed the country folk with music and dancing, teaching them how to become “civilized,” and by that it was meant *to engage in war*. In the mystical literature, Osiris is also sometimes referred to as the water god, because to him was attributed anything that was good and benevolent in nature like the rain that made the crops grow in the fields.

Isis, his wife, was said to contain the creative power of Nature and she also typified “justice” or “wisdom,” a euphemism for punitive justice. Can you start to see the duality of Good and Evil here? Beneficence—Good (reward), and justice—Evil (punishment). This was the godhead of Egypt.

Thus, when the Israelites molded the Golden Calf and said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32: 3), they clearly were putting in motion the mechanism of “the wrath of God.” Can you see how they had even credited the god of Egypt as being their savior? They had clearly given themselves over to Satan and his law of Good and Evil.

God's law, the eternal and universal law of *agape* love, has always been the focus of Satan's attack in his controversy against the Creator. And now, while God was declaring that same eternal law to the world—writing it on stone, as a symbol of its immutability—at the very same moment when it was being given, the people returned their allegiance back to the one who had kept them captive in Egypt, in cruel bondage through the law of Good and Evil. Again, before we condemn them, let us be aware that we may be doing exactly the same thing. So how did God respond at that time? What did He say to Ezekiel and the elders of Israel?

But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the

Gentiles among whom they were, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt (Ezekiel 20: 9).

By getting the people to erect an image, an idol, Satan was trying to force God's hand into giving them up right there and then, forcing Him to remove His protection from them. Why would Satan want to do such a thing? Could it be because if God had let go of His protection, then Satan would have been free to bring disaster upon the people right there and then? And then he would be able to lead them—and all of us as well—to believe that it was God who was punishing them? Hasn't that been Satan's agenda all along, to make us think that God's law is the law of reward and punishment? That it is God who punishes us?

And what about those "Gentiles" who were among them? What would they think of God if all of a sudden, the Israelites were completely annihilated? It was almost as if Satan had cornered God between a rock and a hard place: checkmate, God!

The people had chosen Satan, and now he was demanding the right to have access to them. It is as if he was telling God: "you have to remove your protection from the people because they have chosen me as their god. If you are a righteous God who believes in the utter sacredness of the people's freedom, then let them go. Turn them over to me. They have chosen me as their leader."

Indeed, what can a God who respects our freedom to the highest degree do? He has to let go. God was in a very precarious position that day. In that very moment, God needed a human agent who would intercede on behalf of the people. He needed someone who would stand in the gap of that metaphoric wall of protection. There was a huge metaphoric hole in that wall, a gap big enough for a whole enemy army to come right in. The people had created that gap by erecting an idol. And now God needed a human being who would pray, and who would ask for protection, in spite of what the people had done.

Why did God need this? He needed it so that He would have the right to keep Satan the Destroyer at bay. So that He would have the right to continue protecting the people from the malice and cruelty of the Destroyer. Moses fulfilled that role. Take a look at what the Psalmist wrote about this very same episode:

**They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshiped the molded image.**
Thus they changed their glory
Into the image of an ox that eats grass.
**They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,**
Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
Awesome things by the Red Sea.
Therefore He said that He would destroy them,

**Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach,
To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them**
(Psalm 106: 19-23, emphasis added).

Moses stood before God “in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.” Here is that metaphor—standing in the breach or the gap of the wall of protection. This makes no sense to us, unless we study it to see what it means. We will not discuss this fully right now, but we will address it when we discuss God’s Strange Act. For now, suffice it to say that Moses’ intercessory prayer was enough to give God the right to continue protecting the people, which He did. “God’s wrath,” His letting go was averted and He did not release the people into the hands of the Destroyer. Thus, God was able to say:

But I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they were, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt (Ezekiel 20: 9).

God acted for His “name’s sake.” He protected them for “His name’s sake,” so that His name would not be profaned among the Gentiles. So that Satan couldn’t take this opportunity to soil God’s character yet once again. If we go back to the event itself, in Exodus, we get further understanding of what happened here:

And the Lord said to Moses, “Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have **corrupted themselves**. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. **They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’**” And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! **Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them.** And I will make of you a great nation.” **Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God,** and said: “Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? **Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.** Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” **So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people** (Exodus 32: 7-14, emphasis added).

Those who don’t understand God’s character and the behind-the-scenes workings of the great controversy will take this passage and say that it was Moses who convinced God to relent from His anger. Thus, they make the creature into a better being than the Creator Himself. They ascribe more compassion and mercy to a human being than to God—the God of mercy Himself, whose throne—the mercy seat—is established upon mercy.

If we don't realize how "the wrath of God" works behind the scenes, then we will inevitably default to this understanding too, and we will see God as temperamental and hot-headed, as someone who needs a human being to restrain Him in order to pacify His temper.

Moses' intercession was not needed to calm down an angry, furious God. It was not needed to make God relent from harming His own beloved people. It was not needed to remind a *forgetful* God who could not remember His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God does not have a temper problem. God loved the people more than Moses could ever dream of loving them. And the God about whom it is written "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4: 13) is certainly not a forgetful God.

But Moses, a human being, intercedes with God as a human being. And when humans intercede for others, their intercessions have power in the context of the great spiritual war that is taking place between God and the Devil. It has the power to give a righteous and fair God—who does not "bring a reviling accusation" (Jude 9) even against the Devil—an argument in defense of the people before a ruthless ruler like Satan. Notice how this is exactly what happens, according to Zechariah chapter three:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire" (Zechariah 3: 1-2)?

Joshua is a type of the human race standing before "the angel of the Lord." "The angel of the Lord" is the Lord Himself, and He says to Satan, who is "standing at his right to oppose him," to accuse Joshua: "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Satan, whose name means "accuser," is that "thief" that "does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10: 10). He is that "roaring lion seeking whom he may destroy" (1 Peter 5: 8).

When we pray for those that are clearly walking in Satan's path, Jesus says to Satan: "The Lord rebuke you, Satan!" "Someone has interceded for this person, and this gives Me the right to keep you away for now."

If we return to Ezekiel chapter twenty, we will see that God continued explaining to Ezekiel and the elders of Israel what had happened in their history:

Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. **And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall live by them.'** Moreover **I also gave them My**

Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them (Ezekiel 20: 10-12, emphasis added).

God gave the people the one thing they needed in order to live under His jurisdiction, His protection, and His blessings: He gave them His *statutes*. He gave them His law. He gave them the law of *agape* love, “which, if a man does, he shall live by them.” He gave them what Satan has tried to remove from the universe’s view since the beginning of his rebellion. This, the giving of His law, was the best thing God could have done for them. It was like giving them life—“which, if a man does, he shall live by them.” He also gave them His Sabbaths so that they might know that He is the One who “sanctifies them,” *not the one who destroys them*.

The word “sanctify” means “to be (causatively make, pronounce or observe as) clean” (Strong’s Concordance). God pronounces us as “clean,” He sees us as “clean.” That is why He gave us the Sabbath, “to be a sign between” Him and us, so that we “might know” that He, the Creator, is “the Lord who sanctifies” us. He goes on explaining:

Yet the house of Israel **rebelled against Me** in the wilderness; **they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths**. Then I said I would **pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them** old. But I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out. So I also raised My hand in an oath to them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ the glory of all lands, because **they despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless, My eye spared them from destruction. I did not make an end of them in the wilderness**. (Ezekiel 20: 13-17, emphasis added).

As we read these events of the past, we must keep in mind that all biblical history serves as a type—as examples—for us who are living in the last generation of this earth’s history. The exodus story especially, is given to us as a warning and an object lesson so that we will not make the same mistakes they made back then. Notice what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter ten in this regard:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. **Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them**. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and **were destroyed**

by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, **and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come** (1 Corinthians 10: 1-11, emphasis added).

We are supposed to learn from the mistakes of the past. “The ends of the ages” is the end of the world as we know it. This is our time—right now. We are living at the very edge of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. We, living right now, are those “upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” All this was written for our “admonition”—as a warning to us. Notice please, who it was that destroyed them: they “were destroyed by serpents” and “by the destroyer.” Now, the Destroyer is clearly pointed out in Revelation chapter nine and verse eleven:

And they had as king over them **the angel of the bottomless pit**, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon [DESTRUCTION], but in Greek he has the name Apollyon [DESTROYER] (Revelation 9: 11, emphasis added).

The Destroyer is the “angel of the bottomless pit.” This is definitely not God! God continues His exposition in Ezekiel twenty, His explanation of why “the wrath of God” comes upon the world:

But I said to their children in the wilderness, ‘Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, **nor defile yourselves with their idols.** I am the Lord your God: **Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; hallow My Sabbaths,** and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.’ “Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; **they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; but they profaned My Sabbaths.** Then I said **I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness.** Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out. Also I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and **their eyes were fixed on their fathers’ idols.** (Ezekiel 20: 18-24, emphasis added).

Can you see how God seems to be unceasingly trying to get the people to make the right choices so that He can prevent their disaster? And yet the people seemed set on following the gods and the teachings from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God’s sacred regard for our freedom does not cause Him to punish us, but rather to release us to the choices we make. Notice the next verses carefully:

therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live; and I pronounced them unclean because of their ritual gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through the fire, that I might make them desolate and that they might know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 20: 25-26, emphasis added).

When the people chose the gods, they were in effect choosing to live by the statutes of reward and punishment, the moral law of Good and Evil—”statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live.” In other words, statutes and judgments that do not produce life, but that in effect take away life, just as God had warned Adam regarding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: “the day you eat of it you will surely die.”

The end result was that, since they were worshipping the gods of reward and punishment, they “caused all their firstborn to pass through the fire”—in other words, they sacrificed all their firstborn on the fire in order to appease the anger of the punishing gods. God pronounced them “unclean” because of these ritual gifts which were meant to placate the anger of their gods. God goes on to say Ezekiel:

Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “In this too your fathers have blasphemed Me, by being unfaithful to Me. When I brought them into the land concerning which I had raised My hand in an oath to give them, and they saw all the high hills and all the thick trees, there they offered their sacrifices and provoked Me with their offerings. There they also sent up their sweet aroma and poured out their drink offerings. Then I said to them, **‘What is this high place to which you go?’** So its name is called Bamah [HIGH PLACE] to this day.”’ Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: **“Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations? For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols,** even to this day. So shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live,” says the Lord God, “I will not be inquired of by you. What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, **servng wood and stone**’ (Ezekiel 20: 27-32, emphasis added).

It was in the high places (think of Mayan or Aztec pyramids on top of which human sacrifices were conducted) that the people sacrificed their own children to the gods. It was there that they made “their sons pass through the fire,” something which is abominable to us and even more so to God.

We must ask ourselves: what would cause a parent to sacrifice his/her own child to a god? Why would anyone do something so awful as that? The people offered their best possible offering—their own children—to the gods in order to avert their anger and severe punishments, which of course, they thought were coming from God. The people were in a sense cornered because of their false understanding of who God is. Perhaps they thought that it was better to sacrifice one child rather than their entire family. But through the prophet Jeremiah, God says that such horrific sacrifices never even entered His mind:

Thus says the Lord: “Go and get a potter’s earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests. And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, **I will bring such a catastrophe on this**

place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle. “Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents (they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind) (Jeremiah 19: 1-5, emphasis added).

How horrific! How tragic that the people were so misled regarding God’s character that they would even imagine that He wanted them to burn their children in the fire in order to please or appease Him. Baal, yes, he required such a heart-wrenching sacrifice because Baal is ruthless, cruel, unmerciful. Satan, the true force behind Baal, cares nothing for the human race. He has a point to make, and that is all that matters to him: he wants to prove that he was right in rebelling against God’s law of *agape* love. He doesn’t want to lose this battle. But Satan is no longer in his right mind. He has already lost this war, and yet he keeps persisting as if he can still win it.

The problem with Satan’s system of reward and punishment is that his methods are so damaging to human beings that the moment he manages to create some semblance of order through his methods of violence, he also creates chaos. We can understand this if we look at how we were punished as children. Yes, a good lashing did make us toe the line for a little bit, but it also created such fear and hatred in our hearts that we rebelled even more. This is a microcosm of Satan’s reward and punishment system. Imagine this in a worldwide scale, in every aspect of life. There comes a point when the whole system has to implode and explode. Which is the point where we are arriving at right now in this world’s history.

The point Satan wants to make is this: he wants his system of reward and punishment to win over God’s law of *agape* love. He had claimed that Good and Evil—iniquity—was much more efficient in creating order and harmony among intelligent beings than unconditional love. “How can you rule without reward and punishment, God? Your love is weak. It is foolish!”

Satan’s reputation amongst an entire universe is on the line here. Thus, he goes to great lengths to keep us in ignorance regarding God’s infinite love for us so that we keep worshipping the wrong god. But the day we wises up to him, he will lose this battle. And that day is coming soon.

In view of all the evidence we have seen so far, how do we then answer those initial questions we posed at the beginning of this chapter? When does God give us up? Why does He give us up? Who does He give us up to? What happens when He gives us up?

We have seen that God gives us up when we turn our faces away from Him to worship other gods. And He gives us up because in His righteous-

ness, He has to provide us with total freedom. If we choose to follow another god—the only other god, the one who is the god of this age—then the true God gives us the freedom to do so. What happens next is complete chaos, destruction, pain and suffering. Not only do we destroy each other, but Satan also attacks and destroys us.

In Isaiah thirty-four, God calls all of us, the entire earth, to come and “hear” and understand exactly this:

Come near, you nations, to hear;
 And heed, you people!
 Let the earth hear, and all that is in it,
 The world and all things that come forth from it.
 For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations,
 And His fury against all their armies;
He has utterly destroyed them,
He has given them over to the slaughter
 (Isaiah 34: 1-2, emphasis added).

God has “given them over.” We stated earlier that “the wrath of God” is a mechanism within the great controversy between God and Satan. This mechanism is very simple, and it works much like a political election. It is basically a set of choices and consequences that determine which jurisdiction we belong to. If we elect to follow and live by Satan’s principles, then God has to honor our freedom and allow us to suffer the consequences inherent in that jurisdiction. God releases us to the choices we make.

Since God can only act in harmony with His *heavenly* principles of righteousness—the principles of *agape* love—hence, this is exactly what He does: He gives us the freedom to leave Him. He simply lets us go. He permits us to walk fully into the choices we have made. This is what God does when we leave Him for another god: He reluctantly accepts our divorce papers.

There is no escaping this mechanism of “the wrath of God” which is put in motion by our choice of worshipping the god of this world. Why? Because freedom is sacred to God. It is the foundation of His character, His *agape* love, and His government.

If we elect Satan as our god, the Creator *has to give us up, has to hand us over* to the jurisdiction of our choosing; and then, once He does, destruction comes both from *within us* (we will see more examples of this) and from the violent ruler we have elected. This is the mechanism of “the wrath of God.” This is the true meaning of the *biblical term* “the wrath of God.”



12

FILLED WITH ALL
UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

In Romans chapter one, the Apostle Paul describes what happens to a people who exchange God's immutable, incorruptible character of unconditional love for the mixed, corrupted character of the gods. We will see what happens to those who forsake God's moral law of *agape* love. Those who exchange God's principles for those of Satan live by the *laws and ordinances* of the gods, and by doing so, they themselves become filled with the violence that is inherent in Satan's moral law of reward and punishment. This is the realization to which Paul eventually leads us in the first chapter of Romans, the chapter which explains "the wrath of God."

At this point we need to insert the thought here that these choices are being made by all human beings every moment of every day. It does not matter what religion we profess. It doesn't matter what language we speak, or what part of the world we live in. We are all going through this process together whether we realize it or not. We may or may not even believe in God; it doesn't matter. This war of principles is built into our very being, and none of us can escape it.

What happens to anyone who forsakes God's ways, His ordinances and His law of *agape* love? They themselves become just like their master, the Destroyer. He molds their characters into his image. Notice how Paul describes this phenomenon:

being **filled with all unrighteousness**, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1: 29-32, emphasis added).

Those that follow the teachings of the gods become “filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful.”

We have previously seen how “unrighteousness” refers to how we relate to each other on a human level, in ways that are contrary to God’s *agape* love. This state of being, this “being filled with all unrighteousness”—not just filled with *some* but also with *all* unrighteousness—is a deplorable state.

Those who exchange God’s goodness for Satan’s mixed principles of Good and Evil leave God’s statutes of righteousness and equity for the laws of the gods—laws that are conditional and partial, founded upon the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They leave behind peace, joy, love, hope, happiness. When we let go of God and His principles completely, the end result is strife—propelled at Satan’s instigation—bloodshed, destruction and desolation. Women, physically weaker than men, become violated and widowed; and children, another easy target, are also abused in unspeakable ways and orphaned.

God has given us all the proof we need regarding His character of *agape* love. The evidence is found in both His works of creation and in giving His Son to die for the world. If we reject Him and His principles, what else can He do? There is only one more thing He can do: He can honor our freedom. He is basically forced into giving us up to the ruler we have chosen.

Rejecting God’s ways of love is a slow process. Little by little we make choices that eventually place us fully either on God’s side or Satan’s side. God’s “Spirit shall not strive with man forever” (Genesis 6:3). This is so not because God is impatient. After all, Romans 15:5 says that He is the God of patience. But a time comes when God sees that we have gone beyond the point of no return and He, in love, allows us the freedom to go. Nehemiah explains it like this:

Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands (Nehemiah 9: 30, emphasis added).

Nehemiah says that God “testified against them” by His Spirit and by His prophets. This word “testified” is an interesting word. Some Bible versions use the word “warned” or “witnessed” instead of “testified.” The Hebrew word, *ûd*, means:

to duplicate or repeat; by implication to protest, testify (as by reiteration); intensively to encompass, restore (as a sort of reduplication): - admonish, charge, earnestly, lift up, protest, call (take) to record, relieve, rob, solemnly, stand upright, testify, give warning, (bear, call to, give, take to) witness.

The first meaning is to “duplicate” or “repeat.” God duplicated the warning, He repeated it, and admonished them through two witnesses: His Spirit

and through the prophets. This is very significant to the Jewish mind, for they knew that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established” (Deuteronomy 19: 15). And yet “they would not listen.” God went the full length; He put all His efforts into saving them. But since they still did not listen, *therefore*, He “gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.”

“The peoples of the lands” were themselves entrenched in idolatry, and were experiencing the godlessness, violence, and desolation inherent in the kingdom of the gods. Paul understood “the wrath of God” in the same way, confirming that God gives us up to the consequences of departing from Him:

Therefore God also **gave them up to uncleanness**, in the lusts of their hearts, to **dishonor their bodies** among themselves, **who exchanged the truth of God for the lie**, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever (Romans 1: 24-25, emphasis).

“Uncleanness” in the Biblical sense is the opposite of purity or holiness. “Uncleanness” of mind and heart, therefore, amounts to duality, to characters that are formed by the duality of Good and Evil. This leads men and women to let go of God’s original purpose for them. They “exchanged the truth of God for the lie” of Satan, and as a consequence they “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” When they thought they were worshipping God, they were in reality worshipping the creature, Satan, because they were living by his moral law of reward and punishment. Then Satan leads them into all sorts of distortions of the Creator’s original design for His creatures, into perversions of His original intent as He had shown in the Garden of Eden through Adam and Eve. “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions:”

For this reason **God gave them up to vile passions**. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And **even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind**, to do those things which are not fitting (Romans 1: 26-28, emphasis added).

Many take these words and use them in a *homophobic* way. They interpret these words as a license to condemn and act in unloving ways against any kind of deviation from God’s original purpose. But that is not the intent of these words. Rather, they are meant as a sign post for those who are discerning.

What do we mean by this? When society reaches the stage described above as Sodom and Gomorrah did, then we know that things are going to go downhill pretty fast. Why do we say this? Because when a society reaches this stage, we know that the family—that nucleus of influence, of security, of protection, of all sorts of blessings intended by God—is at great risk. “Natural affection”—that strong bond that unites us through family ties—

no longer exists, and the result is described below:

being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving (WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION, KJV), unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1: 29-32, emphasis added).

Having let go of God and His unchanging principles of love which is the glue that keeps a society together—“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge”—they become Satan’s subjects—“God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.” Now, like Satan, they are also “filled with all unrighteousness.” This is the same condition described by Paul in 2 Timothy chapter three, verse three:

This know also, that in the last days perilous (DANGEROUS) times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3: 1-4, emphasis added)

Have you tried to interact with those who have such character traits as described above? Could such people live in peace with their coworkers, family members and friends? When God’s restraining power, the power of His love, is fully rejected by human beings, they will basically self-destruct and annihilate each other. This is why each person is against his brother, even family members against family members. There is no more “natural affection,” that love-bond that keeps blood relations together.

The clear message of “the wrath of God” is that everyone will reap what they have sown. But this is cause and effect and not an arbitrary act of punishment from God. It is Satan’s principle of iniquity itself, embedded in those who follow his ways that will bring their ruin. Notice how the prophet Ezekiel explains this below:

Therefore **I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,**” says the Lord God. **“Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.** Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and **get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.** For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. **“Therefore turn and live”** (Ezekiel 18: 30-32, emphasis added)!

Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and **I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,**” says the Lord God (Ezekiel 22: 31, emphasis added).

Notice also how everyone who is completely imbued with Satan's reward and punishment principle will turn against each other:

Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land is burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire; **no man shall spare his brother** (Isaiah 9: 19, emphasis added).

I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow against you with the fire of My wrath, and **deliver you into the hands of brutal men who are skillful to destroy** (Ezekiel 21: 31, emphasis added).

It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the Lord will be among them. **Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand** (Zechariah 14: 13, emphasis added).

The strife and turmoil that exists outside of God's law of love will be revealed to its fullest when God's Spirit is finally, completely rejected at the end of this age. In light of this how do we interpret the next verses?

Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it (Isaiah 13: 9).

That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness (Zephaniah 1: 15).

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land (Zephaniah 1: 18).

Is God cruel? Is He the One who destroys sinners from the land? Is He the One who brings about trouble, distress, devastation and desolation? Or are the people destroying themselves, each one not sparing "his brother?" The "righteous judgment of God" against "those who practice such things" is to honor their inherent freedom. God gives us over to the god we have chosen, the god of this world who is represented by "birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things."

Lucifer's kingdom is the kingdom of Babylon. In Isaiah fourteen he is described as the one who beats us down in wrath:

It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

"How the oppressor has ceased,
The golden city ceased!
The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked,
The scepter of the rulers;
**He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke,
He who ruled the nations in anger,**
Is persecuted and no one hinders (Isaiah 14: 3-6, emphasis added).

It is the Lord who will save us from Satan. It is He who will give us “rest” from our “sorrow,” from our “fear and the hard bondage” in which we “were made to serve” under Satan. It is then that we will realize that Satan is the one who has been our “oppressor.”

What is “the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers?” It is a rule of law, a moral law, the law of sin and death which is Satan’s moral law of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is the law with which he “struck” us “in wrath with a continual stroke.” It is the law with which he “ruled the nations in anger.” And it is through this same law, now *in* those who have followed him, that he himself will be persecuted, and “no one hinders.”

Satan’s kingdom, Babylon, is destined for desolation and destruction due to its own inherently violent principles. Jeremiah predicted its demise long ago:

Because of the wrath of the Lord she shall not be inhabited, but she shall be wholly desolate. Everyone who goes by Babylon shall be horrified and hiss at all her plagues (Jeremiah 50: 13).

Because God will let go of her, because He will let her reap the consequences of her choices, Babylon will become desolate. Satan’s kingdom symbolized by this ancient city is going to fall for sure. There is no question about it. But we don’t need to fall along with her. This is what John the Revelator says when he calls us to “come out of her”—come out of Babylon. We are to come out of this violent system so that we are not carried along with its destruction:

Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ **Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her** (Revelation 18: 4-8, emphasis added)

The people who reject God’s principles of grace, mercy, and love, are given over to Satan’s authority, to him who strikes them “in wrath with a continual stroke.” This is what Satan does to those who have chosen him as their god. Why? Because under his law “they are deserving of death.” Why? Because his system punishes sinners in order to keep order. In his mind, once evildoers are punished, the universe will return to its rightful order. They have eaten of the Tree of Death. It is Satan and his angels who destroy sinners. This is exactly what David says:

He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending angels of destruction among them (Psalm 78: 49).

These “angels of destruction” are not God’s angels; they are fallen angels. How does God send demons to destroy us? When we choose these demons as our gods, then God stops holding them back from us and allows them to have access to us. “The wrath of God” is revealed from heaven through the principle of freedom—God *gives us up* to our own choices.

What happens then, when God honors our wrong choices, and lets go of us completely into Satan’s hand? The Bible has a few examples: the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. These are the most extreme examples of “the wrath of God.” Next, we will examine what the Bible says in particular about Sodom and Gomorrah.



13

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

As we look at Sodom and Gomorrah in the context of “the wrath of God,” it would be good for us to ask ourselves the following questions: what happens when a person passes completely over into Satan’s jurisdiction? What does the condition of that person look like? What happens when Satan has complete freedom to control us? What does total demon possession look like? What about entire nations or cities? What would life be like in a place that was completely under the power of Satan?

Paul gave us the answer to these questions in Romans chapter one. This is what those who are one hundred percent imbued with the spirit of Satan look like and behave:

being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful (Romans 1: 29-32).

The people described here are “filled with all unrighteousness.” They are not just filled with *some* unrighteousness, but are “filled with *all* unrighteousness.” If the reader recollects, the same was the case with the people who lived just before the flood.

THE FLOOD

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually** (Genesis 6: 5, emphasis added).

“*Every* intent of the thoughts” of the antediluvians was “only evil continually.” This describes a scenario in which people are completely given over to Satan and his satanic ways. No society can survive this!

As we have seen, God’s response to those who completely reject Him and join Satan is to let them go. This is also expressed in Genesis chapter six

regarding the people before the flood:

And the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever (Genesis 6: 3)

Many interpret this to mean that God decides at a certain point to stop working with the disobedient. Or that He simply loses His patience and drops the hammer. But shouldn't an infinitely patient God have continued to strive with the antediluvians even though they had given themselves completely over to Satan? Isn't God long-suffering?

Yes, and God did strive with them till the very last ray of hope was extinguished. But at a certain time, God saw that there was no point in striving anymore, because they had completely rejected Him and His principles of righteousness. They were “filled with all unrighteousness,” and because they were filled to the top, like that symbolic cup of iniquity, they had gone beyond the point of no return. It was for this reason that God would no longer “strive”—which in Hebrew means to plead, teach, warn—with them anymore. He could no longer give them His Spirit of love because they had completely rejected it. Then notice the next words:

So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them” (Genesis 6: 7).

While the wording of this last verse categorically states that God Himself was going to destroy everything from the face of the earth, as we look to the controversy taking place behind the scenes between God and Satan, we see that the people had moved over entirely to Satan's jurisdiction, and God was in effect forced to let them go. He was forced to give them up because of their own choices. He was forced to stop protecting them from the Destroyer.

God had to do the same with Sodom and Gomorrah, and we will soon see through the Book of Hosea that this is indeed what He did. God could no longer hold things together in order to protect those two cities because they crossed the line and fully entered Satan's jurisdiction.

But here is another question: what does a ruler who thinks and acts completely within the reward and punishment system of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil do to his own people when they step outside of the law? What would such a ruler do to the subjects of his kingdom who are misbehaving and acting in evil ways? How would such a ruler deal with them?

Obviously, he would do one of two things if he operates entirely from within the reward and punishment system: he would either reward or punish them. If they are behaving according to his will, he will reward them. And if they are misbehaving, he will punish them. Or he might reward them in order to motivate them to behave properly. But no matter what he does,

he will always act from within the parameters of Good and Evil—from within the reward and punishment system.

It may be hard for us to think that Satan punishes people for being evil, or even worse, that he wants people to be good. Why is this so? Because our concept of Satan is that he just wants to do evil, since he himself is so wicked. Being so evil himself, why would he care if people are good? Why would he want people to be good? Some have put it this way: if evil people belong to Satan, why would Satan destroy his own people?

Let us put this in another context then. What about human beings like you and me? Aren't we, according to the Bible, evil? Yes, we are evil. Romans chapter three makes that very clear:

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one;
 There is none who understands;
 There is none who seeks after God.
 They have all turned aside;
 They have together become unprofitable;
 There is none who does good, no, not one.”
 “Their throat is an open tomb;
 With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;
 “The poison of asps is under their lips”;
 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”
 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
 Destruction and misery are in their ways;
 And the way of peace they have not known.”
 “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3: 9-18)

As you see, there is no one who really lives out God's righteousness. No one who understands what *agape* love really is. We have all turned aside from God's ways of love. We think we are good, but there is no one who even knows what it means to be good. We are steeped in the ways of the serpent; “the poison of asps” is under our lips. Our feet “are swift to shed blood.” “Destruction and misery” are in our ways, and “the way of peace,” God's way of *agape* love, we have not known. And just like Satan, we function through the system of reward and punishment too—after all, we were all brought into this system through Adam and Eve's eating of that Tree. We operate in Satan's system of reward and punishment all the time—at home, at work, in the church, and in the world.

So then, having established that we have the same *modus operandi* as Satan, we ask the question: do we care if people are good or evil? Yes, we do. Do we want people to be good? Yes, we do. Do we punish them in order to

correct them? Of course we do! What about those people that are our own people: do we punish them? Do we punish our own children, our own flesh and blood? Yes, absolutely we do! We have learned our methods of reward and punishment from Satan; we have copied him. And if we operate by the same principles as he does, then why wouldn't he do the same? Why wouldn't he punish, and turn against *his own people*?

The great problem with all this is that most of us have believed that it is God who rules through reward and punishment. At one time or another we all believed that when God saw the scope of the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, He became so disgusted that He could not take it anymore. He became so indignant, so angry, so incensed, that He lost His cool. Or He became so afraid that the rest of us would follow their example that He decided to make an example *of them to us*: "Do you want to see what I do with evil people? You better watch out! You better behave, or this is what I will do to you too." Sounds like that Christmas song, Santa Claus is Coming to Town, doesn't it?

Thus, we reckoned that a time came when God decided that Sodom and Gomorrah had passed the limits of His forbearance. The time had come when He had to destroy them, obliterate them from the face of the earth, just like He had done to the antediluvians.

But wait a minute... if indeed God had sent the flood, then He had also made an example of those antediluvians... but if He had made an example of them...did it work? No, it didn't work! Humanity didn't pay attention to that huge "lesson" that was the flood; people still continued sinning! So then was God going to have to do it again to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Are God's solutions to the sin problem so faulty that if they don't work the first time He then has to implement them over and over again? Can God really be this illogical and ineffectual?

What a horrible concept of God this is! If this is true, then God's solutions are utterly inadequate and inefficient, because, honestly, they don't seem to work at all! Throughout history people have misbehaved regardless of how many so-called *examples* God is supposed to have made of *sinner*s.

We need to keep in mind that God can only be one of two things: either He is *agape* love or He is a God who operates by Good and Evil. Either He is the Tree of Life, or He is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Either His scepter is the scepter of righteousness or the scepter of iniquity (Hebrews 1: 8). Either He is nonviolent (Isaiah 53: 9) or He uses violence like Lucifer does (Ezekiel 28: 16).

God cannot be both *agape* and Good and Evil. And if He is *agape*, then He cannot punish, because "perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment" (1 John 4: 18). Perfect love, which is *agape* love, casts out fear, because fear is a response to a threat of punishment; therefore, *agape*

love cannot operate by punishment. With all of this in mind then, let us go and see what really happened in Sodom and Gomorrah.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

Sodom and Gomorrah were situated in a paradisiacal setting. We learn this from the dialogue between Abraham and Lot, when Abraham was giving Lot the first choice in selecting a place to settle. Abraham had told his nephew:

Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. **If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.**” And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all **the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah)** like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then **Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan**, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other (Genesis 13: 9-11, emphasis added).

The plain of Jordan, where Sodom and Gomorrah were situated, was well watered everywhere by the river Jordan, and as such it was like “the Garden of the Lord,” the Garden of Eden, which had been watered by four rivers. And it was also like Egypt, which was watered by the Nile. Could there be some symbolic meaning to this? Why are “rivers” being mentioned here?

We all know that “water” means life. This is true everywhere, but especially in the Middle East where there are many desert areas. It also means prosperity, affluence and comfort. A river is the life of a city. In fact, there is no better place to start a city than by a river. The river provides the water for the people to drink, to grow food, travel, bathe and swim. A river is a blessing all around.

Now we know that in the Bible the word “water” can be used literally, but it can also be used *symbolically*, as in the Book of Revelation where water is used as a symbol for “peoples”:

Then he said to me, “**The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues** (Revelation 17: 15, emphasis added).

Notice how elsewhere in the Bible, “waters” can also signify the *words* that come out of people’s mouths:

The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook (Proverbs 18: 4, emphasis added).

In Ezekiel and Revelation, when God speaks, His voice is “like the sound of many waters:”

And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. **His voice was like the sound of many waters;** and the earth shone with His glory (Ezekiel 43: 2, emphasis added).

His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and **His voice as the sound of many waters** (Revelation 1: 15, emphasis added).

Thus, “waters” not only means “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues,” but more specifically, it means the words that come out of those “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.”

What are those “peoples”—“waters”—in the Book of Revelation *thinking and saying* in the context of the war between Satan and God? Which words are coming out of their mouths? Are they words from the Tree of Life? Or words from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? The verse itself tells us that they are thinking and saying words from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, because the harlot, that body of false teachings about God, is sitting over the “waters.” The harlot teaches the people lies about God—she falsifies His image. She is a harlot because she is an adulteress. Her lover is the god of this world. Thus, everything she teaches about God is false, because what she is really teaching us is what the god of this world has taught her.

Now, we know that the word *torah* in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word for “law.” The words of the law are the words that come out from God’s mouth, which is the law of *agape* love, the law of life. And we know that *agape* love is all that comes out of God’s mouth, because “God is love” (1 John 4: 8). He is fully and only *agape* love. In Greek, Jesus is the Word (John 1: 1), the Logos, the law—again, *agape* love.

Now, notice this: the Hebrew word *torah* comes from a primitive root, *yàràh yàrà’*, which according to Strong’s Concordance means:

properly **to flow as water** (that is, **to rain**); transitively to lay or throw (especially an arrow, that is, to shoot); **figuratively to point out** (as if by aiming the finger), **to teach**: archer, cast, direct, inform, **instruct**, lay, shew, shoot, teach (-er, -ing), through (Strong’s Concordance, emphasis added).

In the Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible, which was written in pictures, symbols, just like ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, the word *torah* is written as a picture of a hand and a picture of a man. According to this Lexicon, this is how we are to interpret these symbols:

Combined these [THE PICTURES OF A HAND AND OF A MAN] mean “hand of man”. The hand of man is used for the throwing. **A flowing of water in a river.** A throwing of the finger to show a direction to walk or live. The throwing of an arrow. **The throwing down of water in rain. Awe or fear where one throws self to the foot of one in authority** (AHLB, emphasis added).

The ancient root of the word *torah* means “to flow as water,” “to rain.” “Figuratively,” it means to point something out, “to teach,” “to instruct.” *Torah* is the law of unconditional love through which God has been trying to teach the way of life to the human race for the past six thousand years. God’s *words* have

been *flowing out of His mouth*; they have been *raining out of His mouth onto us*. The law is the center of the entire controversy between God and Satan. God's law of *agape* love is like water that gives life to the one who lives by it. Water then is a symbol that points us to God's law—*torah*—of *agape* love.

We can think of some other instances where water is used to convey God's teachings. Think of Moses' symbolic act of striking the rock so that water would flow out of it. What was God trying to teach us through that? Moses' striking the rock was pointing us to Jesus, who is the Rock, the cornerstone—God's immutable truth.

Jesus Himself was stricken on the cross. And as he was stricken on the cross, water, words of life—the fulfillment of the law of *agape* love—flowed out of Him: "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." The way Jesus taught the law of God was by fulfilling it—by living it out so we could see it in action. So that on the cross we see God's law of life in action—God forgiving His enemies.

Jesus Himself used the word "water" as a symbol. The "water" Jesus gives us is "living water"—the water of life, because it is the law of *agape* love, the law of life. Notice His words to the Samaritan woman at the well:

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4: 10).

Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4: 13-14).

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7: 38).

The "water" Jesus would give to the Samaritan woman was His *words*, His teachings about God's character of unconditional *agape* love. It was His unconditional love, His compassion, His message of hope, mercy, His message of life. His words were life-giving, just like water is life-giving.

Think also of the symbolism of the early and the latter rain, and connect it with the *torah*, the law of love. The early rain are the words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God throughout the past six thousand years, sprouting the seed of His law of love in our hearts. And the latter rain, a double portion of the revelation of His character of *agape* love through the Word, Jesus Christ, is that rain which prepares the human crop for the harvest at the end of the world—the harvest which takes place at the second coming of Christ.

In this context, think also of the river that flowed out of Eden to water the

Garden, and divided into four heads:

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdelium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates (Genesis 2: 10-14, emphasis added).

Pishon means “increase.” Gihon means “bursting forth.” Hiddekel means “rapid,” and Euphrates means “fruitful.” Now, think of the river that flows out from the throne of God in Revelation twenty-two:

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22: 1-2).

While these rivers may all be literal, they are also symbolic of everything that flows out from God toward us. God is life, water is life, God’s law is the law of life, and every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God is life-giving:

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God**’” (Matthew 4: 4, emphasis added).

With all this in mind, please pay close attention to the following passage from the Book of Ezekiel, in which the prophet has a vision of the river of life that proceeds from the temple of God:

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; **and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east**, for the front of the temple faced east; **the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple**, south of the altar. He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and **there was water, running out on the right side**. And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; **the water came up to my ankles**. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; **the water came up to my knees**. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; **the water came up to my waist**. Again he measured one thousand, **and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed**. He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen this?” Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: “**This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live.** There will be a very great multitude of fish, because

these waters go there; for they will be healed, and **everything will live wherever the river goes** (Ezekiel 47: 1-9, emphasis added).

The message given here is that wherever God's river of life flows, His river of words of unconditional *agape* love, it heals and gives life to whatever and whomever it touches: "everything will live wherever the river goes." These passages are not talking about water in a *literal* sense. They are highly *symbolic* because Jesus Himself used them symbolically.

The symbolism of "water" becomes even more clear with the next verses. Notice carefully this next passage from the Book of Ezekiel:

Then **I will sprinkle clean water on you**, and you shall be clean; **I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.** I will put My Spirit within you and **cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.** Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; **you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleanness.** I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. **Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations** (Ezekiel 36: 25-31, emphasis added).

As we can see, "water" is highly symbolic and is definitely connected to God's Spirit, His ways, His law, His *torah*. So then, having laid this foundation as to the meaning of the word "water," as we return to Abraham and Lot we will see that "water" here is also a powerful and meaningful metaphor. Albert Barnes' Commentary on Abraham's and Lot's discussion on where to settle, says the following:

Lot accepts the offer of his noble-hearted kinsman. He cannot do otherwise, as he is the companion, while his uncle is the principal. He willingly concedes to Abram his present position, and, after a lingering attendance on his kinsman, retires to take the ground of self-dependence. Outward and earthly motives prevail with him in the selection of his new abode. **He is charmed by the well-watered lowlands bordering on the Jordan and its affluents. He is here less liable to a periodical famine**, and he roams with his herds and herds in the direction of Sodom. This town and Amorah (Gomorra), were still flourishing at the time of Lot's arrival. The country in which they stood was of extraordinary beauty and fertility. **The River Jordan**, one of the sources of which is at Panium, after flowing through the waters of Merom, or the lake Semechonitis (Huleh), falls into the Sea of Galilee or Kinnereth, which is six hundred and fifty-three feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and thence descends into the basin of the Salt Sea, which is now thirteen hundred and sixteen feet beneath the same level, by a winding course of about two hundred miles, over twenty-seven threatening rapids.

As the reader can see, Sodom and Gomorra were situated on a plain that

was bathed by the river Jordan, and its prosperity was due to that river. But in the Bible, Jordan is not a positive symbol. In fact, Jordan represents the words, the law that flows out of Satan's mouth. Why do we say this?

First, take the Hebrew word "Jordan": in Hebrew it means "descender." This is so, because as Barnes points out, Jordan *descended* from Panium through Galilee, "which is six hundred and fifty-three feet below the level of the Mediterranean," and came all the way to the Dead Sea—the Salt Sea—which is "thirteen hundred and sixteen feet beneath the same level." Jordan goes down and down, it descends, until it becomes death. There is no life in the Dead Sea. Nothing can live in those waters because of its extreme high salt content. This river that ends in death represents the words of Satan's system of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, of which God had said: "the day you eat of it you will surely die."

Another clue that the Jordan is a symbol representing Satan is the fact that in order for the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land they first had to *cross* the Jordan—they had to overcome it, so to speak. How did they do this? They positioned twelve priests holding the Ark of the Covenant—the ark containing God's law—in the river. When the priests' feet touched the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the river stopped, and then all the people were able to cross the river by dry land. Everyone crossed and none were left behind. This is recounted in the Book of Joshua, chapter three.

The application, the *antitype* of this *type* is this: when we come to understand God's true character—His law, His grace, His salvation symbolized by the Ark of the Testament which contained the tablets of the law—the false words that come out of Satan's mouth about God's character are *stopped*, just as the ark with God's law stopped the waters of the Jordan. Then we are able to *cross over* to the truth, to God's true reality—to His kingdom of love, the Promised Land, which is flowing with milk and honey. God's kingdom is flowing with all things that are life-giving and good for us.

Think also of this other example: Naaman. This Syrian commander-in-chief was healed from leprosy by dipping seven times in the Jordan. What could this possibly mean, if the Jordan is a symbol of Satan and the *words* or *law* that come out of his mouth?

Now, we know that leprosy is a symbol of sin in the Bible, and sin is what Satan introduced into the universe. Naaman represents the human race, and the Jordan represents Satan and the words that come out of his mouth—the law of Good and Evil. After seven thousand years of sin (dipping seven times in the Jordan), seven thousand years of the earth being under Satan's law of sin and death, we are all cured of this curse, and sin will never rise again:

Affliction will not rise up a second time (Nahum 1: 9).

After seven thousand years of exposure to Satan's lies, who in their right mind would ever choose him as their leader again? Who would dare to suggest implementing his law of Good and Evil once again? Who would choose death over life? As you see, we will all have been inoculated once and for all.

What about Jesus' baptism? Wasn't Jesus Himself baptized in the Jordan? What could this possibly mean? Do you remember Jesus' reply to the mother of Zebedee's sons, when she asked Him if her sons could sit at His right and left hand when He came into His kingdom? It was then that Jesus indicated what His baptism (in the Jordan) really meant:

But Jesus answered and said, **“You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”** They said to Him, “We are able.” So He said to them, **“You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;** but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father” (Matthew 20: 22-23)

The “cup” Jesus was going to drink was symbolic of “the wrath of God.” For our sake, Jesus would experience what it means to be let go. Jesus' anguish on the cross came from *feeling* forsaken by God. The baptism He was going to be baptized with was the death on the cross, and the cross is yet another symbol of the cursed Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Notice what Deuteronomy twenty-one says:

If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; **for he who is hanged is accursed of God** (Deuteronomy 21: 22-23, emphasis added).

What is the meaning of this? What tree is this passage referring to? Paul explains its meaning when he quotes this passage in Galatians, saying “cursed is anyone who hangs on a Tree”:

Christ has redeemed us from **the curse of the law, having become a curse for us** (for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”) (Galatians 3: 13, emphasis added).

We must put on our symbolic glasses if we are to understand the meaning of these puzzling texts. The only tree in the Bible that is connected to a curse is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That tree was symbolic of something related to the serpent—another symbol. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and the symbol of the cross itself signified that He would enter Satan's death domain of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in order to save us from it. Jesus, “who knew no sin” would become “sin for us.” He would dive right into Satan's kingdom of death in order to save us from it:

For **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us**, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5: 21, emphasis added).

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, **for the suffering of death** crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might **taste death for everyone** (Hebrews 2: 9, emphasis added).

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that **through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage** (Hebrews 2: 14-15, emphasis added).

Jonah, the only sign Jesus gave regarding Himself, is another strong confirmation that we are on the right track regarding the symbolic meaning of “water.” Jonah was first of all thrown into the sea and then swallowed by a “great fish”—“a great fish” being another symbol of Satan, whose depictions in the Old Testament can be traced to large sea monsters such as the serpent, the dragon, or leviathan.

Lot, then, was allured by the beauty of a city that was bathed by the river Jordan. He was attracted by the allure of Satan’s world, which at the present time is ruled by his law of reward and punishment. Lot chose the prosperity, affluence, comfort, beauty, luxury, and law of Satan’s world. As we all know, he paid a steep price for his choice.

Sodom and Gomorrah were imbued with the “waters” of the Jordan. They were filled with Satan’s metaphoric waters, to the point that they were completely in his jurisdiction.

In the face of these facts, what was God going to do? What could He do? If we turn to the Book of Hosea, we will find the answer to these questions. It is in the context of the apostasy of His own people that God gives us a clue as to what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. He begins chapter eleven of Hosea with a sad lamentation over the backsliding history of His people:

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
 And out of Egypt I called My son.
 As they called them [AS I SENT PROPHETS
 TO A THOUSAND OF THEM],
 So they went from them;
**They sacrificed to the Baals,
 And burned incense to carved images**
 (Hosea 11: 1-2, emphasis added).

Already we see the stage being set up in these opening words. For centuries God sent His people prophets to teach, warn, and guide them into the path of life, but they stubbornly would not listen to His messengers. As God sent them, they rejected them. They continued sacrificing to Baal, the god of Good and Evil, even sacrificing their own children in order to gain his

favours, his rewards, or in order to appease his anger, his punishment.

In the next verses, God explains how He had led the people through His principles of *agape* love, showing them the extent of His kindness and gentleness. He did not force His people to follow Him, but “drew” them to Himself through His nurturing love, as a loving Father would:

I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them by their arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
I drew them with gentle cords,
With bands of love,
And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.
I stooped and fed them (Hosea 11: 3-4).

God “was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.” This is a reference to the yoke of the moral law of Good and Evil, the yoke which the gods they chose to serve put on their “neck” and through which they were kept in bondage and fear. God then outlines what will happen to His people who refused to listen to His words of warning:

He shall not return to the land of Egypt;
But the Assyrian shall be his king,
Because they refused to repent.
And the sword shall slash in his cities,
Devour his districts,
And consume them,
Because of their own counsels.
My people are bent on backsliding from Me.
Though they call to the Most High,
None at all exalt Him (Hosea 11: 5-7).

These words could apply to any person who calls upon God but who is actually calling upon a god who looks more like Satan. They apply to anyone who worships a god who looks more like the accuser than like Jesus Christ, the One who justifies all and condemns none.

God’s anguished cry in the next verses in the Book of Hosea is a wail of agony similar to Jesus’ moaning over Jerusalem as He rode into the city on the way to the cross:

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim (Hosea 11: 8, emphasis added)?

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when

you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’ (Luke 13: 34-35)!

The people who were bent on sacrificing to the Baals had ignored God’s prophets, whose purpose was to turn them back from the abyss. They had rejected God’s rulership, they had spurned His law of love, mercy, and equity. And now, as they by their own choice were giving themselves over to Satan’s jurisdiction, God had to watch what Satan would do to them. God’s hands were tied because God never uses force to make anyone follow the paths of life. That would be a contradiction in terms. If in any way force is used, then *agape* love is no longer *agape* love—and God *is agape* love. He doesn’t have it—*He is it*. In other words, if God used force in any way He would cease to be God. He would be more like Satan than God.

Now, the prophet Hosea doesn’t outright say that God had let go of Sodom and Gomorrah. But he does seem to say that God was in utter agony at the prospect of having to give them up and hand them over as He had done with Admah and Zeboiim. What we have to ask ourselves is this: what are Admah and Zeboiim? How did God let them go? And who did He hand them over to?

As it so happens, Admah and Zeboiim were in the vicinity of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were sister cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and they too were destroyed along with their larger neighbors. In the passage above, God is *giving up* and *handing over* Israel and Ephraim just like He *gave up* and *handed over* Admah and Zeboiim. Just like He *gave up* and *handed over* Sodom and Gomorrah! Hosea clearly explains how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. They were not destroyed by God—they were destroyed by the one to whom God had to give them up and hand them over. To whom then, did God give them up and hand them over? Notice the following passage in the Book of Deuteronomy. Here we will see exactly to whom and why God gave up and handed over these cities:

The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath.’ **“All nations would say, ‘Why has the Lord done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?’** Then people would say: **‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book.** And the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day’ (Deuteronomy 29: 23-28, emphasis added).

Isn’t it interesting that Moses predicted that this question would come up some day? Someday, and we believe that day is today—the day when the

hour of God's judgment is come (Revelation 14: 6)—“all nations would say, Why has the Lord done so to this land?” How do we explain God's anger arousing “against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book?” If we addressed this in present-day language we would say, “Wow! What could they have possibly done to make Him so upset?”

But in this controversy that has been raging between God and Satan for six thousand years, there is always much more than meets the eye. Before clarity comes, one must dig as if for precious stones.

Moses himself explains why such destruction came upon these cities. Notice what he says: “Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt,” and “for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them.”

Now, as with everything in the Bible, we can interpret this either through the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. With a Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil mind-set we would say that was God punishing them because they chose to follow other gods. God doesn't like it when we do that, He doesn't approve of it; after all, He is a jealous God. So watch out: no spiritual adultery or He will do us in! I mean, there was nothing left of Sodom and Gomorrah! *Nothing!* It literally became a *salt pit*. Not even grass grows there. This is extreme wrath on steroids!

On the other hand, we could look at this through the Tree of Life mind-set. With a Tree of Life mind-set we would say that God, from heaven—from the heavenly principle of *agape* love—was simply honoring the people's choices. They had clearly chosen to worship and serve other gods. As a result, they forsook God's covenant, and it is implied that by doing that they made a covenant with the gods they served. God did not force them to come back. He did not force them to worship or serve Him. He simply honored their freedom. They went to the gods so God let the gods have them. He, who had been taking care of them thus far, gave them up and handed them over to the gods. So we ask the reader the question: who destroyed them? The God of unconditional *agape* love, or the gods of reward and punishment?

God, being unchangeable, always has to abide by His principle of love, in which freedom is paramount. Thus, God granted them freedom, which was their inalienable right. But through Hosea we get a glimpse of the heart of God at the moment He had to give them up:

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim (Hosea 11: 8, emphasis added)?

It was no easy task for God to see the people He loves infinitely and

unconditionally being destroyed mercilessly. In the story of Job, Satan demanded that God let go of the “hedge” of protection God had surrounded Job with. Here Satan did the same: he required that God let go of His protection over these cities. Why did he demand control over them? Because they had chosen him as their leader—clearly shown by the fact that they had gone after the gods and served and worshipped them.

And yet, God was able to hold back the Destroyer for a long time. He tried every possible means He had to bring the people back to His jurisdiction, to His principles. There they would have had peace, harmony, love, grace and protection.

Even though Lot committed some dreadful mistakes, he was still an evangelist who for years tried to present before the Sodomites the beauty of God’s principles of righteousness. Likewise, in the flood, Noah, a “preacher of righteousness” was sent to preach God’s righteousness, but he too was rejected by the ungodly. Notice what Peter says in this regard:

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and **delivered them into chains of darkness**, to be **reserved for judgment**; and **did not spare the ancient world**, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a **preacher of righteousness**, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, **making them an example** to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to **reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment**, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord (2 Peter 2: 4-11).

What is this verse really telling us? Isn’t it telling us to take this “wrath of God” very seriously? Yes, indeed, it is. Because it says that when the angels chose to leave God and join Satan in his rebellion, God didn’t spare even them. He gave them their freedom and “delivered them into chains of darkness.” He didn’t spare the ancient world either, which was eventually engulfed in the waters of the flood. And He didn’t spare Sodom and Gomorrah—He gave them up and handed them over to Satan’s despotic control, according to their choice.

These are all examples of how seriously God views our freedom of choice. They are not examples of how angry God is. In fact, when Jesus let go of Jerusalem, when He was about to hand it over to Satan—who eventually was behind its utter destruction in 70 A.D.—He cried bitter tears of tremendous sadness and grief:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! **How often I wanted** to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, **but you were not willing!** See! Your house is left to you **desolate**; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’ (Matthew 23: 37-39, emphasis added).

Jerusalem’s “house” had been left desolate because God, her protector, had left her. They had pushed Him out. When they rejected Jesus, they in effect rejected God and His principles of *agape* love. Then He was forced to give her up, to let her go, to leave her to her own desolation, without His presence. He was forced to hand her over to the Destroyer.

How did God “not spare the angels who sinned?” Did He destroy them? No, He didn’t. We know that He hasn’t destroyed them, because they are still alive here on earth. So how did He “not spare” them? This is a really important point, because by understanding how God did not spare the angels, we will understand how He also did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah and the antediluvians.

Peter says that God “cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.” The key word here again is *freedom*. God did not spare the angels from the *consequences* of their choices. The moment the angels positioned themselves on Lucifer’s side of the great controversy they went into darkness. They cast themselves “down to hell;” they delivered themselves into “chains of darkness” and God had to let it happen.

Now we know that there is no such thing as a literal hell. So what does Peter mean? Take a close look at Albert Barnes’ Commentary on this passage:

But cast them down to hell - Greek tartaras - “thrusting them down to Tartarus.” The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is common in the Classical writers. It is a verb formed from Tartaros, Tartarus, which in Greek mythology was the lower part, or abyss of Hades, Hades, where the shades of the wicked were supposed to be imprisoned and tormented, and corresponded to the Jewish word Geenna - “Gehenna.” It was regarded, commonly, as beneath the earth; as entered through the grave; as dark, dismal, gloomy; and as **a place of punishment**. Compare the Job 10:21-22 notes, and Mat 5:22 note. **The word here is one that properly refers to a place of punishment**, since the whole argument relates to that, and since it cannot be pretended that the “angels that sinned” were removed to a place of happiness on account of their transgression. It must also refer to punishment in some other world than this, for there is no evidence that this world is made a place of punishment for fallen angels (Albert Barnes Commentary, emphasis added).

According to Barnes’ understanding of the Greek word *tartaros*, Hell is “a place of punishment.” But unlike what Barnes believes, the “place of punishment” is not one single, literal place, as in “some other world” other than the earth. “A place of punishment” is any place in which Satan’s principle of reward and punishment is used.

Peter does say that God made an example of Sodom and Gomorrah by

turning them to ashes—“an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.” Yes, Sodom and Gomorrah were turned to ashes, but what part exactly did God play in their destruction? According to Hosea, He gave them up, He handed them over to Satan’s jurisdiction. So what is the lesson for us from this example of God’s wrath being revealed from heaven?

The lesson is for those “who afterward would live ungodly.” The reader may recall our study of the word “ungodly.” It referred to the first four Commandments of the Decalogue, which in turn all had to do with worshipping the gods of this world instead of the true Creator God.

The lesson is clear: if we want to worship the gods, whether they be gods of Egypt, Greece, Rome or any other country, or even Jehovah (if to us He is a God of reward and punishment) then God will hand us over to the gods we have chosen—Satan and his angels. Once we pass entirely under his jurisdiction, Satan is free to do with us according to his will, he is free to punish us as he sees fit.

If we persist in going onto Satan’s territory, what can God do after pleading, warning, begging, sending prophets, and even sending His own Son to give us the truth about Himself? He can only give us up to the choices we have made and hand us over to the leader who demands power over us, the leader that will punish us severely.

The wrath of God is coming upon the world yet one more time. This will happen when God sees that we have made choices that have gone beyond the point of no return. Then, when those who transgress God’s law reach the limit of their iniquity (when we study God’s Strange Act, we will see what this limit is), they will have filled the cup of their iniquity. Then they will be “filled with all unrighteousness,” and all their thoughts will be continually evil. Then, and only then, God will let them go and will hand them over to Satan.

We are now living under God’s umbrella of protection. We have no idea how much we owe Him for the peace we still have at this time. Many are already being let go. When the world fully rejects Him, however, then we will see what it means to be let go and to be handed over to the Destroyer. Then we will see what Satan’s kingdom, without any restrictions from God, is truly all about.



14

THOSE WHO JUDGE ARE INEXCUSABLE

As we continue our study of “the wrath of God,” we must address another very important point, one that applies to those who think they are above that class who will suffer “the wrath of God.”

Paul’s definition of “the wrath of God” does not stop in chapter one. It goes into chapter two, where he says:

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things (Romans 2: 1-2).

What is Paul saying here? Who are those that “judge” and who are they judging? We believe the *judges* he means here are those who condemn the people Paul has described so far in chapter one—the women who have “exchanged the natural use for what is against nature” and “likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful.” These *judges* are also condemning any who fall under the categories he listed below:

God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful (Romans 1: 29-31).

What Paul is really saying here is that those who condemn *anyone* for *any* reason are really judging them through the law of Good and Evil. Thus they are guilty of the same thing, that is, they are guilty of *exchanging God for Satan*. How so? By condemning others, they break God’s law of unconditional love. God’s law of unconditional love offers unconditional and impartial mercy and grace *to all*—and that includes even all those who are

listed above. God is not in the business of condemning anyone. Period. Why? Because God does not operate by Good and Evil; He operates by *agape* love. There is no condemnation in *agape*. Do you remember how Peter said that even “angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord” (2 Peter 2: 11)?

Therefore, Paul says to those who condemn others: “for you who judge practice the same things.” This does not mean that those who judge homosexuals, for instance, practice homosexuality. It means they are operating by the same law of Good and Evil, which is a condemnatory law.

But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things (Romans 2: 2).

What is the judgment of God against those who judge others? God gives them up too. He hands them over to the jurisdiction of condemnation because condemnation belongs to Satan’s jurisdiction. Satan is the accuser. Those who condemn others in this passage consider themselves highly moral and in line with God. And they see especially homosexuals as being highly immoral. Therefore, they consider themselves superior to those they see as worthy of contempt and punishment.

There are two places in the Old Testament that reveal how homosexuality was perceived to be utterly immoral in the past. The first is in the story of Lot in Genesis chapter nineteen. The second is in the story of the Levite and his concubine in Judges chapter nineteen. In both stories, homosexual men came to the house of a relative or descendent of Abraham, asking to engage in homosexual relations with visiting men—in Lot’s case the men in question were angels. Both Lot and the concubine’s father thought it highly immoral to allow such a thing. But in their code of ethics, in their morality, it was not immoral to give their daughters to these men—and some of these girls were virgins! To them it was more moral to allow their daughters to be gang raped than to allow their male visitors to be sodomized.

But what Paul is saying here is that those who judge and condemn even homosexuals—who traditionally are thought to be the most immoral class of people—are moralists who themselves have fallen into Satan’s trap. By judging and condemning homosexuals, they are in effect using Satan’s law or moral standard of Good and Evil. Notice how Paul continues to address this issue:

And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to

his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; **but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish**, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God (Romans 2: 3-11, emphasis added).

Again, Paul is saying to all of us who think we are any better than those we condemn: “And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?” In other words, do you think that by accusing and condemning you will remain in God’s jurisdiction? Do you think you will escape the judgment of God, meaning that God won’t give you over to the real god you follow? No, God, reads our hearts, and knows where we belong. If we are more in line with Satan’s law of Good and Evil than God’s law of *agape* love, then God hands us over to the god we have chosen. If ever there was a *sobering* warning, this is it. Please understand what this means!

Those who condemn others “in accordance” with their “hardness” and “impenitent” hearts “are treasuring up” for themselves “wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds.” How will God “render to each one according to his deeds?” Will He reward them if they are good? Will He punish them if they are evil? No, this is not what Paul is saying. Here will come into play these words from Jesus:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you (Matthew 7: 1-2).

We will be judged by whatever system of “judgment” we ourselves use. There are two kinds of judgment: God’s righteous judgment, which is grace, freedom, and mercy. And there is Satan’s judgment, which is condemnation and punishment. The judgment we use places us either in the kingdom of God—righteous judgment—or the government of Satan—condemnation. By judging and condemning others we are “treasuring up wrath for ourselves for the day of wrath”—the day when God gives us up after He has done everything to help us see that grace and mercy are the principles of life. By rejecting them, we will have chosen Satan’s jurisdiction of punishment.

God’s righteous judgment will be to allow us to reap the consequences of our choice of government—“for there is no partiality with God.” All have the liberty to exercise their freedom, and all will reap the consequences of their choices. This is “the wrath of God”—to honor our choices and to allow us to experience the consequences of those choices. This is the same thing the following verses are telling us:

Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them,
For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him,
For **the reward of his hands shall be given him** (Isaiah 3: 10-11, emphasis added).

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then
He will reward each according to his works (Matthew 16: 27, emphasis added).



15

GOD'S STRANGE ACT

Christianity today is steadily and surely polarizing into two camps: in the first camp are those who believe in and promote a punishing god of force, and in the second, a minority, are those who believe in and promote the nonviolent God whom Jesus Christ came to reveal. Both groups rely on the Bible for evidence for their respective positions. Outside of Christianity, the same polarization is taking place, unbeknownst to the world. Everyone is positioning themselves for this final countdown either on the side of God or of Satan.

We are all living during the biblical *antitypical* Day of Atonement—the ultimate fulfillment of that typical day in Moses' sanctuary in which the sanctuary was cleansed once a year. Some have interpreted this antitypical Day of Atonement to be a judgment of the human race. This would mean that this is the time in which God sits down to judge each of us in order to determine who will be saved and who will be lost. There is something so scary to this scenario that many have discarded altogether the whole idea of the antitypical Day of Atonement, thus throwing the baby out with the bath water.

In Revelation chapter fourteen we read that a time of judgment has come:

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, **for the hour of His judgment has come**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14: 6-7, emphasis added).

Here indeed a judgment is revealed: but who is judging and who is being judged? Is God judging us? Or are we judging God? If God is judging us, then we would think He is deciding whether we are good enough to be saved or bad enough to be lost. But if we are judging God, how are we judging Him?

The writers of this book believe that the second option is the correct one—we are judging God, and the Bible supports this. But as we will soon

see, that act of judging God also judges us. This understanding is based on the following verse taken from Romans chapter three:

As it is written: **“THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND MAY OVERCOME WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED”** (Romans 3: 4, emphasis added).

This verse is addressing God, not us. In writing this verse, Paul pulls a direct quote from Psalm fifty-one. Here we will provide the reader with a few different translations of that verse:

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and **be clear when thou judgest** (Psalm 51: 4, KJV, emphasis added).

Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—**that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge** (Psalm 51: 4, NKJV, emphasis added).

Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done the evil thing in Thine eyes, **so that Thou art righteous in Thy words, Thou art pure in Thy judging** (Psalm 51: 4, YLT, emphasis added).

Against thee only have I sinned, and done evil before thee: **that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged** (Psalm 51: 4, Brenton, emphasis added).

First of all, there can be no question that the person being addressed here is God. “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.” This is David talking to God after He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband.

Paul didn't have all these translations that we have today. He had only the Hebrew Old Testament. Did you notice that he interpreted David's Psalm just like the Brenton translation, the last one we provided? Both Brenton and Paul are saying the same thing. They are saying that David is saying that *it is God who will be justified when He speaks*, and *it is God who will be cleared when He is judged*. Now, David may not have meant it that way, or even understood what he was saying. But this is *how Paul interpreted* what David said. Also, Paul interpreted it this way because He gained a completely new mind and understanding of the Scriptures after He met Jesus Christ.

Having established that it is God who is on trial right now, did you notice the nuances of each version and how there is a sense of *progression* from version to version as to the meaning of this one passage? We started out with a version that seemed to imply that God judges us, but by the last version—which is the closest to Paul's interpretation of that verse—we realize that it

is God who is being judged. This means that we are the ones who are judging God in *how He* judges humanity. Does He judge us through the Tree of Life—*agape* love? Or does He judge through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—reward and punishment?

Not only are we judging God, but so is the entire universe. Everyone is observing what is happening on this earth—this theatre of the universe—to see what God is really like. If God is really being judged, why and how are we judging Him? Why is this focus on God?

The answer to these questions is very simple: Satan confused and deceived all living beings so that even angels desire to look into these things (1 Peter 1: 12). Heavenly beings are learning from what is happening down here:

to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be **made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places** (Ephesians 3: 10).

In 1 Corinthians Paul even states that he thinks that God has made him and the apostles a “spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” because through Paul’s life they can also judge God (1 Corinthians 4: 9). However, the Bible is also very clear that God is our judge:

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which **the Lord, the righteous Judge**, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8, emphasis added).

We, however, are also judging God in that we are weighing, pondering, trying to figure out how God is a “righteous judge.” Is He a righteous judge within the realm of *agape* love, or is He a “righteous judge” within the realm of reward and punishment? Could He be a righteous judge within the realm of Good and Evil? What kind of character does He have? Does He have a character of *agape* love, or a character of Good and Evil? Does He judge us in the conventional sense of the word, with condemnation, and if not, how does He judge us?

What Psalm fifty-one is prophesying is that God will be justified, He will be found just, He will be found righteous in all His doings. He will be cleared of all wrongdoing. He will be found blameless and pure in all His “judgments,” which implies in all His *decisions*. God will overcome all the lies of the enemy when He is judged. He will be found to have done everything He has done in the past six thousand years solely in accordance with His eternal moral law of *agape* love, which is His righteousness. It will become clear for all to see that God never even once deviated from His law in order to use Satan’s death principle of Good and Evil as a solution in dealing with the problem of evil.

Biblically speaking there is no doubt that it is we who are judging God. But there is a twist to this, and the twist is that by *our verdict of His character we will in*

turn judge ourselves. At least this seems to be what Jesus was saying when He stated:

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, **has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day** (John 12: 48, emphasis added).

“The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” Jesus clearly points us in the direction of the antitypical Day of Atonement Judgment in which we are now living—“the last day,” the Day of Judgment. But what judges us in the last day? From what Jesus said, it is our acceptance or rejection of Him and His “word,” His message. Jesus positions Himself as the last and final authority on truth regarding the character of God, and if we don’t listen to Him, we will surely walk into darkness.

Jesus is the main witness in this trial. He is the “True Witness,” the only One who can really give us the truth:

And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, **the Faithful and True Witness**, the Beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3: 14, emphasis added).

Note what Jesus goes on to say regarding His own witness:

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin (John 15: 22).

If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father (John 15: 24).

If God hadn’t sent the only True Reliable Witness to show us the truth and help us make a right decision about who God really is, then we would not be held responsible for misjudging God due to Satan’s lies about Him. But if we reject the “Faithful and True Witness” then we “have no excuse” for our “sin” of *missing the mark* about God. By rejecting Jesus’ testimony, we show that we hate both Jesus and the Father, since they are exactly alike. By rejecting Jesus’ witness, we show that, just like Satan, we hate everything He taught regarding His Father’s principle of *agape* love.

Ultimately, what this means is that we are judged by whether we accept or reject Jesus’ revelation of God’s character because this is what He came to earth to do—He came to reveal God’s true character:

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying:

**“I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”**
(Hebrews 2: 11-12, emphasis added)

O righteous Father! **The world has not known You, but I have known You;** and these have known that You sent Me. And **I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it,** that the love with which You loved Me may

be in them, and I in them (John 17: 25-26, emphasis added).

“The world has not known” God. “The world” Jesus was speaking of was the world of the past and the world of the present—the world *in all ages*. This sentence, “the world has not known You,” has to include even the Old Testament’s portrayal of Jesus’ “righteous Father”—which was a pretty grim and chilling portrayal of a dual God who was loving, yes, but also a genocidal despot. This portrayal is not in harmony with Jesus’ life, teachings, and death on the cross.

In the revelation He came to give of the Father, Jesus overturns the malicious lie that God is a Good and Evil God—“O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You. . . . And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

God is a “righteous Father,” not a ruthless tyrant! He is a God of *righteousness*, which is the *path of life*. God is a God of grace and forgiveness, not a God of condemnation and punishment. God is a God of life, not a God of death. God is the Creator, not the Destroyer. God has never killed anyone and never will do so, because His character is unchanging—it does not waver back and forth between Good and Evil. For all who accept it, here is life abundant in the true knowledge of the God of *agape* love. God is not the “thief;” rather, He is the ‘Good Shepherd:’

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep (John 10: 7-11).

The thief was stealing, killing and destroying every way possible, including lying. Jesus came to put an end to all lies about God’s character. However, there are some who still believe that God is a destroyer. In particular, they believe that God must destroy sinners in order for sin to come to an end. And so they often quote a verse from Isaiah twenty-eight, which speaks of God’s Strange Act:

For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may do His work, His awesome [STRANGE - KJV] work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual [STRANGE - KJV] act (Isaiah 21: 28, emphasis added).

Those who espouse the view that God will destroy sinners in the end believe that God’s Strange Act is His final destruction of sin and sinners—a destruction which will be done by fire. This is rather puzzling, however, because if God has indeed often destroyed sinners in the past as the Old Testament claims, then destroying them in the final Day of Judgment would be no strange thing to Him at all! Rather, it would be just some more of

His usual *modus operandi*, some more of His normal and well-established method of dealing with sinners. How then can it be His Strange Act?

The problem, as usual, is that we don't allow the Bible to define its own words and terms for us. We tend to interpret biblical text on a surface level without digging in, comparing text with text, line by line, here a little, there a little as we are told to do in the very same chapter of the Book of Isaiah, chapter twenty-eight:

Whom will he teach knowledge?
And whom will he make to understand the message?
Those just weaned from milk?
Those just drawn from the breasts?
For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept,
Line upon line, line upon line,
Here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28: 9-10)

If we dissect the verse that talks about God's Strange Act word by word, if we look at the meaning of its Hebrew words and compare scripture with scripture, we will find that God's Strange Act is something quite different from what a shallow or literal reading of this verse would seem to indicate. So without much ado, let's proceed right into God's Strange Act.



16

THE LORD WILL RISE UP...

We have now arrived at the foundational text which describes God's Strange Act, which many believe is God's last act of destroying sinners and sin. The text in question is found in Isaiah twenty-eight, verse twenty-one:

For the Lord will **rise up** as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may do His work, His awesome [STRANGE - KJV] work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual [STRANGE - KJV] act (Isaiah 28: 21, emphasis added).

In the first part of this verse there is a synonymous parallel structure “in which the same sentiment is repeated in different but equivalent words.” This means that one thought is expressed two different ways:

For the Lord will **rise up** as at Mount Perazim, He will **be angry** as in the Valley of Gibeon (emphasis added).

If the reader recalls, in the introduction of this book we showed how the Greek word for “wrath,” *orge*, is related to the obsolete word *oros*, which means to “rise” or to “rear.” This bit of information confirms the idea that “rise up” and “will be angry” are parallel expressions meaning the same thing. So then, when we read the beginning words of this verse in Isaiah—“the Lord will rise up”—we know that this *rising up* has to do with “the wrath of God” which is indeed confirmed by the very next parallel sentence: “He will be angry (“WROTH” IN THE KJV) as in the Valley of Gibeon.”

Furthermore, the parallel verbs here are *to rise* and *to be angry*. What this means is that these two idiomatic expressions have the same meaning. They both amount to “the wrath of God” as explained in Romans chapter one. In literary construction, this would be similar to us saying: “Carl’s business is worth peanuts; it is not worth a cent.” Both “worth peanuts” and “worth a cent” are idiomatic expressions, and yet they both convey the same idea that “Carl’s business” is worthless.

We have seen that “the wrath of God” is simply God’s act of *letting go, giving over* by giving *freedom* to those who leave Him for the gods of reward and punishment. “The Lord will rise up,” therefore, must have the same meaning. This will become more and more apparent as we go on.

If we look up the word “rise up” in Hebrew, we will see that it has many applications besides its obvious and literal meaning. Notice the many meanings of the Hebrew word *qûm*, which means to “rise up:”

to rise (in various applications, literally, figuratively, intensively and causatively): abide, accomplish, be clearer, confirm, continue, decree, be dim, endure, enemy, enjoin, get up, make good, help, hold, (help to) lift up (again), make, but newly, ordain, perform, pitch, raise (up), rear (up), remain, (a-) rise (up) (again, against), rouse up, set (up), (e-) stablish, (make to) stand (up), stir up, strengthen, succeed, (as-, make) sure (-ly), (be) up (-hold, -rising).

As the reader can see, there are many ways in which this word can be used. Besides meaning “to rise,” it can also mean to “abide,” “accomplish,” “be clearer,” “confirm,” “continue,” “decree,” “establish,” “strengthen,” etc... and even “succeed.” This is not an easy word!

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) also has a lengthy entry for this word’s many applications and usages, but it ends with the following application, which seems to be the most relevant to this context:

Finally, our word is frequently used in **martial contexts**. It refers to preparation for (Jud 7:15), engagement in (Ex 2:17), and **victory in war** (or struggle, Josh 7:2). Sometimes, *qûm* connotes anticipated or realized victory. **When God engages in combat victory is certain. Thus the word may denote his creative, saving, and judging action.** Pious men frequently beseech him to rise in their behalf (Num 16:35). This enlightens many Psalm texts in which this idea of victory is not immediately apparent (Ps 3:7 [H 8]); 76:9 [H 10]; 35:2). When God is on one’s side he prevails over his enemies. **Those who are against God are warned of immediate (Ps 89:43 [H 44]) and ultimate (Ps 1:5) failure.**

To “rise up,” as it pertains to God, means that He is preparing for *war*. But we must not forget that when God engages in war, He does so “in righteousness”—from His principle of *agape* love:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and **in righteousness He judges and makes war** (Revelation 19: 11, emphasis added).

God’s *methods* of war are not the same as what we would normally think. His methods are always in harmony with His character of *agape* love, and as we have seen in the context of “the wrath of God,” this means *letting go* out of respect for freedom—this is how “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.” Regardless of what happens in this war down here—even if we think God *appears* to be losing—in the end we can be assured that

God will win, because when God engages in combat, victory is certain” and “those who are against” Him “are warned of immediate and ultimate failure.” “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13: 8), therefore love will win.

There are a few occasions in the Bible when God rises up, but two come readily to mind. One is in the New Testament and the other in the Old. In the New Testament, Jesus *stands up* when Stephen is stoned to death; and in the Old Testament, He *rises up* during the final events of this earth’s history, when His people are being persecuted. After He rises up, then there will be “a time of trouble such as never before.”

THE STONING OF STEPHEN

After Jesus’ ascension, the apostles were doing great wonders and signs among the people, declaring that Jesus had fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament. Stephen was preaching that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. Some members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen—“Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia”—began disputing with him, but they were no match for Stephen’s wisdom. Since they couldn’t win the argument, they then began spreading lies about him—a not so unusual strategy for those who oppose the truth and feel impotent to rebut it.

Soon they managed to bring about Stephen’s arrest. Stephen was taken to the Council where he began to expound on the history of the children of Israel. Point by point, he took them from Abraham to Joseph, to the slavery in Egypt, to Moses and the rebellion in the desert. He recounted the history of the Children of Israel step by step in order to show that Jesus was the prophet that Moses had spoken of:

This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘**The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear**’ (Acts 7: 37, emphasis added).

Stephen’s speech was a denunciation of the Chosen People’s hardness of heart. It was an indicting oratory pointing out how they had turned from the “living God” to the worship of the gods:

And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.
Then God turned and **gave them up** to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets:

‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, images which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’

Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, who found favour before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him a house.

However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

‘Heaven is My throne,
And earth is My footstool.
What house will you build for Me? says the Lord,
Or what is the place of My rest?
Has My hand not made all these things?’ (Acts 7: 41-50, emphasis added).

When Stephen arrived at this point in his oratory, “God does not dwell in temples made with hands,” he touched upon a very sensitive spot—a much-treasured idol, which was their temple. We see a sudden change in his speech. It is as if the Jews became infuriated, menacing. Perhaps they were already picking up stones to throw at him, because Stephen then exclaims:

“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”

When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, **and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**, and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and **the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!**”

Then they **cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord**; and they **cast him out of the city and stoned him**. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a **young man named Saul**. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, **“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”** And when he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7: 51-60).

Stephen “gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus *standing* at the right of God.” And he exclaimed aloud, for all to hear: “Look! I see the heaven opened and the Son of Man *standing* at the right hand of God!” Jesus had *risen up*. This was a highly meaningful act. Christ was standing to go to war—but He would do so “in righteousness.”

The stoning of Stephen became greatly significant as far as the Jewish nation was concerned, because by stoning him to death, they showed that they

had *fully* rejected Jesus' teaching and revelation of His Father—the God of *agape* love. Jesus had been patiently teaching them step by step that God is not in the business of condemning or destroying sinners. Every word from His mouth, every action of His being pointed to a God of infinite love, grace, and life. He came to bring them “grace and truth” (John 1: 14, 17) so that by killing Stephen, they fully rejected “grace and truth.”

In this act of destroying one of Jesus' followers, the Jewish nation completely rejected Jesus himself. By rejecting Jesus, they also rejected the *gospel* of Jesus, which was the *good news about God* which Jesus came to share with them.

The rejection of the *light* Jesus had shed about God set them on a course that took them to Satan's side of the great controversy between God's principles and Satan's principles. It was a path from which *they themselves, as a nation, not as individuals*, would never choose to return. It was as if their nation was sealed, set in stone, never to be changed again.

By the time of Stephen's stoning, the Jews had already rejected and killed the very Son of God three and a half years earlier. That was the greatest sign that they had rejected Jesus and His teachings. But God does not give up on us easily. What is *strange* for God is to give up on us, and more specifically to *give us up* or *hand us over* to someone as cruel as Satan. He does not do this easily or hastily. God could have let go of His protection of the Jewish nation right there and then when they handed His Son over to the Romans to be crucified. But His infinite heart of *agape* love is filled with mercy, compassion, and pity. He patiently waits and sends more messengers so that their disaster can be averted. Stephen was one of these messengers.

In the act of killing one of Jesus' messengers, the Jews showed undeniable evidence that they had irretrievably distanced themselves from the principles of God's law—unconditional love, grace, impartiality, mercy, goodness and freedom of choice. In rejecting God's law, they had rejected God Himself, because the law of *agape* love is the very essence of God's character—it is who He is, for “God is love.”

But even then, there was still mercy, because Stephen, inspired by the Spirit of God, intercedes for the very people that are killing him. He “stands in the breach” (another biblical term we will explain shortly) and pleads, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” The same intercessory prayer had escaped Jesus' dying lips three and a half years earlier—“Father forgive them for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23: 34).

God is the God of many chances; over and over we read in the Bible that He is long-suffering. And His *patience* was not in vain, for there were many *individuals* that did turn to the truth, like Paul for instance, at whose feet those who stoned Stephen placed their overcoats.

Stephen's intercessory prayer brought many *individuals* to the truth, for they saw in him something unusual, something peculiar, something heavenly. But as a *nation*, the Jews had made their choice. That choice stands even to this day, and while there are many *individual* Jews who are accepting Christ, the nation of Israel still stands firm in its rejection of Him.

By fully rejecting Christ, the nation had therefore *sealed* its own fate. Jesus declared that it was left "desolate," without God's presence. God respected their freedom, and as a result He had to *give it up*. He *handed it over* to the Destroyer, who incited the Romans against it. Thirty-six years after Stephen's stoning, in AD 70, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies led by Titus.

Jerusalem suffered the true "wrath of God," the true *letting go*. It was not God who *destroyed* Jerusalem. It was not God who *punished* Jerusalem. But it was God who *let it go*; it was He who *gave it up*, *gave it over*, and *handed it over* to Satan's jurisdiction. Jerusalem was destroyed because of its own choice to live by the principles of the Destroyer; therefore, God had to let it go where it wanted to go.

In this tragic history we can see that it was a *persistent* rejection of the truth—a step by step closing of the heart and mind—that led to a final destruction.

When Jesus came into the scene, He began shedding the full light of God's character and the principles of *His kingdom*. Jesus' life of constant love, mercy, compassion, goodness, in which there was not mingled one particle of evil, malice, force, or violence (Isaiah 53: 9), should have turned the nation to the light. But they refused it, and with each refusal, they became more and more *settled in darkness*. This is a *sealing* process.

The Jews knew that there was something particularly different about Jesus. They knew that He was unlike anyone they had ever seen—there was a purity about Him that was not earthly. Not only that, but no one could do the miracles He did unless they had a connection with a superior, supernatural power. The problem was that His teachings didn't agree with their perception of what the Messiah should be like.

Jesus was too humble, too peaceful, too forgiving, too kind to the masses whom they despised and considered accursed of God. They expected a mighty warrior who would come into the scene with power and pomp, ruthlessly trampling down their oppressors. And as they became more and more settled in darkness, they were paving the way to their eventual demise, whereby God would have to let them go to the leader they had chosen. Sadly, we see the same false expectations today.

We are all sinners. We are all born into a sinful world. "The wrath of God" is not revealed from heaven against us because we are sinners. God does not fault us for having been born into a sinful world; this was not our choice! Nobody chose this!

Rather, "the wrath of God" is revealed from heaven when *light*—the

truth—is given to us and we *persistently reject it*. God lets go only when the truth He sends is fully rejected by us, and the evidence of our rejection is clearly shown through our *words* and *actions*. *Light* brings judgment, because if we *reject* it, then we have made a choice *against* it. God's *letting go* is a *response* to our choice. He lets go only because He respects our freedom.

We should pay very close attention to any light the Lord gives us. Because the moment we reject it, we will walk into darkness, and if we continue to reject light we will eventually pass fully under Satan's control, which translates into certain destruction.

If we continually reject Jesus Christ and His principles—which is God's Spirit of *agape* love—we will eventually be left wide open to Satan's attacks. Then there will be no one to protect us, not only from his evil principles working *in our own hearts*, but also from his and his followers' own personal, satanic cruelty. We will have to reap what we have sown.

It was at the very moment when the Jews were mercilessly stoning Stephen to death—proving by their *words* and *actions* that they had clearly rejected God's *agape* love—that Christ *stood up*.

DANIEL 12:1

The other clear example of the Lord *standing up* is recorded in the Old Testament, in the Book of Daniel, chapter twelve, verse one:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy people: **and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time**: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (Daniel 12: 1, emphasis added).

Before we can understand these passages, we need to understand their context. In what context is Michael standing up here? If we look a few verses back in chapter eleven, we will see that there is a king who “exalts” himself above God and His principles, and who persecutes the people of God:

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. **And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days...**

Then **the king** shall do according to his own will: **he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished**; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for **he shall exalt himself above them all**. But in their place **he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which**

his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a **foreign god**, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain...

But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore **he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many**. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him (Daniel 11: 32-33, 36-39, 44-45, emphasis added).

It is when the king who exalts himself goes forth “with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many” that Michael stands up. What does it mean “to utterly make away many?” Notice the meaning of the Hebrew word *châram*, translated in the KJV as “to make away many:”

to seclude; specifically (by a ban) to devote to religious uses (especially destruction); physically and reflexively to be blunt as to the nose: - make accursed, consecrate, (utterly) destroy, devote, forfeit, have a flat nose, utterly (slay, make away) (emphasis added).

It is very interesting that this king will “seclude” or “ban” those that do not conform to his “foreign god.” Could this be a parallel to Revelation thirteen, where those who do not conform to receiving the mark of the beast are “banned,” ostracized, kicked out of the economic system, by not being able to buy or sell? It is when the king “who exalts himself” goes forth “with great fury to destroy” and ostracize many that Michael stands up. This appears to be directly related to Revelation chapter thirteen:

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that **no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name** (Revelation 13: 16-17, emphasis added).

In this passage we see a world power enforcing a “mark” on the “right hand” or “forehead” of the peoples of the world, and anyone who does not bow down to this power will be kicked out of the system and will be *banned*, *secluded*, as it were. They will not be able to participate in the world’s economic system of buying and selling.

When this begins to happen, according to the twelfth chapter of the Book of Daniel, Michael—“the great prince which stands for the children of thy people”—will *stand up*. Michael will stand up to go to war “in righteousness.” This means that His victory is certain, and “those who are against” Him “are warned of immediate and ultimate failure” because Michael is about to *let them go*, He is about to *hand them over*.

The Hebrew word “stand” used in Daniel chapter twelve verse one is not

the same as the word “rise” found in Isaiah chapter twenty-eight, verse twenty-one. Here the word is *âmad*, and Strong’s defines it like this:

A primitive root; to stand, in various relations (literally and figuratively, intransitively and transitively): abide (behind), appoint, arise, cease, confirm, continue, dwell, be employed, endure, establish, leave, make, ordain, be [over], place, (be) present (self), raise up, remain, repair, serve, set (forth, over, -tle, up), (make to, make to be at a, with) stand (by, fast, firm, still, up), (be at a) stay (up), tarry (Strong’s Concordance).

The Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon indicates that this Hebrew word—*âmad*—has its original roots in the Arabic language, and means to “set firmly, to sustain, to prop.” This is the second meaning of Jesus’ act of “standing up.” Jesus is not only about to let the persecutors of His people go, but He stands up to “sustain,” to “prop” His people up.

Those who oppose God’s light and persecute those who follow God’s light in the world are in effect persecuting God Himself. The fact that they are *persecutors* to begin with, is to them a “proof of perdition.” Note the verse below from the Book of Philippians:

Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and **not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof [TOKEN, KJV] of perdition, but to you of salvation and that from God** (Philippians 1: 27-28, emphasis added).

What is to the adversaries “a proof of perdition”? The “proof of perdition” is the fact that they, the adversaries, are *terrifying*. They terrify God’s people by persecuting them. That in itself is to them a “token,” an *indication* that they are in the wrong path, on the wrong side of this war. They are walking in the path of “perdition.” Those that persecute God’s messengers would persecute God Himself if He was in their midst—which in fact is what they did when God was on earth in the person of His Son.

The very act of persecuting—using violence and terror—is a sign, a token, a proof, an evidence that they have rejected the true God, for these are not God’s methods or character traits.

Persecutors in general, *by definition*, are working for the god of this world—regardless of who they claim to be or what *righteous* cause they claim to uphold. One could stand for the greatest cause in the world, but if he/she is using cruel methods to enforce his/her agenda, persecuting those who oppose them, they are on the wrong side of the controversy between God and Satan. They are on the losing side.

Likewise, those who suffer persecution without *retaliating*—as Jesus taught we should do—can be assured that their peaceful ways are to them a token “of salvation and that from God.” They have been saved from Satan’s

tooth for tooth moral law of Good and Evil.

Many who don't even consider themselves to be Jesus' followers, but who stand for the right without using force and violence against their opponents will suffer persecution for Jesus' sake. As Paul says in Romans chapter two:

...for **not the hearers** of the law are just in the sight of God, **but the doers** of the law will be justified; **for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves**, who show the work of **the law written in their hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them... (Romans 2: 13-15, emphasis added).

Those who are persecuted for "righteousness sake" may know that their persecution is to them a token of "salvation." Rather than being discouraged, they should jump for joy—they are in the right camp:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad**, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5: 10-12, emphasis added).

When Michael stands up in Daniel chapter twelve, we see the same pattern of persecution taking place as during the stoning of Stephen. Note how the Lord had also given a certain message for His servants to declare in Daniel chapter eleven, just as in the case of Stephen:

And they that understand among the people shall instruct many (Daniel 11: 33).

The king who blasphemes against God and who exalts himself persecutes the people, those "that understand" and who "instruct many." He persecutes them "by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days" (Daniel 11: 33). Then God completely surrenders him to Satan, and he suffers "the wrath of God":

yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him (Daniel 11: 45).

By persecuting the people of God, this king completely rejects Jesus' gospel of peace—he seals himself in the rejection of the God of *agape* love. Then sudden destruction comes upon him and those who have aligned themselves with him:

And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time (Daniel 12: 1)

At that time, Jesus' *standing up* is not only a *sign* that the king who exalts himself has finally *sealed* his fate and God is about to *let him go*—as He is about to do also to those who follow the king—but it is also a sign that He is going to *sustain* His persecuted people:

And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be

found written in the book” (Daniel 12: 1).

There will be “a time of trouble, such as never was” because destruction will happen on a *global* scale. So far, every example of “the wrath of God” has taken place on a local scale—in small *pockets* of the human race. But here in Daniel chapter twelve, we see a whole world that has rejected God and His principle of *agape* love. By persecuting Jesus’ followers, those who persecute them show that they have rejected God and His principles. They have passed entirely under Satan’s jurisdiction, that they have fully become subjects of his government and its principles of Good and Evil, reward and punishment.

What then is the meaning of the Lord’s *rising up*? God’s act of rising up is a sign of two things: first, it indicates that those who persecute and murder God’s true followers have sealed their minds against the gospel; the *evident proof* is that they attack them. It means that God can no longer intercede *with* those who reject Him and His gospel of peace, because they have closed their hearts and minds to Him. Their rejection of His principle of *agape* love is made evident by the fact that they persecute and destroy His followers—those who choose to live by His *nonviolent* principle.

Thus, the Lord’s *standing up* is a sign that He is about to exercise “the wrath of God,” which means He is about to *give them up* and *hand them over* to the ruler they have chosen. This means that they are about to become completely exposed to Satan’s fury, without God’s protection, and as a result, their destruction is certain for Satan is merciless.

Secondly, the Lord’s *rising up* means that He is going to “sustain” His people in whatever way He deems necessary. He will either give them the strength to face pain, suffering, and even death, or He will find a way of escape for them. His people will understand this, and just like Daniel’s three friends, who when they were under Nebuchadnezzar’s threat of being thrown into the fiery furnace and face certain death, exclaimed:

O Nebuchadnezzar, **we have no need to answer you in this matter.** If that is the case, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up**” (Daniel 3: 16-18, emphasis added).

The certain assurance that God was sustaining these three friends in Babylon is the fact that although they were thrown into the fiery furnace, Jesus joined them there, and not even one hair of their head was burned:

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?”

They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”

“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3: 24-25).

And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them (Daniel 3:27).

In the case of Stephen, when the Lord stood up so that Stephen could see Him, Jesus was *supporting* Stephen firmly, He was *sustaining* him, *propping* him up, so to speak. The act of standing up was a sign that Christ gave to Stephen himself—to show him that he was not forgotten. It was a gesture of support, encouragement and vindication. It was as if Jesus, seeing what was happening to Stephen, stood up to help him through this excruciating experience. When Stephen saw Christ standing at the right hand of God, his faith was strengthened, he was sustained, given strength to go through his tragic martyrdom. The evidence is in his demeanor and words of forgiveness toward his killers.

Jesus’ *standing up* in both the stoning of Stephen and Daniel twelve is the equivalent to the Lord’s *rising up* in Isaiah chapter twenty-eight verse twenty-one—they all mean the same thing.

The *sustaining* of the *persecuted* coincides with the *sealing* of the *persecutors*—when they become sealed in Satan’s ways, they will unfailingly rise against the people of God—those who are living by the law of God’s *agape* love. By their very action of persecuting them, they show that they have rejected God and His *agape* principle. The Jews sealed themselves in opposition to God by the very act of stoning Stephen; the same will happen to the king who persecutes those “who understand” and who “instruct many.” The fact that they persecute the people of God is to them a token, a sign or the proof of their “perdition,” and to the people of God it is a token of “salvation, and that from God.”

As we continue we will examine the two instances where the prophet Isaiah said that God rose up: Perazim and Gideon. As we look at these examples, we must keep two things in mind. First, they are historical accounts of people and events that happened in real life. Secondly, they are also types, or *examples*. Remember how Isaiah chapter twenty-eight verse twenty-one begins: “For the Lord will rise up **as** at Mount Perazim, He will be angry **as** in the Valley of Gibeon.” The word we are trying to bring to the reader’s attention is the little word “as.”

God is saying that “as” it happened in the past with people and events, so it will happen again in the future with other people in similar events. However, the people who were involved with these events in the past were motivated by *partial* knowledge, since truth is *progressive*. Full truth didn’t arrived on our planet until two thousand years ago, with the First Advent of Jesus Christ.

Therefore types are imperfect, but the future ones will be the actual thing.

Types are only *templates, not the actual fulfillment itself*. Therefore types cannot fulfill all the requirements that *antitypes, who have greater knowledge*, must fulfill. We hope to make this clearer as we proceed.



17

MOUNT PERAZIM

For the Lord will rise up as at **Mount Perazim**, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may do His work, His awesome [STRANGE - KJV] work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual [STRANGE - KJV] act (Isaiah 28: 21, emphasis added).

As we continue to examine the above verse word by word, we now ask: what happened at Mount Perazim? Why did the Lord “rise up” there? Can we find the same pattern in Mount Perazim as we have seen in the two cases already discussed, the stoning of Stephen and the events at the end of the world?

The story of what happened in Mount Perazim is told in two different places in the Bible. As you read both accounts, please notice the subtle differences which we have highlighted in bold. The first account is found in Second Samuel, chapter five, verses seventeen to twenty-five:

Now when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And **David heard of it and went down to the stronghold**. The Philistines also went and **deployed themselves** in the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? **Will You deliver them** into my hand?” And the Lord said to David, “Go up, for I will **doubtless deliver** the Philistines into your hand.” So David went to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there; and he said, “The Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water.” Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim. And **they left their images there**, and **David and his men carried them away**. Then the Philistines went up **once again and deployed themselves** in the Valley of Rephaim. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, and He said, “**You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the Lord will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.**” And David did so, as the Lord commanded him; and he drove back the Philistines from Geba [GIBEON] as far as Gezer. (2 Samuel 5: 17-21, emphasis added).

The second place where this story is told is in First Chronicles chapter fourteen, verses eight to seventeen:

Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And **David heard of it and went out against them.** Then the Philistines went and **made a raid** on the Valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of God, saying, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? **Will You deliver them** into my hand?” The Lord said to him, “Go up, for I will **deliver** them into your hand.” So they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then David said, “**God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water.**” Therefore they called the name of that place Baal Perazim. And when **they left their gods there**, David gave a commandment, and **they were burned with fire.** Then the Philistines **once again made a raid on the valley.** Therefore David inquired again of God, and God said to him, “**You shall not go up after them; circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.**” So David did as God commanded him, and they drove back the army of the Philistines from Gibeon as far as Gezer. Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations (1 Chronicles 14: 8-17, emphasis added).

As you read both of these accounts, did you notice that there is no literal mention anywhere in this text of the Lord *rising up*? But didn't Isaiah clearly say in chapter twenty-eight, verse twenty-one that “the Lord will *rise up* as at Mount Perazim?” Even though it is not *written* that the Lord *rose up* on this occasion, we have to accept that the Lord did “rise up” in a very significant way at Mount Perazim because Isaiah said so. How then did the Lord *rise up* at Mount Perazim?

The evidence of the Lord's rising up—which we have seen means two things: *letting go, giving them up, handing over* to the master they have chosen, and standing to sustain His people—is in “the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees.” What is the meaning of this “marching”?

The Hebrew word for “marching” is *tsâdâh*, and according to Strong's Concordance it means a “march; (concretely) an (ornamental) ankle chain: - going, ornament of the legs.” The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon states that it is “1) marching 2) armband, anklet, stepping chains.” And the Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon says that these were “stepping chains which were worn by oriental women fastened to the ankle-band of each leg, so that they were forced to walk elegantly with short steps.”

So then, who is “marching” in the tops of the mulberry trees making the sound of “stepping chains”? This is a really important question and we must find its answer. Notice what the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge says about this “marching:”

Some, taking the word *bechaim*, translated “mulberry trees,” as a proper name, render, “when thou shalt hear a sound of going upon the summits of Bechaim;”

other understanding rosh, “a top,” in the sense of beginning or entrance, read, “when thou hearest a sound of footsteps at the entrance of the grove of mulberry trees;” and others think a rustling among the leaves is intended. The Targumist read, “When thou shalt hear the sound of the angels coming to thy assistance, then go out to battle; for an angel is sent from the presence of God, that he may render thy way prosperous.” If there had not been an evident supernatural interference, David might have thought that the ruse de guerre which he had used, was the cause of his victory (Treasury of Scripture Knowledge).

Not all commentaries interpret the mulberry trees as being “the sound of angels coming.” And those who do, like this one, interpret that these angels are *God’s angels*. But notice what the Biblical Illustrator Commentary states about this event:

What this “sound of going” was exactly we cannot tell. It probably resembled the march of an army in the air. **A host of unseen angels may have moved above the mulberry groves, striking terror into the hearts of the barbarians and sending them into precipitate retreat.** As they retreated, they fell into the hands of the Israelites (who had swung around to their rear), and were routed with complete **discomfiture** (Biblical Illustrator Commentary, emphasis added).

“A march of an army in the air. A host of unseen angels... striking terror... sending them into precipitate retreat... complete discomfiture...” Put this picture together with an army of angels chained in the ankles, which when they walk make a jingling sound... What do you think? Do these supernatural beings sound like *God’s angels*? Are God’s angels chained together at the ankles?

When we look at this description in view of God’s character of *agape* love, we see that there is something here that simply doesn’t align. What stands out in particular is the *terror*, the *fear* these angels produced in the Philistine army. Fear is not in line with God’s principles of love. Fear and terror are intrinsic to Satan and his angels. We have devoted a whole chapter to the topic of fear in our second book, *God on Trial: Have We Been Lied To? Is God a Killer?* Therefore, we will not take the time here to develop this. We will simply quote a few verses below:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8: 15, emphasis added).

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1: 7, emphasis added).

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment [KOLASIS: PENAL INFLICTION, PUNISHMENT]. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18, emphasis added).

“God is love.” He is “perfect love.” When we are surrounded by “perfect love” we have no fear. But if God is no longer there, when “perfect love” is

removed, then fear and terror comes in. This is exactly what happened as the following verses will show. Notice what God had said:

And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. **For then the Lord will go out** before you to strike the camp of the Philistines (2 Samuel 5: 24, emphasis added).

God had said that He would “go out” before David. What exactly did this mean? To “go out”—*yâtsâ* in Hebrew—means to *depart*, to *get away*. The Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon says it means to “go out, come out, exit, go forth, depart, to go forward, proceed to, to come out of.” God was going to *leave* the Philistines; He was going to “go out” *away from them*. It is God’s *going out* that causes destruction, because when He departs, Satan has full access, freedom and power to destroy.

God was going to *depart* from the Philistines and as God was departing, Satan and his armies were marching in. What a chilling, horrific, terrifying picture!

Why did God depart from the Philistines? The Philistines had completely *filled* their *iniquity*, which means they had completely rejected God and His principles and had therefore fully passed over onto Satan’s jurisdiction. How do we know that they filled their iniquity? They filled it by *rising up against* God’s people, by persecuting and making war against those who were in God’s jurisdiction. We will develop this more as we study the next example given in Isaiah twenty-eight verse twenty-one, when we see what happened at Gibeon.

The scenario we see above is very similar to the stoning of Stephen and the case of the king who exalts himself in the last days. Like these previous examples, here God’s people—in this case David and his army—are being attacked and persecuted by an enemy who has *fully* rejected God’s *agape* love principle. And then we see how in the very act of *persecuting*, they position themselves in a place where God can no longer protect them. They’ve painted themselves in a corner where God has to let them go, hand them over, or deliver them.

Their own choices cause God to deliver them into Satan’s hands, and we eerily read about that army of darkness coming to take possession of their prey. What a terrible, horrible scenario, to be let go completely into the hands of a sadistic, cruel, punitive master! Oh, that the world would wake up to see the fate that awaits it if it doesn’t turn back to the true God of *agape* love!

A BREAKTHROUGH OF WATER

David’s words of victory over the Philistines are extremely meaningful and we will take a careful look at them. He said:

The Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water (2 Samuel 5: 20).

Then David said, “God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a breakthrough of water.” Therefore they called the name of that place Baal Perazim (1 Chronicles 14: 11).

The word “breakthrough” in Hebrew is the word *perets* which means “to break out, make a breach, burst out” (Strong’s Concordance). TWOT states that it is a “breach, gap, mostly in a wall...peres may also describe the breaking of a dike” (TWOT, p. 738).

David named the place where he defeated the Philistines *Baalperazim*. He did so for a very specific reason, which he himself explains: because “the Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water.” The word *Baalperazim* is a compound word— *Baal* and *Perazim*. *Baal* was the Canaanite god and the word itself means “master, husband, owner.” *Perazim* is the plural of the word *peres* or *perets*. Thus, *Baalperazim* means “possessor of breaches” or “master of the breaks.” Gesenius says that *Baalperazim* means a “rupture, breach of a wall.” What is the picture God is trying to paint for us here? We believe God is using a metaphor to explain what happens when He departs, what happens when He hands someone over to Satan.

Imagine a dike, a water dam. The wall of the dam holds the waters back and protects the city situated in the valley below. Now imagine that one day there is a rupture in the wall of the dam. Picture the suddenness in which the pressure of the water will gush through that hole, and within seconds it will break down the entire wall. The result will be that the village below in the valley will be completely destroyed. This is the picture God is painting for us in this story. So then how do we interpret this metaphor?

There is a war between God and Satan. This war involves their respective laws which were represented on earth by the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We as human beings can choose which Tree we want to eat from—we do this by choosing which moral law we want to live by. God’s law of *agape* love is the metaphoric wall that protects us and holds the destroying waters from flooding us.

Satan’s waters are constantly pressuring the wall, trying to bring it down. As long as we hang on to the God of *agape* love, we are the subjects of His jurisdiction, and Satan has no jurisdiction over us. Our choices either keep us safe behind God’s wall of protection, or they render us unprotected to Satan’s attacks.

If there is a breach, a rupture, a hole in the wall, the waters can quickly come in. If we *persistently* reject God and fully reject His ways of love, we make a breach on the wall. Satan’s waters are like a huge body, a mass of pressure that is constantly seeking the smallest rupture in the wall in order to break through. Satan is like a roaring lion constantly pressuring God to remove His protection from us.

If we consistently reject God and His principles, then we create a hole in His wall of protection and the waters can come in all at once—like a sudden “break-through of water.” The moment a rupture in the wall is made, the waters which had been under immense pressure come rushing in suddenly, in an instant, and those on the other side of the wall are completely destroyed and decimated by it.

The same idea is portrayed through a city that is surrounded by a wall. The purpose of the wall is to protect it from outside enemies. As long as the wall is intact, the enemies and their armies cannot enter the city. But if for any reason part of the wall collapses, then they can come right in and take the city and its inhabitants captive. The enemies will have complete access to destroy, burn, and take down the dwellers of that city.

This is what happened to the Philistines in Perazim and this is why David named the place *Baalperazim*. Baal, the harsh taskmaster god who operates by reward and punishment—the sun god—suddenly broke through the Philistines’ wall of protection, and they were completely overtaken by him. It happened suddenly, in an instant, like a break in the wall. Notice the Thayer Lexicon’s definition of the word *perets* below:

- 1) breach, gap, bursting forth
- 1a) bursting forth, outburst
- 1b) breach
- 1c) broken wall
- 1d) outburst (figuratively of God’s wrath)

The same word is used in Psalm 106: 23 to describe Moses’ intercession for the people of Israel when they erected the Golden Calf:

Therefore He said that He would destroy them, **had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach**, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them (Psalm 106: 23, emphasis added).

Moses stood before God “in the breach to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.” By sculpting a Golden Calf, the people were returning to Egypt—they were worshipping the Egyptian god Apis, Osiris, the god of fertility, the so-called god of beneficence. Osiris, the *beneficent*, was the Good god of the Egyptian godhead of Good and Evil. His Evil counterpart was his wife, Isis, the goddess of justice, or rather, *vengeance and punishment*.

By worshipping the Golden Calf, the children of Israel created a “breach” in their wall of protection, because they were rejecting the true God and choosing Satan as their master. God was about to hand them over to the master of

their choice, but Moses prayed and interceded, giving God the right to continue protecting them. God Himself wanted Moses to stand in the “breach” so that He could keep Satan from entering and destroying His people.

This metaphor applies to all of us. A wall of protection surrounds us in this world. Jesus is “the true Light which gives light to **every man** coming into the world” (John 1: 9, emphasis added). The enemy is Satan. He wants to get into that metaphoric *city* and destroy its inhabitants. As long as God’s wall is up and there are no breaches in it, we are safe. What does the Bible say is the wall?

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; **salvation will God appoint for walls** and bulwarks (Isaiah 26: 1, emphasis added).

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but **thou shalt call thy walls Salvation**, and thy gates Praise (Isaiah 60: 18, emphasis added).

God’s wall of protection around His people is His salvation, which is the gospel, the good news that Jesus came to give and demonstrate. The good news is the character of God, His law of *agape* love, which is the essence of His being.

How is the breach in the wall made? It is made by rejecting God’s law of *agape* love which Jesus came to reveal. It is made by choosing our own ways, which are the ways of the flesh, which are the ways of Good and Evil.

Our flesh is in direct opposition to God’s ways. We must die to our flesh if we want to learn to live by God’s way of *agape* love. We must let go of our violence, of our revenge, of our punitive sense of justice, our malice, our condemnation of others. We must live by *agape* love, which is unconditional love, without partiality, without force or violence. We must respect each other; we must bless and not curse one another. Disregarding the word of God—departing from His law of love—causes a breach in the wall. The Bible also gives us some specific reasons as to why this breach is formed:

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**. By **swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out**, and blood touches blood (Hosea 4: 1-2).

Pârats—to break out—is the root word for the plural form, *parâtsîym*, which is *Perazim*. We “break out,” we make a breach in our wall of protection by breaking and going outside of the law of God: “there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.”

No “knowledge of God in the land” refers to transgressions of the first four commandments—to the “ungodly.” Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery are consequences of rejecting God and His principles of love and refer to the last six commandments—to “unrighteousness of

men.” By doing these we “break out,” “and blood touches blood.”

In Ezekiel twenty-two God gives the prophet a long list of the things the people have done to make a breach in their wall of protection. They also fall under one of these two categories mentioned above:

The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come; and she makes idols within herself to defile herself. You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have **defiled yourself with the idols which you have made...** “Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to **shed blood in you**. In you they have **made light of father and mother**; in your midst they have **oppressed the stranger**; in you they have **mistreated the fatherless and the widow**. You have **despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths**. In you are men who **slander to cause bloodshed**; in you are those who **eat on the mountains**; in your midst they **commit lewdness**. In you men **uncover their fathers’ nakedness**; in you they **violate women who are set apart during their impurity**. One **commits abomination with his neighbour’s wife**; another **lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law**; and another in you **violates his sister**, his father’s daughter. In you they **take bribes to shed blood**; you **take usury and increase**; you have **made profit from your neighbours by extortion**, and have **forgotten Me**,” says the Lord God... The **conspiracy of her prophets** in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have **devoured people**; they have **taken treasure and precious things**; they have **made many widows in her midst**. Her **priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things**; they **have not distinguished between the holy and unholy**, nor have they made known the **difference between the unclean and the clean**; and they have **hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths**, so that I am profaned among them. Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to **shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain**. Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing **false visions**, and **divining lies** for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord had not spoken. The people of the land have used **oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy**; and they **wrongfully oppress the stranger** (Ezekiel 22: 3-4, 6-12, 25-29, emphasis added).

Isn’t this a rather accurate description of our present-day world? All the things listed above had caused a breach in the wall of God’s protection around the Jews because by doing them the people had rejected God. The same things are causing a breach in our day, and our wall of protection is about to come down, sooner than we think! The above chapter ends with the following words:

So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and **I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads**,” says the Lord God (Ezekiel 22: 30-31, emphasis added).

God sought a man who would “stand in the gap,” who would stand in the breach as Moses had stood. But there was no one living by God’s principles of righteousness that could intercede for the people. Therefore, God could not go to Satan and say, “I know the people are living in your jurisdiction; their actions

show it. But there is a man who is living by my principles and he is interceding for them, and you must honor that request, at least for the time being.” He looked “for a man among them” who would “make a wall”—who would honor God’s law of love, “and stand” in the breach, in the gap of the wall of protection, “on behalf of the land” that it should not be *given over* to the Destroyer.

When God says that He has “recompensed their deeds on their own heads,” He is not saying that He is punishing them for being evil. After all, God is a forgiving God, a God of grace. What He is saying is that, in view of all we have studied, He is going to have to let them go. He will have to *hand them over, deliver* them to the Destroyer, because by their actions they have shown that they have chosen the kingdom of the Destroyer over the kingdom of God.

Intercession was the theme of the discussion that took place between Abraham and Jesus under the terebinth trees of Mamre:

And the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? And the Lord said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether **according to the outcry against it that has come to Me**; and if not, I will know.” Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, “**Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**” So the Lord said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.” Then Abraham answered and said, “**Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?**” So He said, “If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it.” And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “**Suppose there should be forty found there?**” So He said, “I will not do it for the sake of forty.” Then he said, “**Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?**” So He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.” And he said, “**Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?**” So He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty.” Then he said, “**Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?**” And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.” So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place (Genesis 18: 17-18, 20-33, emphasis added).

Abraham was an intercessor for Sodom and Gomorrah. What about us: is there someone interceding for the world in our days? What do the Scriptures say? Do we have messengers, like Stephen, who are taking the truth to the people, thus giving them a chance to choose between the Creator and the Destroyer?

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, **“Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”** And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed (Revelation 7: 1-4).

God is holding Satan at bay for the time being. He says: “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” When God’s messengers, those that have received the testimony of Jesus and His law of *agape* love, are sealed, they will share the eternal gospel spoken of in Revelation chapter fourteen, verse six. The world will then have a chance to hear the good news about God’s eternal character of *agape* love. But if the world rejects the eternal gospel, then its wall of protection will fall without a doubt.

Destruction will come in speedily, like a sudden flood. Isaiah explains the speed with which the removal of this metaphoric wall of protection brings in destruction:

Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel:
“Because you despise this word,
And trust in oppression and perversity,
 And rely on them,
 Therefore this **iniquity shall be to you**
Like a breach ready to fall,
A bulge in a high wall,
Whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant
 (Isaiah 30: 12-14, emphasis added).

Another passage highlights God’s loving concern and care for the human race, which is expressed through His wall of protection, which He erects to protect us “continually:”

Can a woman forget her nursing child,
 And not have compassion on the son of her womb?
 Surely they may forget,
 Yet I will not forget you.
 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
Your walls are continually before Me.
 Your sons shall make haste;
 Your destroyers and those who laid you waste
 Shall go away from you (Isaiah 49: 15-16, emphasis added)

God also sends “watchmen” on the walls, to bring the truth about Him

to the people, to keep them in the ways of the Lord so that they may be protected from the enemy:

I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;

They shall never hold their peace day or night.

You who make mention of the Lord, **do not keep silent,**

And give Him no rest till He establishes

And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isaiah 62: 6-7, emphasis added).

So then, what really did happen at Perazim? For years, the Philistines were given the light of the gospel. They had ample light and opportunity to join the ranks of God. But they persistently rejected it, and by rising up against God's people, they finally rejected Him.

By going to war against David, the anointed of God, the Philistines sealed their rejection of the gospel and made a breach in God's wall of protection. They were left wide open—as the Egyptians had been when they refused to grant *freedom* to God's people. That put them in Satan's jurisdiction and made them vulnerable to Satan's attacks. By going to war against God's people, they rejected God, and so their probation came to a close. This was not because God closed the door on them. They closed it themselves. Their iniquity had filled to the top, meaning that they had fully accepted Satan's principle of **iniquity** and rejected God's principle of **righteousness**.

Then the Lord *arose* as a *sign* that His intercession for them had come to an end, and as a result, their period of probation had closed. This proved that they had sealed themselves in their rejection of God's principles. And so, as the rejectors of His grace set themselves up to persecute His followers, He also rose to *sustain* His persecuted people.

God had sent all the light they needed in order to make a decision for the God of life, but they chose the god of death and his principles of death. The Lord granted their freedom and at the same time, He moved to protect His own people.

The metaphoric *city* of the Philistines was left wide open to Satan's attack through the "breach in the wall" and the harsh master they had chosen came in like a flood to punish them swiftly. God gave them up, handed them over, and Satan destroyed them "like a breakthrough of water," suddenly, in an instant.

Ironically, David was used by Satan to destroy the enemy, as were many others who were in God's service in the Old Testament. Moses had killed an Egyptian thinking that God would deliver the people from Pharaoh by using destructive methods such as murder. Joshua destroyed a multitude of people once he came into the promised land. Elijah killed four hundred and fifty priests of Baal.

But David could not build God's temple because he had too much blood on his hands. And "Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but

Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end (Hebrews 3:5-6). Moses was faithful to all the truth he had. He viewed himself as a servant, serving a God whom he saw as a violent master. But Jesus saw Himself as a Son, serving a nonviolent God who was a Father, an *abba*, a “daddy.”

And of Joshua, Paul says that he was not the giver of truth, because Joshua could not give us the truth that brings “rest” unto our souls. In the Book of Hebrews Paul wrote that “if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day” (Hebrews 4: 8).

In other words, if Joshua had given us the complete truth about God, then God would not have mentioned that there was another day coming in which we would “rest” from our works of Good and Evil. Joshua was a sinful, fallen human being who was only a *type* of Jesus, the One who would fully and truly bring us into the *antitypical* Promised Land, which is that “new heavens and a new earth in which *righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3: 13, emphasis added).

David, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, these were all *types* who were motivated by *partial* knowledge. They did not have the full knowledge of God’s character. Only Jesus can give us the true rest, because only He can give us the true knowledge of God’s character of non-violence. David, Moses, Joshua, and Elijah were the *templates*—we who have the knowledge of the Father that Jesus revealed now must fulfill the role of the *antitypes*. The responsibility rests on our shoulders “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10: 11).

When Peter wanted to erect three tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration honoring Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, God immediately interrupted him and said: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him! (Matthew 17: 5).”

God was saying to Peter: “Hear Jesus because only Jesus knows My character of *agape* love. Only He really knows that I’m a loving Father and not a harsh master. Only He really knows that there is no mixture of Good and Evil in My character. Hear His testimony of who I am, and forget Moses’ and Elijah’s testimony in this regard. They did live up to the light they had, and they were indeed types. But they were sinful, fallen human beings, and many of the things they did were not in harmony with My character of *agape* love; they did them in ignorance. But now you have My Son. Hear Him. You are no longer in ignorance.”

The destruction of the Philistines at Perazim came like “a bulge in a high wall whose breaking comes suddenly,” like a gush of waters rushing through a break in a dam. It happened in an *instant*.

The same fate awaits any of us who reject the only true God of *agape* love in our days. Today is the day of salvation. God is calling us to choose Him

and His ways of *agape* love, to choose salvation and not destruction:

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION, IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TESTED ME, TRIED ME, AND SAW MY WORKS FORTY YEARS. THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THAT GENERATION, AND SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND **THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN MY WAYS.**’ SO I SWORE IN MY WRATH, ‘**THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.**’ “ **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;** but exhort one another daily, while it is called “TODAY,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3: 7-13, emphasis added).

We must beware lest we go astray in our hearts in not knowing God’s ways. What are His ways? There is only one true place where we can see His ways without any fear of being deceived: Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only true representation of God’s ways.

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” Beware lest you do not believe in the God that is only life, “the living God.” Because if we depart from this living God, who is the only true God, then He will have to hand us over to the god of this world who is eagerly waiting to have us as a subject of his kingdom. It is not God whom we must fear. What we must fear is *exchanging Him for the ruler of this world.*



18

THE VALLEY OF GIBEON

For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the **Valley of Gibeon**—that He may do His work, His awesome [STRANGE - KJV] work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual [STRANGE - KJV] act (Isaiah 28: 21, emphasis added).

We have studied the words, terms, and events surrounding the words “rise up” “anger” and “Perazim.” Now we must find out what happened at Gibeon, because the Lord also rose up at Gibeon, according to Isaiah 28: 21. This episode of biblical history is found in the Book of Joshua, chapter ten, verses one to fourteen. But before we read the pertinent passages we will provide a little background on the protagonists involved in this drama.

Adonizedec was an Amorite king (Amorite is the same as Canaanite). The word Amorite means “sayer” (Brown-Driver-Briggs, BDB), “in the sense of publicity, that is, prominence; thus a mountaineer” (Strong’s Concordance). The Amorites dwelled in the mountainous regions of Judah, beyond the Jordan.

Adonizedec was the king of Jerusalem before Joshua led Israel to conquer that city. Joshua and his men had been winning the neighboring lands step by step. They had taken the cities of Jericho and Ai, which were mighty cities. And the men of Gibeon—also a great and mighty city—out of fear, had made peace with Israel, although through deception and cunning. Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem, watched all this. Fearing they would be the next in line to be destroyed, and refusing to make peace as Gibeon had done, he summoned his neighbors—four Amorite kings—to join forces and create an alliance against the city of Gibeon, which was Joshua’s ally. This is where we pick up the thread of the story:

Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it. And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua

to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee. Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. And the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword (Joshua 10: 5-14, emphasis added).

There are two words we need to look at in this passage: they are “delivered” and “discomfit.” “Delivered,” which in Hebrew is *nâthan*, means “to be given, to be delivered, to be given forth” (Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon). Notice how this word is also used elsewhere:

Blessed is he who considers the poor; The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies (Psalm 41: 1-2, emphasis added).

Those who “consider the poor” will not be “delivered,” that is *nâthan*, given over “to the will of his enemies.” God will “deliver” him—this is another word, *mâlat*, meaning to escape, slip away, release or rescue—in time of trouble.

God “delivered” (*nâthan*) the Amorite kings to the will of their enemies. Who were their enemies? We will soon see who it was that really destroyed them.

Note another passage where the same word “delivered” (*nâthan*) is used:

Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God,
 And did not keep His testimonies,
 But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers;
 They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
 For they provoked Him to anger with their high places,
 And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.
 When God heard this, He was furious,
 And greatly abhorred Israel,
 So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
 The tent He had placed among men,
And delivered His strength into captivity,
 And His glory into the enemy’s hand.
 He also gave His people over to the sword,
 And was furious with His inheritance.
 The fire consumed their young men,
 And their maidens were not given in marriage.
 Their priests fell by the sword,
 And their widows made no lamentation

(Psalm 78: 56-74, emphasis added).

God “delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand.” Who were God’s “strength” and His “glory?” They were “His people,” whom He also gave “over to the sword.”

In the next example He gives “them into the hand of the Gentiles”:

Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people,
 So that He abhorred His own inheritance.
And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles,
And those who hated them ruled over them.
 Their enemies also oppressed them,
 And they were brought into subjection under their hand.
 Many times He delivered them;
 But they rebelled in their counsel,
 And were brought low for their iniquity
 (Psalm 106: 40-43, emphasis added).

God gave His people into the hand of the Gentiles, “those who hated them and ruled over them.” Under them, God’s people were “oppressed,” and “brought into subjection.” Why did God “deliver” them into the hands of their enemies? Earlier in Psalm one hundred and six we read why:

They did not destroy the peoples [SEE CHAPTER EIGHTEEN],
Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them,
But they mingled with the Gentiles
And learned their works;
They served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.
They even sacrificed their sons
And their daughters to demons,
And shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
 And the land was polluted with blood.
 Thus they were defiled by their own works,
 And played the harlot by their own deeds
 (Psalm 106: 34-39, emphasis added).

Isaiah also used this word *nathan* in the same context:

Come near, you nations, to hear;
 And heed, you people!
 Let the earth hear, and all that is in it,
 The world and all things that come forth from it.
 For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations,
 And His fury against all their armies;
He has utterly destroyed them,

He has given them over to the slaughter

(Isaiah 34: 1-2, emphasis added).

In the following passage, Rabshakeh, the Assyrian, is taunting the Israelites, and he uses the word *nâthan* in the same way:

Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be **given into the hand of the king of Assyria.**"(Isaiah 36: 13-15, emphasis added).

Jeremiah too, used *nâthan* in the same way:

The wise men are ashamed,
They are dismayed and taken.
Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord;
So what wisdom do they have?
Therefore I will give their wives to others,
And their fields to those who will inherit them;
Because from the least even to the greatest
Everyone is given to covetousness;
From the prophet even to the priest
Everyone deals falsely (Jeremiah 8: 9-10, emphasis added)

Is it logical to think that God would literally give someone's wife to another man? Of course not, that is absolutely not how God acts! What this is saying is that because the people had rejected "the word of the Lord," they would be given over to what they had chosen, they would lack wisdom and be violent to such an extent that men would be taking other men's wives.

In the next passage, God shows how hard it is for Him to give up on someone whom He loves dearly:

I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage;
I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies
(Jeremiah 12: 7, emphasis added).

The last example we will give is taken from Micah, where God was telling His people that He was going to give them up until the Messiah would come. This is what this verse is stating:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."

Therefore He shall give them up,
 Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth;
 Then the remnant of His brethren
 Shall return to the children of Israel
 (Micah 5: 2-3, emphasis added).

What this verse foretold is in fact what took place. Not because God wanted it to be that way, but because the people had gone so far away from Him that they would not listen to anything He tried to tell them anymore. Thus, from Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, to the first Book of the New Testament, Matthew, when Mary gives birth to Jesus, there is a gap of roughly four hundred years in which there were no prophets in Israel.

The next word we want to study is the word “discomfit.” In Hebrew this word is *hāmam*, and Strongs’ Concordance defines as “properly to put in commotion; by implication to disturb, drive, destroy: break, consume, crush, destroy, discomfit, trouble, vex.” And the Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon says it means to “put in motion...to impel, to drive...to disturb, to put in commotion, to put to flight...to destroy utterly, to make extinct.” The word *hāmam* appears thirteen times in the Old Testament:

Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He **troubled** the army of the Egyptians (Exodus 14: 24, emphasis added).

“I will send My fear before you, I will cause **confusion** (KJV SAYS “DESTROY ALL THE PEOPLE”) among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you (Exodus: 23: 27, emphasis added).

For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to **destroy** them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed (Deuteronomy 2: 15, emphasis added).

So the LORD **routed** (DISCOMFITTED, KJV) them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah (Joshua 10: 10, emphasis added).

And the LORD **routed** (DISCOMFITTED, KJV) Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot (Judges 4: 15, emphasis added).

Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, **and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel** (1 Samuel 7: 10, emphasis added).

Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out

to meet Asa, and said to him: “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, **but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands**. So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity (2 Chronicles 15: 1-6, emphasis added).

So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to **consume** them and destroy them (Esther 9: 23-24, emphasis added).

The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. **He sent out His arrows and scattered** [DISCOMFITED, KJV]**the foe** (Psalm 18: 13-14, emphasis added).

Bow down Your heavens, O Lord, and come down;
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
Flash forth lightning and scatter them;
Shoot out Your arrows and **destroy** them.
Stretch out Your hand from above;
Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters,
From the hand of foreigners,
Whose mouth speaks lying words,
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood
(Psalm 144: 5-8, emphasis added).

With a new understanding of what these two words mean, the picture we begin to see is that the sudden arrival of Joshua and his army took Adonizec’s five-king alliance by complete surprise. They became utterly confused. But it was not only Joshua’s unexpected appearance that caused such a turmoil in the enemy camp. God had delivered them, He had given them up, handed them over to their true leader, Satan. The moment that happened, they were “discomfited.” They were filled with such fear, terror, and horror that they lost their reason. They no longer acted in unison as an army, but everyone’s thoughts became focused only on saving themselves, rather than fighting together as a unit. What happened next is that they found the only route of escape, and they ran the way that goes up, toward Bethhoron.

Here we must ask the question again: who caused such terror in them? Was it God? Or was it Satan? Can fear come from God? Notice again the passage from 2 Timothy:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1: 7).

God is the same, always; He does not change. God does use fear as a weapon. Again, we urge the reader to take a look at that extended study on fear in our second book, *God on Trial: Have We Been Lied To? Is God a Killer?*

What happened next is that as Adonizec and his allies were coming down the mountain toward Bethhoron, “that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”

Hailstorms, great stones from heaven, lightning bolts. At this point these words should begin to ring a bell, especially in those who are knowledgeable of Greek mythology. Take for instance the mythological god Zeus: he was the god of the sky, the lord of the rain. He was the Greek counterpart of Baal, who was the god of the Amorites. The following is a typical depiction of Zeus:

...**his weapon was a thunderbolt** which he hurled at those who displeased or defied him, especially liars and oath breakers...ruler of the sky and earth, the god of all natural phenomena on the sky, the ruler of the state, the father of gods and men, and **he could create all natural phenomena related to the air and the sky, such as storms, tempests, and intense darkness**...As the father of men, he took a paternal interest in the actions and well-being of mortals. He watched over them with tender solicitude, rewarding truth, charity, and fairness, while severely punishing perjury and cruelty. Even the poorest and most forlorn wanderer could find a powerful advocate in this god, for he, as a wise and merciful paternal figure, demanded that the wealthy inhabitants of the earth be attentive to the needs of their less fortunate fellow citizens (<http://www.greek-mythology.com/Olympians/Zeus/zeus.html>)

Zeus has a *confusing* character. He appears to be concerned with human beings, especially the less fortunate. He seems to be paternal. He seems to reward “truth, charity, and fairness.” But he also severely punishes “perjury and cruelty.” “His weapon was a thunderbolt which he hurled at those who displease or defied him, especially liars and oath breakers.” Zeus is a god of reward and punishment, a god of Good and Evil. He will reward some and punish others as he sees fit.

Those who worship the gods give themselves over to the cruel justice of this capricious ruler. This is why God warned the people to not bow down to the gods around them. Because if they chose to follow this god, then God, the true God of agape love, would have to honor their choice and according to the righteousness revealed from heaven, He would have to give them up to their Destroyer. God would have to remove His restraint from this vicious demon, and the people would be left wide open to the demon’s destructive whims.

The International Bible Encyclopedia connects Baal with Zeus. There is no difference between them; they are just different names, in different times and places, for the same demon:

The Phoenician writer Sanchuniathon (Philo Byblius, Fragmenta II) accord-

ingly says that the children of the first generation of mankind “in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven toward the sun; for they regarded him as the sole Lord of heaven, and called him Beel-samen, which means ‘Lord of Heaven’ in the Phoenician language and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek.” Baal-Shemaim had a temple at Umm el-Awamid between Acre and Tyre, and his name is found in inscriptions from the Phoenician colonies of Sardinia and Carthage (The International Bible Encyclopedia: <http://biblehub.com/topical/b/baal.htm>, emphasis added).

In the book of Job we can see this god at work very clearly. He can send fire from heaven, can send great winds, instill in people his destructive ways and so they end up destroying each other, and bring disease and distress upon human beings. Job’s wounds are a testimony to how Satan is able to afflict the human body.

The International Bible Encyclopedia confirms Baal’s duality of Good and Evil:

As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive (The International Bible Encyclopedia: <http://biblehub.com/topical/b/baal.htm>).

Once God let go of them, the Amorites suffered the wrath of Satan. God had held back the Destroyer from the Amorites for four hundred years. Abram had seen their fate in a dream:

Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, **and they will afflict them four hundred years**. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. **But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete**” (Genesis 15: 12-16, emphasis added).

“The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” Here is that metaphor of the cup full of iniquity—and iniquity is that reward and punishment principle that filled Lucifer’s heart in the beginning of his rebellion against God’s unconditional love. Once this cup was full, those in question would be completely imbued with Satan’s principle of iniquity—the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They were “filled with unrighteousness” (Romans 1:29), and just like the antediluvians, “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

The Amorites had rejected the light God had shone on them for four hundred years. But it was only when they organized themselves to oppose and destroy the people of God that their cup of iniquity was really full; that

is when God finally gave them up.

We see here the same mechanism we saw earlier. Like the Philistines, the Amorites persecuted or went to war against God's people. By doing so they filled their cup of iniquity and sealed their rejection of the gospel. Then the Lord knew that they had gone beyond the point of no return, and Satan claimed jurisdiction over them. Then God arose to sustain His people while Satan came in like a flood into the enemy camp to utterly discomfit, terrorize, and destroy. In fact, Satan had been waiting for this moment for four hundred years! When God's restraint was finally removed, Satan sent great pieces of hail from heaven, and the biblical record says that more died by the hail than by the sword of Joshua's army.



19

UTTERLY DESTROY THEM

At this point we find it necessary to tackle the passage from Psalm one hundred and six, in which God appears to have clearly given a command to His people to destroy the pagan peoples surrounding them. We will provide the passage in question one more time:

They [ISRAEL] did not destroy the peoples,
Concerning whom the Lord had commanded them,
 But they mingled with the Gentiles
 And learned their works;
 They served their idols,
 Which became a snare to them.
 They even sacrificed their sons
 And their daughters to demons,
 And shed innocent blood,
 The blood of their sons and daughters,
 Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
 And the land was polluted with blood.
 Thus they were defiled by their own works,
 And played the harlot by their own deeds.
 Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people,
 So that He abhorred His own inheritance
 (Psalm 106: 34-40, emphasis added).

The Psalmist writes that when Israel crossed the Jordan to take over the Promised Land, they “did not destroy the peoples concerning whom the Lord had commanded them.” The “peoples” mentioned here were pagan peoples; they were worshipping the gods.

In order to understand this passage, we need to ask ourselves a few questions: when had God given the first command to the children of Israel to destroy the gods-worshipping-peoples of the land? What were the exact words used in that command? Do the subsequent uses of that command align themselves with God’s initial intent He had when He first gave the command? Where do we find

the first instance of this command which is outlined in this Psalm?

The first mention of this command is found in Exodus chapter twenty-three. Notice what God had said:

For My Angel will go before you and bring you into the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and **I will cut them off**. You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars. “So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. “I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land. And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you” (Exodus 23: 23-33, emphasis added).

Even at first glance this passage is very enlightening. Already some of the language used here has become familiar to us and we can make a safe bet that there is much more behind these words than meets the eye.

Take the words “I will cut them off,” for instance. What did God mean when He said that He would “cut them off?” In Hebrew, “cut them off” is not a phrase but one single word, the word *kāhad*. TWOT defines *kāhad* like this:

972 (kad) kick, conceal, cut off, cut down, make desolate. This verb, which appears in the Nilhal, Piel, and Hiphil, occurs thirty-two times in the Old Testament. It means to keep something back, to refuse to make it known. Since something which is unknown has no independent existence, the verb also denotes non-existence or effacement (TWOT p. 436).

The *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* helps us understand this word a bit better. It says that *kāhad* means to “deny, to disown.” God was going to disown these people; He was going to let them go from His kingdom because they were no longer in His jurisdiction. They had chosen to pass onto the jurisdiction of the gods. Therefore, God’s command to His people regarding them was:

You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars (Exodus 23: 24).

It is easy for us to do a surface reading of this command and interpret it to mean that God wanted the Israelites to utterly kill every single one of the

Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. But is this what the text is saying? Is this what God was saying?

Let us take a look at some of these words. Take the words “utterly overthrow.” These two English words are in effect one single Hebrew word, *hâras*, which is written twice. Repeating a word is the Hebrew way of making a superlative, therefore *hâras hâras* is translated as “utterly destroy.” *Hâras* is a primitive root, which means:

beat down, break, break down, break through, destroy, overthrow, pluck down, pull down, throw down, ruined, destroyer, utterly (TWOT, p. 224).

It sounds quite obvious that what God meant was for the Israelites to utterly destroy and kill their pagan neighbors. But does it really? Notice what TWOT further says about this word:

this root means to destroy by tearing down, e.g. city walls, houses, and fortresses... Objects of destruction included walls (Ezk 13:14), foundations (Ezk 30:4), barns (Joel 1:17), cities (II Kgs 3:25; I Chr 20:1), either by God (Lam 2:2; Ex 15:7), or men (I Chr 20:1)” (TWOT, p. 224).

Did you notice that *hâras* is not used in the context of destroying or killing *people*? When God was telling His people that they were supposed to “utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars,” He was talking about destroying their “pillars,” their carved idols—not killing the people themselves!

That this is the case is apparent by the rest of God’s command to the people in Exodus twenty-three, because further down we read that God was going to “cause confusion among all the people.” You cannot cause confusion among those that are already dead.

The “confusion” mentioned by God is related to the phrase that precedes it:

I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make your enemies turn their backs on you (Exodus 23: 27).

What did God mean when He said that He would send His “fear” before them? The Hebrew word for “fear” used here is *’êymâh ’êmâh*, and it means:

fright; concretely an idol (as a bugbear): - dread. fear, horror, idol, terrible, terror (Strong’s Concordance).

This is real fear God is talking about here; it is horror, terror, absolute heart-stopping abject fear. Then, in the New King James Translation, He says that He would “cause confusion among the people.” But if you read the King James Version you will notice that its translators chose to say that God was going to “destroy” instead of “confuse” the people. But the Hebrew word for “destroy” used here is that word *hâmam again*, which as we saw earlier, also can

mean “confusion” as well as “discomfit.” TWOT describes *hâmam* like this:

The basic meaning of this word seems to be “to give attention to” in the negative sense, that is, “harass,” “trouble,” often with the purpose of creating panic. This verb is used thirteen times. Ten times God is the subject. Of these, five times the object is Israel’s enemy whom God strikes with panic for their sake. (See I Sam 7:10; Ex 14:24; Ex 23:27; Josh 4:15; and also II Chr 15:6 with a more general subject.) Thus it denotes an important aspect of holy war (TWOT, p. 220).

This is an extremely important word which we need to understand, because as TWOT explains, this word “denotes an important aspect of holy war.” *Hâmam* is always used in the context of “the wrath of God.” Having said as much, it is true that one of the definitions of *hâmam* is also “destroy.” But it is the “confusion,” the fear, and the unrepressed satanic fury and violence that destroys, as we saw in the preceding chapter. Strong’s says that the word “fear”—*êymâh*—means “fright; concrete, an idol (as a bugbear): dread, fear, horror, idol, terrible, terror.” And *êymâh* related to another word, *âyôm*, because they share an unused root, *’ym*, “meaning to frighten, frightful, terrible” (Strong’s Concordance). *Âyôm* “connotes the awesome dread inspired by a mighty army” (TWOT, p.37). So we see that God was going to do something that would cause these people to be scared out of their wits, and we will soon see which army this is referring to.

What we are seeing here is exactly the same thing that happened in the valley of Gibeon, when the Amorites and their allies stood up to war against the city of Gibeon and God’s people. God was doing something there that was going to cause such fear that they would go into a terrible panic, terrible confusion, utter panic and fear.

This is confirmed by the next phrase: “and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.” What does this mean? Gesenius explains that turning their backs means that they would be put to flight. They would run away in utter fear. And this is exactly what happened, as we saw.

Thus, we see that what was going to happen is that the moment God gave Satan and his armies permission to take over, the moment God handed them over to Satan and gave them up, Satan would imbue them with such fear that they would lose their sanity and not only flee for their lives but destroy each other as well. This is the result of leaving God in order to follow the gods.

What about those *hornets*? What’s the meaning of that? Was God going to send an army of stinging bees to harass and hurt those pagans? It sure sounds like it, doesn’t it? But what a sadistic picture of God this would give us! Can we afford to take this at face value without researching to see what it really means? Are we willing to settle for a tyrannical picture of God without at least looking for a better answer?

“And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.”

Gesenius states that some have doubted this is to be taken literally, but that rather, that it is a metaphor “designating ills and calamities of various kinds.” This is absolutely in line with the curses of Deuteronomy twenty-eight where God outlined everything that can happen to human beings when they forsake Him and His counsels of life. When we don’t follow the Creator’s *manual*, really bad things begin to happen to us and those around us! And this is exactly what happened to the nations who did not choose to follow God’s life-giving instructions. In Joshua 24: 12 the hornets are mentioned again as God’s method of deliverance:

I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow (Joshua 24: 12, emphasis added).

Here we see how clearly God is pointing out that it would take a series of causes and effects to free up the land for the Israelites to take possession. They were not meant to use their swords and bows! And yet, in Joshua chapter ten we see Joshua using the sword and utterly killing all the people around him. This was absolutely not God’s will, because He had said in Exodus twenty-three:

I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land (Exodus 23: 29-30).

God’s command to “utterly destroy” the peoples of the land was *not a command to utterly kill them*. God Himself, in His own way—in the way of righteousness—was going to give His people the Promised Land. He did not want the peoples of the land massacred. In fact, He wasn’t even going to drive them out in one year. It would be little by little that this would happen, in God’s own way of allowing them freedom to distance themselves from Him. And as they did so they would begin to die out. God was going to wait for things to take on their natural course, even though to see them destroy themselves must have been a painful thing.

God, who is love—unconditional love—loved those Amorites and Hittites and Perizzites and the Canaanites and Hivites and Jebusites. Yes, God loved them as much as He loves you and me! But they didn’t love God. Therefore, they didn’t listen to God’s counsels, instructions, warnings and as a result they fell prey to what happens when we spurn God’s wisdom. The same can happen to you and me because God’s kingdom is absolute and impartial. We have two ways to choose from: the way of life and the way of death. If we don’t

choose the way of life, we automatically default to the way of death.

As the people of the land became more and more entrenched in their evil and wicked ways, they entered more and more into Satan's jurisdiction—the way of death. And as they did so, God became a stranger to them. As a consequence, Satan was given more and more freedom to do his destructive work upon them, and they perished through disease, pestilence and violence. This is what the “hornets” were meant to represent.

Up to now, we have seen God describe what was going to happen to the people that spurned His love and wisdom. But the real message He wanted to convey, the most important message He wanted His covenant-keeping people to understand was this:

“You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

God did not want His people to follow in the same path as these nations. He was trying to teach them and us as well, that when we ally ourselves with Satan, the result is destruction. The people of course, didn't heed God's warnings. Over and over they assimilated the pagan religions that surrounded them. And so they reaped the consequences as we have already seen.



20

DO HIS WORK, HIS AWESOME
WORK, AND HIS UNUSUAL ACT

For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that **He may do His work, His awesome [STRANGE - KJV] work**, and bring to pass His act, His **unusual [STRANGE - KJV] act** (Isaiah 28: 21, emphasis added).

DO HIS WORK

The first words we are going to examine here are the words “do” and “work.” As it just so happens, these two words are the same word in Hebrew, *mā’āseh*. “The Lord will rise as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may **do His work**.” What “work” is this? If we look at Strong’s definition of this Hebrew word, we will see that it means “an action (good or bad); generally, a transaction” (Strong’s concordance). God is going to have to act, and His action happens to be a “transaction.” What is this “transaction” that God is putting into motion here? We will see what this is as we continue examining the words in this sentence.

HIS AWESOME WORK

When we read the words “awesome” or “strange act,” we automatically interpret this to mean *unusual* or *odd*. And those who believe God is the punisher of sinners believe this “strange work” means God will rise up to finally destroy them once and for all. But this interpretation makes no sense if God has been destroying sinners from the very inception of sin. If that is the case as many affirm, then there is nothing strange about God destroying sinners. Furthermore, this is not what this Hebrew word “strange” here

means. The Hebrew word is *zûwr*, which means:

to turn aside (especially for lodging); hence to be a foreigner, strange, profane; specifically (active participle) to commit adultery: - (come from) another (man, place), fanner, go away, (e-) strange (-r, thing, woman) (Strong's Concordance).

Gesenius says that *zûwr* means "to depart." And TWOT has the following entry for *zûwr*:

KB gives the basic meaning as "turn aside." BDB cites the similar but apparently not related root *sr* that has this meaning.

Apart from its participial use, the word appears only four times in Qal, twice in Niphal, and once in Hophal. Typical is Job 19:13, where Job states that his former friends have become "estranged" from him. The Niphals and Hophals are passive.

zûr is principally used in the participial form, *zr*, appearing sixty-nine times. It carries the force of a noun, and is so listed by KB. It is used for some action strange to the law (Lev 10:1), and for one who is a stranger to another household (Deut 25:5), to another person (Prov 14:10), and to another land (Hos 7:9). The basic thought is of non-acquaintance or non-relatedness. The feminine form, "The Strange Woman," often in Prov is the adulteress (TWOT, p. 238).

God's Strange Act is not an act of *killing* or *destroying*. His Strange Act is in essence to depart, to turn aside, to go away, to *become a stranger*, a *non-acquaintance* to those who absolutely reject Him and His principles of *agape* love. It is true, however, that God's turning aside does cause total panic and destruction, but this is so because as God departs there is a "transaction" taking place. As God leaves, Satan comes in to take possession of his subjects. And as he does, the hearts of those who have given themselves over to him are filled with utter terror, dread, abject fear, and panic. But we need to understand that giving those who reject Him over to Satan is not something God does in order to *punish* them. He does it in order to *respect their freedom of choice*.

God departs only when He absolutely has to, only when He absolutely is no longer wanted. And He does so in deep pain, as a parent having to witness a child being killed by an intruder.

We can see His broken heart in a similar situation, as we look at Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, knowing that by rejecting Him, the Jews had sealed their fate at the hands of the Destroyer:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but **you were not willing!** See! **Your house is left to you desolate;** for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD' " (Matthew 23: 37-39, emphasis added).

Jesus wanted to protect His chosen people as a hen protects her little

chicks under her wings. Did He want to protect them from Himself? Absolutely not! That would make no sense!

The work of God is to protect us from the Destroyer. But the Jews were not *willing* to receive the words of life which Jesus had come to bring. Therefore, their “house” was going to be left “desolate” because the glory of God was about to depart from it. A parallel passage in the Book of Luke describes *when* that was going to happen to the city that had rejected the Savior. Jesus was giving them a sign about *when* God was going to depart, *when* it would become “desolate:”

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. **For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.** But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21: 20-24, emphasis added).

Jerusalem would be surrounded by “armies” and this was a sign that its “desolation” was near. Jesus said these would be the days of “vengeance.” What did He mean by this? Did He mean that this would be God’s vengeance?

The word “vengeance” is the word *ekdikēsis* which means “vindication, retribution, revenge, vengeance, punishment” (Strong’s Concordance). Again we ask, whose “vindication, retribution, revenge, vengeance or punishment” was this? Was this punishment coming from the God of *agape* love, or from the god of reward and punishment?

God’s Strange Act is to “turn aside,” “to depart” from those who persecute and go to war with His people. His turning aside happens only then—because then they show that they have filled their cup of iniquity. Only by persecuting the true followers of Jesus do they seal their rejection of the gospel.

Today, many are getting a taste of the wrath of God already. They are panic stricken; they have pushed God so far away that they are being harassed by demons. God is calling all of us to come back to the only safe haven available to us. Why would we be destroyed when we have such a protector as God?

My soul, wait silently for God alone,
 For my expectation is from Him.
 He only is my rock and my salvation;
 He is my defense;
 I shall not be moved.
 In God is my salvation and my glory;
 The rock of my strength,
 And my refuge, is in God.
 Trust in Him at all times, you people;
 Pour out your heart before Him;

God is a refuge for us. Selah (Psalm 62: 5-8)

God wants to protect us from Satan. We cannot remain safe one moment without His protective care:

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5: 9).

HIS UNUSUAL ACT

As we finish our word study of Isaiah twenty-eight verse twenty-one, we will see what the second word “strange,” translated as “unusual” in the New King James Bible, means. This word is not the same word as the previous word for “strange” which was *zûwr*. Here the word for “strange” is the Hebrew word *nokrîy*. Strong’s defines *nokrîy* as this:

strange, in a variety of degrees and applications (foreign, non-relative, adulterous, different, wonderful): — alien, foreigner, outlandish, strange (-r, woman).” (Strong’s Concordance)

TWOT has the following entry for this word:

Foreign, strange, alien; often as a noun, “foreigner,” “stranger.” This term occurs over forty times and has a variety of uses... *nokrî* is normally translated “strange” or “stranger” in the av, but “foreign” or “foreigner” in the RSV. A non-Israelite is a “foreigner” (Jud 19:12; 1 Kgs 8:41 et al.). The term applies to a “foreign land” (Ex 2:22; 18:3) and “foreign (non-Israelite) women” (1 Kgs 11:1, 8 et al.). In the book of Proverbs, “foreign (or strange) woman” (*nokrîyâ*) becomes a technical expression for a prostitute or adulteress (Prov 2:16; 5:20; 6:24 et al.). Sometimes *nokrî* carries the idea of “unknown,” “unfamiliar” (Job 19:15; Ps 69:8 [H 9]), or even “odd” or “surprising” (Isa 28:21). In modern Hebrew, *nokrî* may stand for “gentile” (TWOT, p. 580).

As we can see, the last phase of “the wrath of God” means that God becomes a “stranger” to the people whom He has to let go. They have become *foreigners* to Him, because they now belong to another jurisdiction altogether. There is nothing in common with their ways of Good and Evil and God’s ways of *agape* love. They belong to a “foreign land,” the land of the Destroyer. Here also comes the symbolism of the prostitute, a “foreign woman,” a metaphor meaning spiritual adultery.

At this point, the story of Hosea (a name which interestingly means “salvation” or “deliverer”) comes to mind. Hosea’s story is a living allegory through which God teaches us the mechanism of “the wrath of God:”

When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea:
 “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry
 And children of harlotry,

For the land has committed great harlotry
By departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1: 2, emphasis added).

Hosea took to himself Gomer, and Gomer began to have children. The first was Jezreel, which means "the Lord sows." Then Gomer gave birth to a daughter, Lo-ruhamah, which means no-mercy. Then Gomer gave birth to a son, Lo-Ammi, which means "not my people:"

Call his name Lo-Ammi,
 For **you are not My people,**
And I will not be your God (Hosea 1: 8).

Throughout the Book of Hosea, God outlines what the people have done and the whoredoms they have committed with the gods. Then He says in chapter five that He has withdrawn Himself from them:

With their flocks and herds
 They shall go to seek the Lord,
 But they will not find Him;
He has withdrawn Himself from them.
 They have dealt treacherously with the Lord,
 For they have begotten pagan children.
 Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage
 (Hosea 5: 6-7, emphasis added).

The consequence of leaving God and His law of *agape* love for the gods and their teachings is that God has to give them up:

Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment,
 Because **he willingly walked by human precept** [THE MORAL LAW OF
 GOOD AND EVIL] (Hosea 5: 11, emphasis added).

Israel has rejected the good [*AGAPE* LOVE];
 The enemy [SATAN] will pursue him
 (Hosea 8: 3, emphasis added).

They made **idols** for themselves—
 That they might be **cut off** [LET GO BY GOD]
 (Hosea 8: 4, emphasis added).

Because Ephraim has made many altars for sin,
 They have become for him altars for sinning.
 I have written for him the great things of My law [*AGAPE* LOVE],
 But they were considered a strange thing
 (Hosea 8: 11-12, emphasis added).

For Israel has forgotten his Maker,
 And has built temples;

Judah also has multiplied fortified cities;
But I will send fire upon his cities,
And it shall devour his palaces” (Hosea 8: 14).

I found Israel
Like grapes in the wilderness;
I saw your fathers
As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season.
But they went to Baal Peor [SATAN],
And **separated themselves [FROM GOD]** to that shame;
They became an abomination like the thing they loved.
As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird—
No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception!
Though they bring up their children,
Yet I will bereave them to the last man.
Yes, **woe to them when I depart [WHEN I AM FORCED TO HAND**
THEM OVER TO SATAN] from them!
Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place,
So Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer [SATAN] (Hosea 9: 10-13, emphasis added).

Who is the murderer spoken of here? Is it God? Jesus told us who “the murderer” is:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. **He was a murderer from the beginning**, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him (John 8: 44, emphasis added).

In the next verses God clearly points out that eternal law of reaping and sowing from which no one can escape. This is a law of cause and effect, and is not an arbitrary act of God:

You have plowed wickedness;
You have reaped iniquity [GOOD AND EVIL].

You have sown wickedness and therefore you will reap iniquity!

You have eaten the fruit of lies,
Because you trusted in your own way [GOOD AND EVIL],
In the multitude of your mighty men [TRUSTED IN POWER AND VIOLENCE].

Therefore **tumult shall arise among your people**,
And all your fortresses shall be plundered
As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle—
A mother dashed in pieces upon her children.
Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel,
Because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel
Shall be cut off utterly (Hosea 10: 13-15, emphasis added).

Lastly, in the next verses we hear again God’s deep pain as He addresses

His people who are about to be destroyed by the Destroyer:

How can I give you up, Ephraim?

How can I hand you over, Israel?

How can I make you like Admah?

How can I set you like Zeboiim?

My heart churns within Me;

My sympathy is stirred.

I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;

I will not again destroy Ephraim.

For I am God, and not man,

The Holy One in your midst;

And I will not come with terror (Hosea 11: 8-9, emphasis added).

The story of Hosea is a type. It is an example. But the great antitype, which all the biblical types of the past point to, is about to take place in the very near future, as we will soon see explained in the Book of Revelation.



21

THE WRATH TO COME

There is a verse in the Bible that predicts that there is yet a “wrath to come” upon our world. According to the Scriptures, this “wrath” will not be localized—for it will be *universal*. The verse in question is found in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians. He says to them:

Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from **the wrath to come** (1 Thessalonians 1: 8-10, emphasis added).

As we look at these verses some very interesting points come to mind. First, there is indeed a “wrath” that is yet “to come”—this is not only revealed in these verses, but the entire Bible speaks of it. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, here we are shown the way out, the only way of escape from this wrath that is yet to come: the way of deliverance “from the wrath to come” is Jesus, “who delivers us from the wrath to come.” The question we need to ask ourselves then is this: how exactly does Jesus deliver us “from the wrath to come”?

Just as the people asked Peter at Pentecost after his witnessing about Jesus Christ, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2: 37) We also need to ask the same question: what shall we do to be saved? How can we allow Jesus to deliver us from “the wrath to come?” Peter’s response for his time is the same response for us today:

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2: 38-39).

What is new about this? We have all heard this over and over, and most of us

have done this already. We believe in Jesus, we have been baptized, we continually repent and ask God to forgive our sins. The problem is that we have not grasped the deeper significance of these words, the deeper meaning of what Peter said.

First of all, most of us have misunderstood the word “repentance.” We have interpreted that word through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, not through the Tree of Life. The latter is the way that God wants us to understand it. The word “repentance” in the Bible does not mean *to feel sorry for our sins*. This, as we said, is an interpretation from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, because it is a form of *works*. This kind of repentance involves a *transaction* between us and God. This means that if we feel sorry enough for how bad we have been, then God will forgive us. This way of thinking says that God won’t forgive us unless we feel sorry for our sins and feel bad about ourselves.

Dear Reader, if this is true, what happens to *grace* then? What happens to *righteousness by faith*? What happens to Paul’s statement in Romans, “being justified *freely by His grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24)? Can you see the problem here?

The problem is that we have not properly understood *metanoia*—the Greek word for repentance. *Metanoia* really means “to change one’s mind” (Thayer), “to think differently or afterwards, that is, reconsider” (Strong’s Concordance). This is what *metanoia* means. Period.

However, most Bible lexicons go on to say that in addition to meaning “a change of mind,” *metanoia* also means “morally to feel compunction” (Strong’s Concordance) or “to change one’s mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins” (Thayer). In other words, to repent.

But repentance from our sins, that sorrow we feel for having done something wrong, is expressed by another Greek word, *metamelomai*, which means “to care afterwards, that is, regret: repent (self)” (Strong’s Concordance). This word is used in Matthew twenty-seven to describe Judas’ regret after betraying Jesus:

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (Matthew 27: 3).

Metanoia, however, has to do with a *paradigm shift*, an aha moment, a change of mind from a previous understanding.

So then, what did Peter mean when he said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”? We believe he meant this: allow Jesus’ gospel of good news about the Father to change your minds about who God is. Jesus taught us the true character of the Father. Allow your mind to accept the good news about God that Jesus declared! Believe that God has already forgiven you—“let

every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” *Metanoia* means to move away from Satan’s interpretation of the gospel—which is *salvation by works*—and believe Jesus’ version of it—*salvation by grace*. Salvation is a gift, an *unmerited* gift.

What Peter meant to say was, “Let everyone of you accept Jesus’ unconditional forgiveness which He freely gives to the entire world, because ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved’ (John 3: 16-17).”

Think of the paralytic that was lowered through the roof; did he ask Jesus to forgive him? Absolutely not! Jesus offered him forgiveness without a single petition for forgiveness coming out of his mouth. And what about Zaccheus? Did he ask Jesus to forgive him? Absolutely not! Jesus offered His love and forgiveness freely, before Zaccheus could even say a word. And what about the adulterous woman? Did she have to ask Him to forgive her? No! He didn’t even condemn her at all. Over and over we see Jesus accepting people unconditionally, forgiving them, without their having to ask him for pardon or even having to repent in the conventional way we have understood repentance.

It was *after* Jesus showed His unconditional love, which brought a change of mind, that sorrow for one’s sins came. It was *after* Jesus showed him grace and forgiveness that Zaccheus felt sorrow for his sins and gave back all he had stolen. It was *after* Mary Magdalene had been saved from stoning and from seven demons that she was so taken up by Jesus’ love that she gave Him everything she had of value mixed with her tears of love and thanksgiving. This is exactly what Paul tells us in Romans chapter two, verse four:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that **the goodness of God leads you to repentance** (Romans 2: 4, emphasis added)?

Once we understand this foundational good news that is revealed in Jesus’ gospel, we need to go back to Paul’s address to the Thessalonians. Paul made a very interesting statement when He said to them that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” The Greek word “turned” is *epistrephō*, which means “to revert.” What did they revert to?

We believe this means that they had reverted to the original mind that Adam had in relation to God before he ate of Satan’s lies about God, lies which were embedded in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. By giving them the truth about God, Jesus made it possible for them to revert to that original knowledge of God which Adam and Eve had in the Garden before sin entered the world. That is the true and correct knowledge of God

which Jesus is giving us even today.

How then did they turn “to God from idols to serve the living and true God?” They “turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God” exactly through what we have talked about above: they had a change of mind, a paradigm shift. They began to see God in a *new but also old way*—through what Jesus Christ was teaching them via Paul. They reverted to the original “old” way of knowing God before the fall, which is the true way. They began to see God again as He truly is: an unconditionally loving God who is non-condemning, non-violent, filled with mercy and forgiveness. A God who is our friend and not our enemy, who is our Father who is *for us*, and not a harsh judge who is *against us*.

The Thessalonians had *metanoia* in the true sense of the word. They stopped seeing God through Satan’s eyes, and began seeing Him through Jesus’ eyes. Satan’s view of God is distorted, skewed, untruthful. But Jesus’ view of God is true, correct, not skewed. Why? Because Jesus Himself is God. His witness of who God is, of His character, stands *high above all others*. His witness is above all human witness, and even above all principalities and powers in the heavenly places. It is even above the witness of angels:

For to which of the angels did He ever say:

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You”?

And again:

“I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son”?

But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

And of the angels He says:

“Who makes His angels spirits
And His ministers a flame of fire.”

But to the Son He says:

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

And:

“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.”

But to which of the angels has He ever said:

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1: 5-14, emphasis added)?

God never addressed the angels as *sons*. Rather, He told them to worship Jesus: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Angels are “ministering spirits,” ministering to us who will be “heirs of salvation.” But God addresses Jesus as God, as Lord, and reveals Him as the One who “laid the foundation of the earth” and who “created the heavens.” Jesus is the One who sits on the throne, ruling with the scepter—or law—of righteousness. All of this makes Jesus the supreme authority in revealing the truth about who God is. No one else can reveal God as Jesus can. No one has the credentials, or the ability or know-how to do so.

Jesus Himself said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14: 6). This means that no one comes to a correct knowledge of God except through Jesus.

What great news this is, because Jesus’ revelation of God is filled with pardon, forgiveness, goodness, love! His message is life-giving! Jesus gives us true hope. He gives us an expectation of much better things to come. He reveals to us a God who loves us unconditionally, who is our *abba*—daddy—a God who is non-violent, non-punitive, and non-destroying. The Creator God is the God of life, which He will give us abundantly and forever more.

In his message to the Thessalonians, Paul referred to God as the “living and true God.” Why did he use the word “living” to characterize God? Who is this “living and true God”? Is Paul using the word “living” to differentiate it from the word *dead*? Is he inferring that there is a *dead* God? Is there such a thing as a dead God? No, it makes no sense to think that Paul was differentiating between a “living and true God” and a “dead and false God.” What then is he trying to tell us by calling God the “living and true God?”

Paul is attempting to call our attention to the fact that the true God is a *God of life*—the “living God.” The true God is a God of life *only*, because the word “light” is a metaphor for *life* in the Bible, and “God is light in whom there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1: 5).

The true God is not involved with death in any way whatsoever, except to overthrow it by giving us back life. The true God is the God who gives life and is involved with life and life only. This means that the “living and true God” has nothing to do with the kingdom of darkness, which represents death.

If the God we believe in is a God who takes life, if he causes death by killing us as a punishment, then we are believing in a false god and not in the

“living and true God.” Then we are worshipping an idol, even though we may not be literally bowing down to an image. It was by believing in this truth about God which Paul revealed to the Thessalonians that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

It is the demons behind the idols that are involved with death. They are the ones that teach a message of death. Their knowledge, their wisdom, is from the Tree which causes death. They are the ones who kill and cause death. Their kingdom, symbolized by Babylon, is responsible for all death upon this earth:

And in her [BABYLON] was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth (Revelation 18: 24, emphasis added).

So then, when Paul states that there is yet another “wrath to come,” what is he saying? He is saying that there will be many that will not turn to God from idols to serve the “living and true God.” He is saying that there will be many that will reject the true knowledge of God that Jesus came to give to the world. He is saying that there will be many whom God will yet have to let go. There will be many that God will yet have to hand over, deliver to Satan, because sadly, they have chosen to remain in Satan’s death jurisdiction of works—reward and punishment, Good and Evil.



22

AVOIDING THE WRATH TO COME

What can we do to avoid the wrath that is yet to come upon this world? When will it happen? The answer to the second question will become apparent shortly, but first we will address the first: what can we do to avoid it?

We saw that Paul gives the answer to this last question in his address to the Thessalonians: it is Jesus who “delivers us” from the “wrath to come.” We can avoid “the wrath to come” only through Jesus. But how exactly does Jesus deliver us from the “wrath to come”?

The first thing we need to ask as we answer this question is this: what is the reason for “the wrath of God” in the first place? Why does God let go of us? What did Paul write in Romans chapter one?

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1: 18-23, emphasis added).

God lets go—“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven”—because we exchange Him, the “living and true God,” for Satan. We have exchanged His glory—His character—for the character of Satan, which is *in us already* since Adam’s transgression of eating from Satan’s Tree. As a result of thinking that God looks like us or the gods that teach us Satan’s ways, we become solidified in *their ways*, which many seem to believe is *godliness and righteousness*, but which are really *ungodliness and unrighteousness*. It is that simple.

If we choose to worship the devil rather than God, then God, who has

been protecting us from the Devil all along, is forced to hand us over to him. God has to play fair; He has to honor our choices, and He has to honor Satan's government, because that is how God operates. He has respected Satan's rule over this earth all along, and He will continue to do so unless we finally see the truth and choose Him again as our ruler.

Many today are still worshipping a god that looks more like the devil than the "living and true God." Yet most are doing this *unknowingly*. But the knowledge of God will increase to the point that all will know, so that all may make an informed decision. The prophet Hosea spoke how important it is to know the true God:

Hear the word of the Lord, You children of Israel, For the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:

"There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint [THE RESTRAINT IS GOD'S HOLDING THE DESTROYER BACK, IT IS GOD'S PROTECTION AGAINST SATAN'S DESTRUCTIVENESS], With bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.

"Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children (Hosea 4: 1-6, emphasis added).

So what is God's last solution to the problem of not knowing Him as we approach the end of this age? How is the knowledge of God going to be given in the last days?

In the past, God spoke through the fathers and the prophets, but in these last days He sent His own Son to deliver the message that needed to be heard. His solution today is to send yet another messenger—another message—to reveal His character yet once more. His solution is to give us one more chance to choose which God we want to serve, and therefore, which jurisdiction we want to belong to. How then does God reveal His character one more time?

God has already fully revealed His character through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "express image" of the Father. If we see Jesus, we see the Father. Jesus did nothing that His Father wouldn't do. And Jesus did everything that His Father would do. Everything Jesus did and said was in harmony and in line with the "living and true God," because Jesus is the "living and true God." In His last prayer, Jesus revealed the reason and the work He came to do down here on earth:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished the work which You have given Me to do** (John 17: 3-4, emphasis added).

Jesus came to give us a knowledge of the only true God. This was the work God gave Him to do.

I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world (John 17: 6, emphasis added).

The Greek word for “manifest,” *phaneroo*, means to “render apparent (literally or figuratively): appear, manifestly declare, (make) manifest (forth), shew (self).” Jesus came to “render apparent,” “declare,” “show” who the Father is. Later in the same chapter Jesus says:

For I have given to them the words which You have given Me (John 17: 8)

I have given them Your word (John 17: 14)

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17: 17).

O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name [CHARACTER], and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17: 25-26, emphasis added).

The Psalmist used similar language when talking about Jesus:

I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You (Psalm 22: 22).

And in the Book of Hebrews, Paul quotes the same Psalm:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

And again:

“I will put My trust in Him.”

And again:

“Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2: 12-15, emphasis added).

Jesus came to nullify Satan’s power over death, which is imposed on us through his lies about God. Through Jesus’ death, through the message of the cross, the message of God’s unconditional *agape* love for us, Jesus releases us “who through fear of death” are subject all our “lifetime to bondage” to Satan and his death jurisdiction.

If Jesus is the answer, if He is the one who will save us from “the wrath to come,” then how do we get to know Him now, today? God sent Jesus to declare to us His character of love two thousand years ago, but what is He doing for us right now? How is He going to save us from wrath *right now*?

God is giving us Jesus Christ all over again. How so? We get to know Jesus through a special work He is doing for the human race right now, as we speak. Jesus is at this very moment doing a very unique work. At this very time in the history of the world, Jesus is acting as High Priest by giving the world the “everlasting gospel.”

The “everlasting gospel” is God’s last message of mercy to the world about His true, merciful character of *agape* love. In this message there is mercy, love, forgiveness and hope. The “everlasting gospel” is God’s last attempt to save us from exchanging His character for Satan’s character—a terrible mistake which would place us in Satan’s jurisdiction, and thus leave us unprotected from the violence built into his kingdom. Here is the last message that can save us from the upcoming “wrath of God:”

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14: 6-7).

What is the “everlasting gospel?” We know that the word “gospel”—*euangelion*—means “good news.” What then is the everlasting, or eternal good news? The “everlasting good news” is the good news about someone who is everlasting or eternal. Who is eternal? Only God is eternal. Therefore, the “everlasting gospel” is the eternal good news about the eternal God.

To us this is “news,” because we have been lied to about God. We had thought that God was Good and Evil, that He had a mixed, schizoid character of love and anger, which is bad news. But Jesus came to give us the message that God is only “light” and that there is absolutely “no darkness” in Him—and this is indeed extremely good news.

So we are going to share with you what Jesus is doing right now in order to propagate the eternal good news about His Father. We read about it in Revelation chapter fourteen:

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men,

being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God (Revelation 14: 1-6).

Jesus, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)” (who takes away our wrong conception of God) is standing on Mount Zion, which is a symbol of His government of *agape* love. He has with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand human beings. We know the first question many will ask: “is this a literal or symbolic number?” But we are not going to take a stand on this one way or another. Rather, we invite the readers to come to their own conclusions.

What we can indeed say about this group of people is this: they believe in the God whom Jesus revealed because they have “His Father’s name written on their foreheads.” They don’t believe in the character of that *other father*, whom Jesus talked about to those who were seeking to kill Him:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was **a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.** When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it (John 8: 44, emphasis added).

The hundred and forty-four thousand do not have the *murderous* principle of Good and Evil in their hearts. We may think, “Well, I’m safe because I have never killed anyone.” But we cannot afford to forget how Jesus took this principle to the extreme when He said that even being angry at someone can catapult us into Satan’s domain—it can cause us to be “in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

The hundred and forty-four thousand have accepted Jesus’ witness, His testimony about the true character of the “living and true God.” They believe in a God who looks completely and entirely like Jesus—if you see the One, you see the Other.

Earlier in Revelation chapter seven, John told us more about this group called the one hundred and forty-four thousand. Here is what he says about them:

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed (Revelation 7: 1-4).

Here we learn that the one hundred and forty-four thousand come into view just before the trumpets and the final “wrath of God”—the “wrath to come” of which Paul spoke in first Thessalonians. This is the time they appear on the scene because they come into play just before God lets go of “the four winds”:

Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads (Revelation 7: 3).

The Greek word for “seal” here is the word *sphragizō*, which means “to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation (literally or figuratively); by implication to keep secret, to attest: (set a, set to) seal up, stop” (Strong’s Concordance).

What is God doing by sealing, or *stamping* the hundred and forty-four thousand? Isn’t He putting His seal on them, branding them, to mark them as His own? Isn’t this the same *seal* that He told the Israelites to put on their door posts, so that when the Destroyer came through, he could not touch them? Wasn’t the seal back then the blood of the Lamb? And wasn’t that blood symbolic of Jesus’ revelation of God’s immense love for the human race, which took Him to the cross? By putting His seal—the seal of “the living God”—on the hundred and forty-four thousand and those who hear and accept their message, God is claiming them as part of His own jurisdiction of life. There, Satan, the king of the jurisdiction of death, cannot harm or come near them.

Thus, God sends a messenger “from the east” to inform the four angels that are holding back the “winds” of destruction—four angels from each corner of the earth, representing a worldwide destruction that is about to be unleashed upon the earth—to wait until he has “sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” The “forehead” points to their thinking, to their understanding of God’s character. It represents that *metanoia* we talked about, that *paradigm shift* about God’s character, *being born again*, which Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus.

The winds represent destruction, because once they are let go, they will “harm the earth, the sea, or the trees.” Who are the angels that are holding back the winds of destruction? They are messengers who, all around the world, are giving the eternal gospel, the everlasting good news, which is a message about the “living and true God.” Their message is what holds back the satanic forces of evil from completely destroying the earth.

The one hundred and forty-four thousand are “sealed” with the “seal of the living God.” They are sealed with the knowledge that God is a God of life, not of death. They are “servants” of God, which means that they are willing to give their own lives for the cause of clearing up God’s reputation, just as Jesus, the “righteous Servant” of God, gave His life and bore our iniquities for the same cause:

By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53: 11).

Something else we know about the hundred and forty-four thousand is that they are “redeemed from the earth.” What does it mean that they

are “redeemed from the earth?” The word “redeemed” in Greek is *agorazō*, which means “to buy,” “to purchase.”

The human race was taken captive by Satan the moment Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Ever since then, Satan has been teaching us his Good and Evil system of law—the moral law of reward and punishment. He also taught us to believe that God operates by this same reward and punishment moral law. But Jesus revealed to us a God of *agape* love, who operates by another principle, the principle of unconditional *agape* love. Thus, through His teachings, His life and His death, Jesus removed Satan’s lies from our minds. He gave us the truth about the God who does not condemn through the reward and punishment moral law, but who freely justifies us and forgives all our sins. This is what the Bible is telling us in the following verses:

He has **delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love**, in whom we have **redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins** (Colossians 1: 13-14, emphasis added).

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—**and righteousness and sanctification and redemption**—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1: 30-31, emphasis added).

In Him **we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7, emphasis added).

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption** (Hebrews 9: 12, emphasis added).

The redemption we have in Jesus is the “forgiveness of sins.” But Jesus does not save us *in* Satan’s jurisdiction. His revelation of God *removes* us out of Satan’s jurisdiction altogether. The word “conveyed” is the Greek word *methistēmi methistano*, which means:

to transfer, that is, carry away, depose or (figuratively) exchange, seduce: put out, remove, translate, turn away (Strong’s Concordance).

If we believe in Jesus’ revelation of God and His kingdom, then we are *transferred* from Satan’s jurisdiction to God’s jurisdiction. Some translations use the word “translated” instead of “conveyed.” We are *removed* from the *kingdom of condemnation* and carried to the *kingdom of grace*, where we are freely given “forgiveness of sins.” We are now living by the laws of another kingdom altogether, laws which are based on *grace*, the new covenant:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus** (Romans 3: 23-24, emphasis added).

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, **for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant**, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9: 15, emphasis added).

Jesus gave Himself as a ransom to Satan, the one who had taken us captive, so that we could be redeemed from Satan's kingdom of darkness:

For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he (Jeremiah 31: 11, emphasis added).

Satan is the “one stronger than” Jacob, stronger than the human race. But Jesus ransomed us from his system of lies of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which brought death into our world. Notice the passion in God's voice as He speaks about how He will save us:

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes” (Hosea 13: 14, emphasis added).

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life a ransom for many** (Mark 10: 45, emphasis added).

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, **the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2: 5-6, emphasis added).

Did you notice how in Mark chapter ten, Jesus said that He gave “His life a ransom for many” but when writing to Timothy, Paul said that He “gave Himself a ransom for all”? This means that Jesus' grace, justification, mercy, love, and forgiveness is for the entire human race. We have all been ransomed by Jesus, and we all need to know this!

The word “ransom” implies that we were taken captive by someone, and Jesus paid a price to get us back. This is what the word *lutron*—ransom—means:

to loose. Ransom or price paid for redeeming captives, loosing them from their bonds and setting them at liberty. In Mat 20:28 and Mar 10:45, it applies spiritually to the ransom paid by Christ for the delivering of men from the bondage of sin and death (The Complete Word Study Dictionary).

So when we are told that the one hundred and forty-four thousands are *ransomed* from the earth, this means that Jesus' work of redemption has been fully fulfilled in their lives. It means they have fully accepted His justification, His unconditional forgiveness, His unmerited grace, His love, His revelation of God's pure character of *agape* love—in other words, they have accepted God's law of grace. Thus, they have been redeemed fully from Satan's jurisdiction of reward and punishment and from the mindset it creates

in us, that causes us to look at God through fear.

The prophet Isaiah describes this sealing process—a complete settling into the truths that Jesus taught—which is taking place right now:

For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:

“Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’
 Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy,
 Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.
 The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow;
 Let Him be your fear,
 And let Him be your dread.
 He will be as a sanctuary,
 But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense
 To both the houses of Israel,
 As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
 And many among them shall stumble;
 They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken.”
 Bind up the testimony,
 Seal the law among my disciples.
 And I will wait on the Lord,
 Who hides His face from the house of Jacob;
 And I will hope in Him.
 Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!
 We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the Lord of hosts,
 Who dwells in Mount Zion (Isaiah 8: 11-18).

Those who have turned from the false god to the living God are “the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.” This group of people have not been defiled with the lies that many religions or churches—“women”—teach about God: that He is violent, vindictive, punishing. They are “virgins” because they have the knowledge of a *pure* God, a God who is only *agape* love. They are pure, set apart from the contaminated knowledge of God which abounds in the world.

They also “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” They “follow” Jesus, as a lamb follows a good shepherd. They are *not forced* to follow Him. They don’t follow Him with the motivations of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: out of a selfish desire to be saved—reward—or out of fear of being lost—punishment.

Rather, they follow Him by the motivation of the Tree of Life: out of their own free will, out of a deep love for Him, because they have known the love He has for them. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4: 19). They have an appreciation and admiration for this new God they have come to know and love.

To the one hundred and forty-four thousand, Jesus has become a much beloved leader and teacher, and as a result, they no longer allow Satan to teach them lies about God. They believe whatever Jesus teaches them, and they fol-

low His example of *agape* love, which He gave throughout His life. They love Jesus so much that they even do “not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12: 11). They would willingly give their lives for Jesus and His cause of revealing God’s *agape* love, this knowledge that means salvation for each one of us.

It is interesting that the hundred and forty-four thousand were not only redeemed from the “earth,” from all that is earthly and satanic, but they are also “redeemed from among men.” This means that they are different from the rest of all the world at this time, who according to Revelation thirteen are following the beast:

And all the world marveled and followed the beast (Revelation 13: 3, emphasis added).

But the one hundred and forty-four thousand are not an elitist group. They remain separate from the world because they have caught a glimpse of the war between God and Satan, and they see that in order to save even more people, God needs them to fully consecrate themselves to the cause of His kingdom. Thus, they are “firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.” This means that they are the first of many more to come. They are “the first installment, or pledge, of the great harvest” (SDA Commentary, Vol. 7). The “great harvest” is that great multitude spoken of in the Book of Revelation:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands (Revelation 7: 9).

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God (Revelation 19: 1)!

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns (Revelation 19: 6)!

The one hundred and forty-four thousand are also “those who are victors in the great conflict with the beast and his image” (SDA Commentary, Vol. 7). Their victory over the beast, who is the principal agent of Satan in the last days, is a victory on behalf of all humanity. They stand strong against the world’s influence and pressure to join them in their delusions. If need be, they will even give up their own lives for this cause.

The response of the hundred and forty-four thousand to the beast from the earth—the beast who tells “those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived” (Revelation 13: 14), and who threatens that no one can “buy or sell” except one has its “mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13: 17)—is the same as that of Daniel’s three friends in Babylon when faced by a similar situation:

O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3: 16-18).

The one hundred and forty-four thousand stand strong for God against the world not because they are motivated by pride or insanity. Instead, they are motivated by *agape* love for the very people who are pressuring them to conform to their violent ways, who are using violence to make them join their ranks. Their victory will mean redemption for many—for they are the firstfruits of the great harvest of the earth.

Finally, we are told about them, that “in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” What is this “deceit,” this “guile” about? This deceit is referring to all the deceptions of the serpent, who was the most cunning of all God’s creatures (Genesis 3: 1), “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12: 9).

There are no more lies about God’s character in the mouth of this group of people. They no longer believe Satan’s lie that God is an accuser, a harsh judge, a vindictive ruler, a destroyer of sinners. They now understand and believe that God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4: 5), which is the condition of the entire human race (Romans 3: 9-18). Thus, they now know that all are freely pardoned, freely justified and beloved of God.

Although they are fallen human beings, the one hundred and forty-four thousand know that in God’s estimate, in His eyes of *agape* love, they are completely without fault. They know that their salvation is not based on their own goodness, which in the Bible is compared to menstrual rags:

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags [MENSTRUAL RAGS]; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away (Isaiah 64: 6, emphasis added).

The one hundred and forty-four thousand know that their salvation is based on the love of God shown on the cross by the God who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3: 16) as a ransom to redeem us from the lies of Satan, the Destroyer, and his band of destroying angels.

Thus, as they no longer speak lies about God, the one hundred and forty-four thousand are then prepared to proclaim the “everlasting gospel” about the eternal God. Their message, their good news about the *agape*-love-character of the eternal God is proclaimed through the heavens:

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made

heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14: 6-7).

The message of the hundred and forty-four thousand rings out with incredible speed, authority, and power—it flies “in the midst of heaven.” They “preach,”—*euaggelizō*—which means “to proclaim good tidings.” And the “good tidings” they proclaim reaches all “who dwell on the earth”—“every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” These messengers say “with a loud voice,” that is, with authority and power:

Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water (Revelation 14: 7).

The one hundred and forty-four thousand tell the world that in worshipping a god of violence they are in effect worshipping an idol, a false god, the god of this world. They point them to the true God, to the One who is a Creator, not a Destroyer: “Fear God and give glory to Him!” “Stop worshipping Satan the Destroyer god and worship instead the true God, the Creator!”

They beckon the human race to worship the God “who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” Who is this God “who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water”? Speaking of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote to the Colossians:

He [JESUS CHRIST] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (Colossians 1: 15-17, emphasis added).

The message of the one hundred and forty-four thousand points us right back to Jesus, the One who created all things. Do we want to see God as He truly is? If so, then there is no way out of it—we must look to Jesus!

Just as the double portion of manna—which was a type of Jesus—was poured out in the desert on the sixth day, Jesus is now, at the very end of the *sixth prophetic day*—in the *sixth millennium*—also pouring out a double portion of light regarding Himself—the antitype of the manna—because He is the express image of the true God, the “true manna,” “the bread of life.”

Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. **Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.**” Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.**” Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? **Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’**” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the**

true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” And Jesus said to them, **“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst** (John 6: 26-35, emphasis added).

Jesus is “the true bread from heaven,” because He is the One who gives us the truth about the Father’s character. “Moses did not give” the “bread from heaven,” because Moses was “earthly,” he had an earthly view of God’s character. Jesus was “from above,” therefore He has much more authority than Moses. Notice what John said in this regard:

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. **For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.** The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but **the wrath of God abides on him**” (John 3: 31-36, emphasis added).

Jesus, then, is our *double portion of manna* that comes straight from heaven, from the Father, to us living right now at the end of six thousand years of sin. And He will continue to do this special work of pouring down the truth, which we could call a work of *intercession*, until every living person on this earth makes his or her decision for or against God. This decision-making process is being made by us. Who do we appoint as our king, God or Satan? Which moral law do we choose, *agape* love or the moral law of Good and Evil? Under whose jurisdiction do we want to be?

The special work Jesus is doing at this time is the work of the High Priest. In Moses’ sanctuary, which is a type for us to understand the plan of salvation, the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place once a year to cleanse it of all the sins of the people. We have previously talked about *sins* and *the sin*. *Sins* are all those transgressions we commit daily, like lying, stealing, etc. *The sin*, however, is “missing the mark” about who God is. The sin—this :missing the mark;—is exchanging God for Satan, which is what happened when Adam and Eve ate of the serpent’s tree. *The sin* is what Paul explained in Romans chapter one, the chapter on “the wrath of God”:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.** Amen (Romans 1: 22-25, emphasis added).

The sin, the lies about God, is the *root cause* of all our *sins*. We commit *sins* because we first commit *the sin*. Only Jesus can take *the sin* away from us, because He is “the Lamb of God who takes away *the sin* of the world,” (John 1:29, emphasis added). Only Jesus, the pure, white, non-violent Lamb can take away our wrong understanding—the missing the mark—that God is a violent God. This false view of God came into the world through Satan and his moral law of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

As we said, right now, Jesus is pouring upon us a *double portion* of the truth about God’s character—He is revealing the “eternal gospel” through His followers here on earth. He is doing this through what He Himself accomplished by His life, His teachings, and His death. Right now, He is teaching us everything we need to know about the true God. This is part of that “hour of His judgment has come,” spoken of in Revelation fourteen.

Once the “everlasting gospel” is given to every person on earth, then everyone will have the opportunity to make his or her final decision about who God really is. Our decisions will be expressed either through thought, word, or action.

The message of the one hundred and forty-four thousand is a *sealing message*. Those who accept and believe it will receive the “seal of the living God.” They will belong fully to His jurisdiction, and Satan’s destructive wrath will not be able to affect them. They are protected by God, and the winds that harm the earth and the sea will not come near them. Like the Passover in Egypt, they are *covered* by the blood of the Lamb, and the Destroying angel cannot enter their abode because he has no power in that jurisdiction.

When this happens, Jesus our High Priest who has been in the Most Holy Place cleansing God’s character of all the lies which Satan has attributed to His character, will finish His work of cleansing our hearts and minds. Those who accepted Him are sealed and safe, and those that have remained in Satan’s jurisdiction will receive Satan’s seal—the mark of the beast.

Jesus’ work in the Most Holy Place, that compartment of the plan of salvation that contains the truth about the Most Holy God (the law and the mercy seat, the throne of mercy), has been to pour out a double portion of understanding of God’s Most Holy character based on His life and death here on earth. This is the latter rain. This revealed knowledge of God is what cleanses the sanctuary from *the sin*, that foundational sin of “missing the mark” about who God really is.

“Missing the mark” about God’s character is the darkness that has enveloped the earth for six thousand years due to the enemy’s lies about Him. When this *sin* is removed from us, all other sins follow suit. And then we are cleansed, because by “beholding” Him, by seeing His true character, “we are changed into the same glory”:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the

Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3: 18).

Jesus' intercession in the Most Holy Place means that He has been doing the same work the high priest in the earthly sanctuary did. A high priest offered sacrifices for sins. Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin "once for all":

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption** (Hebrews 9: 12, emphasis added).

Jesus, our High Priest, entered the Most Holy Place—the place where God's true character is revealed—with His own blood. His own sacrifice as the offering for our *sin*. With this sacrifice He revealed God and is now pouring out truth to us about Himself and the Father. He is sending us a double portion of Himself, the Bread of Life, on the *sixth day* of the week—the *sixth millennium*.

During this phase of the plan of salvation, this period of time of the ministry in the Most Holy Place, this antitypical Day of Atonement, Christ is interceding *with us*, pleading *with us*, beseeching *us* to choose Him who is the Word, *the True Witness*, "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14: 6).

If we reject Jesus' testimony of who God is, then we are left with the only other alternative, which is Satan's lies about who God is. Isaiah also describes what will happen to the group that rejects the true knowledge of God:

Bind up the testimony, **Seal the law** among my disciples. And I will wait on the Lord, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the Lord of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.

And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? **To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**

They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that **they will be enraged and curse their king and their God**, and look upward. **Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness** (Isaiah 8: 16-22, emphasis added).

"To the law and to the testimony!" To the law of *agape* love, to the testimony of Jesus regarding the character of God. If they do not speak according to this word—according to God's law of *agape* love and the True Witness' testimony—then "there is no light in them!"

What will be the consequence of rejecting this final message? Look at verse twenty-one. They will be enraged at God, because when they look to all the destruction Satan is causing on the earth, they will think it is God who is doing it. Then they "curse their king and their God." Like Job's wife they will say, "Curse God and die!" Thus, they will be driven into *utter* and

outer darkness—the darkness that is present outside of God’s kingdom of light. There, there will be gnashing of teeth:

And cast the **unprofitable servant** into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Matthew 25: 30, emphasis added).

Jesus’ words above are directed in particular to *believers*. They are “unprofitable servants”—they have been working for the Master. He makes this even clearer in the next verse:

But **the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness**. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8: 12, emphasis added).

Satan’s portrayal of God is a false portrayal. The character he ascribes to God is actually his own character of Good and Evil. Those who worship this god of Babylon, will “drink the wine of the wrath” of Babylon’s “fornication” which we will discuss in the next chapter.



22

AVOIDING THE WRATH TO COME

What can we do to avoid the wrath that is yet to come upon this world? When will it happen? The answer to the second question will become apparent shortly, but first we will address the first: what can we do to avoid it?

We saw that Paul gives the answer to this last question in his address to the Thessalonians: it is Jesus who “delivers us” from the “wrath to come.” We can avoid “the wrath to come” only through Jesus. But how exactly does Jesus deliver us from the “wrath to come”?

The first thing we need to ask as we answer this question is this: what is the reason for “the wrath of God” in the first place? Why does God let go of us? What did Paul write in Romans chapter one?

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things (Romans 1: 18-23, emphasis added).

God lets go—“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven”—because we exchange Him, the “living and true God,” for Satan. We have exchanged His glory—His character—for the character of Satan, which is *in us already* since Adam’s transgression of eating from Satan’s Tree. As a result of thinking that God looks like us or the gods that teach us Satan’s ways, we become solidified in *their ways*, which many seem to believe is *godliness and righteousness*, but which are really *ungodliness and unrighteousness*. It is that simple.

If we choose to worship the devil rather than God, then God, who has

been protecting us from the Devil all along, is forced to hand us over to him. God has to play fair; He has to honor our choices, and He has to honor Satan's government, because that is how God operates. He has respected Satan's rule over this earth all along, and He will continue to do so unless we finally see the truth and choose Him again as our ruler.

Many today are still worshipping a god that looks more like the devil than the "living and true God." Yet most are doing this *unknowingly*. But the knowledge of God will increase to the point that all will know, so that all may make an informed decision. The prophet Hosea spoke how important it is to know the true God:

Hear the word of the Lord, You children of Israel, For the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:

"There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint [THE RESTRAINT IS GOD'S HOLDING THE DESTROYER BACK, IT IS GOD'S PROTECTION AGAINST SATAN'S DESTRUCTIVENESS], With bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.

"Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children (Hosea 4: 1-6, emphasis added).

So what is God's last solution to the problem of not knowing Him as we approach the end of this age? How is the knowledge of God going to be given in the last days?

In the past, God spoke through the fathers and the prophets, but in these last days He sent His own Son to deliver the message that needed to be heard. His solution today is to send yet another messenger—another message—to reveal His character yet once more. His solution is to give us one more chance to choose which God we want to serve, and therefore, which jurisdiction we want to belong to. How then does God reveal His character one more time?

God has already fully revealed His character through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "express image" of the Father. If we see Jesus, we see the Father. Jesus did nothing that His Father wouldn't do. And Jesus did everything that His Father would do. Everything Jesus did and said was in harmony and in line with the "living and true God," because Jesus is the "living and true God." In His last prayer, Jesus revealed the reason and the work He came to do down here on earth:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished the work which You have given Me to do** (John 17: 3-4, emphasis added).

Jesus came to give us a knowledge of the only true God. This was the work God gave Him to do.

I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world (John 17: 6, emphasis added).

The Greek word for “manifest,” *phaneroo*, means to “render apparent (literally or figuratively): appear, manifestly declare, (make) manifest (forth), shew (self).” Jesus came to “render apparent,” “declare,” “show” who the Father is. Later in the same chapter Jesus says:

For I have given to them the words which You have given Me (John 17: 8)

I have given them Your word (John 17: 14)

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17: 17).

O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name [CHARACTER], and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17: 25-26, emphasis added).

The Psalmist used similar language when talking about Jesus:

I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You (Psalm 22: 22).

And in the Book of Hebrews, Paul quotes the same Psalm:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

And again:

“I will put My trust in Him.”

And again:

“Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2: 12-15, emphasis added).

Jesus came to nullify Satan’s power over death, which is imposed on us through his lies about God. Through Jesus’ death, through the message of the cross, the message of God’s unconditional *agape* love for us, Jesus releases us “who through fear of death” are subject all our “lifetime to bondage” to Satan and his death jurisdiction.

If Jesus is the answer, if He is the one who will save us from “the wrath to come,” then how do we get to know Him now, today? God sent Jesus to declare to us His character of love two thousand years ago, but what is He doing for us right now? How is He going to save us from wrath *right now*?

God is giving us Jesus Christ all over again. How so? We get to know Jesus through a special work He is doing for the human race right now, as we speak. Jesus is at this very moment doing a very unique work. At this very time in the history of the world, Jesus is acting as High Priest by giving the world the “everlasting gospel.”

The “everlasting gospel” is God’s last message of mercy to the world about His true, merciful character of *agape* love. In this message there is mercy, love, forgiveness and hope. The “everlasting gospel” is God’s last attempt to save us from exchanging His character for Satan’s character—a terrible mistake which would place us in Satan’s jurisdiction, and thus leave us unprotected from the violence built into his kingdom. Here is the last message that can save us from the upcoming “wrath of God:”

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14: 6-7).

What is the “everlasting gospel?” We know that the word “gospel”—*euangelion*—means “good news.” What then is the everlasting, or eternal good news? The “everlasting good news” is the good news about someone who is everlasting or eternal. Who is eternal? Only God is eternal. Therefore, the “everlasting gospel” is the eternal good news about the eternal God.

To us this is “news,” because we have been lied to about God. We had thought that God was Good and Evil, that He had a mixed, schizoid character of love and anger, which is bad news. But Jesus came to give us the message that God is only “light” and that there is absolutely “no darkness” in Him—and this is indeed extremely good news.

So we are going to share with you what Jesus is doing right now in order to propagate the eternal good news about His Father. We read about it in Revelation chapter fourteen:

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men,

being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God (Revelation 14: 1-6).

Jesus, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)” (who takes away our wrong conception of God) is standing on Mount Zion, which is a symbol of His government of *agape* love. He has with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand human beings. We know the first question many will ask: “is this a literal or symbolic number?” But we are not going to take a stand on this one way or another. Rather, we invite the readers to come to their own conclusions.

What we can indeed say about this group of people is this: they believe in the God whom Jesus revealed because they have “His Father’s name written on their foreheads.” They don’t believe in the character of that *other father*, whom Jesus talked about to those who were seeking to kill Him:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was **a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.** When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it (John 8: 44, emphasis added).

The hundred and forty-four thousand do not have the *murderous* principle of Good and Evil in their hearts. We may think, “Well, I’m safe because I have never killed anyone.” But we cannot afford to forget how Jesus took this principle to the extreme when He said that even being angry at someone can catapult us into Satan’s domain—it can cause us to be “in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

The hundred and forty-four thousand have accepted Jesus’ witness, His testimony about the true character of the “living and true God.” They believe in a God who looks completely and entirely like Jesus—if you see the One, you see the Other.

Earlier in Revelation chapter seven, John told us more about this group called the one hundred and forty-four thousand. Here is what he says about them:

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed (Revelation 7: 1-4).

Here we learn that the one hundred and forty-four thousand come into view just before the trumpets and the final “wrath of God”—the “wrath to come” of which Paul spoke in first Thessalonians. This is the time they appear on the scene because they come into play just before God lets go of “the four winds”:

Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads (Revelation 7: 3).

The Greek word for “seal” here is the word *sphragizō*, which means “to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation (literally or figuratively); by implication to keep secret, to attest: (set a, set to) seal up, stop” (Strong’s Concordance).

What is God doing by sealing, or *stamping* the hundred and forty-four thousand? Isn’t He putting His seal on them, branding them, to mark them as His own? Isn’t this the same *seal* that He told the Israelites to put on their door posts, so that when the Destroyer came through, he could not touch them? Wasn’t the seal back then the blood of the Lamb? And wasn’t that blood symbolic of Jesus’ revelation of God’s immense love for the human race, which took Him to the cross? By putting His seal—the seal of “the living God”—on the hundred and forty-four thousand and those who hear and accept their message, God is claiming them as part of His own jurisdiction of life. There, Satan, the king of the jurisdiction of death, cannot harm or come near them.

Thus, God sends a messenger “from the east” to inform the four angels that are holding back the “winds” of destruction—four angels from each corner of the earth, representing a worldwide destruction that is about to be unleashed upon the earth—to wait until he has “sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” The “forehead” points to their thinking, to their understanding of God’s character. It represents that *metanoia* we talked about, that *paradigm shift* about God’s character, *being born again*, which Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus.

The winds represent destruction, because once they are let go, they will “harm the earth, the sea, or the trees.” Who are the angels that are holding back the winds of destruction? They are messengers who, all around the world, are giving the eternal gospel, the everlasting good news, which is a message about the “living and true God.” Their message is what holds back the satanic forces of evil from completely destroying the earth.

The one hundred and forty-four thousand are “sealed” with the “seal of the living God.” They are sealed with the knowledge that God is a God of life, not of death. They are “servants” of God, which means that they are willing to give their own lives for the cause of clearing up God’s reputation, just as Jesus, the “righteous Servant” of God, gave His life and bore our iniquities for the same cause:

By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53: 11).

Something else we know about the hundred and forty-four thousand is that they are “redeemed from the earth.” What does it mean that they

are “redeemed from the earth?” The word “redeemed” in Greek is *agorazō*, which means “to buy,” “to purchase.”

The human race was taken captive by Satan the moment Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Ever since then, Satan has been teaching us his Good and Evil system of law—the moral law of reward and punishment. He also taught us to believe that God operates by this same reward and punishment moral law. But Jesus revealed to us a God of *agape* love, who operates by another principle, the principle of unconditional *agape* love. Thus, through His teachings, His life and His death, Jesus removed Satan’s lies from our minds. He gave us the truth about the God who does not condemn through the reward and punishment moral law, but who freely justifies us and forgives all our sins. This is what the Bible is telling us in the following verses:

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have **redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins** (Colossians 1: 13-14, emphasis added).

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—**and righteousness and sanctification and redemption**—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1: 30-31, emphasis added).

In Him **we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7, emphasis added).

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption** (Hebrews 9: 12, emphasis added).

The redemption we have in Jesus is the “forgiveness of sins.” But Jesus does not save us *in* Satan’s jurisdiction. His revelation of God *removes* us out of Satan’s jurisdiction altogether. The word “conveyed” is the Greek word *methistēmi methistano*, which means:

to transfer, that is, carry away, depose or (figuratively) exchange, seduce: put out, remove, translate, turn away (Strong’s Concordance).

If we believe in Jesus’ revelation of God and His kingdom, then we are *transferred* from Satan’s jurisdiction to God’s jurisdiction. Some translations use the word “translated” instead of “conveyed.” We are *removed* from the *kingdom of condemnation* and carried to the *kingdom of grace*, where we are freely given “forgiveness of sins.” We are now living by the laws of another kingdom altogether, laws which are based on *grace*, the new covenant:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus** (Romans 3: 23-24, emphasis added).

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, **for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant**, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9: 15, emphasis added).

Jesus gave Himself as a ransom to Satan, the one who had taken us captive, so that we could be redeemed from Satan's kingdom of darkness:

For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he (Jeremiah 31: 11, emphasis added).

Satan is the “one stronger than” Jacob, stronger than the human race. But Jesus ransomed us from his system of lies of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which brought death into our world. Notice the passion in God's voice as He speaks about how He will save us:

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes” (Hosea 13: 14, emphasis added).

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life a ransom for many** (Mark 10: 45, emphasis added).

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, **the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2: 5-6, emphasis added).

Did you notice how in Mark chapter ten, Jesus said that He gave “His life a ransom for many” but when writing to Timothy, Paul said that He “gave Himself a ransom for all”? This means that Jesus' grace, justification, mercy, love, and forgiveness is for the entire human race. We have all been ransomed by Jesus, and we all need to know this!

The word “ransom” implies that we were taken captive by someone, and Jesus paid a price to get us back. This is what the word *lutron*—ransom—means:

to loose. Ransom or price paid for redeeming captives, loosing them from their bonds and setting them at liberty. In Mat 20:28 and Mar 10:45, it applies spiritually to the ransom paid by Christ for the delivering of men from the bondage of sin and death (The Complete Word Study Dictionary).

So when we are told that the one hundred and forty-four thousands are *ransomed* from the earth, this means that Jesus' work of redemption has been fully fulfilled in their lives. It means they have fully accepted His justification, His unconditional forgiveness, His unmerited grace, His love, His revelation of God's pure character of *agape* love—in other words, they have accepted God's law of grace. Thus, they have been redeemed fully from Satan's jurisdiction of reward and punishment and from the mindset it creates

in us, that causes us to look at God through fear.

The prophet Isaiah describes this sealing process—a complete settling into the truths that Jesus taught—which is taking place right now:

For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:

“Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’
Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy,
Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.
The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow;
Let Him be your fear,
And let Him be your dread.
He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And many among them shall stumble;
They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken.”
Bind up the testimony,
Seal the law among my disciples.
And I will wait on the Lord,
Who hides His face from the house of Jacob;
And I will hope in Him.
Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!
We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the Lord of hosts,
Who dwells in Mount Zion (Isaiah 8: 11-18).

Those who have turned from the false god to the living God are “the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.” This group of people have not been defiled with the lies that many religions or churches—“women”—teach about God: that He is violent, vindictive, punishing. They are “virgins” because they have the knowledge of a *pure* God, a God who is only *agape* love. They are pure, set apart from the contaminated knowledge of God which abounds in the world.

They also “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” They “follow” Jesus, as a lamb follows a good shepherd. They are *not forced* to follow Him. They don’t follow Him with the motivations of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: out of a selfish desire to be saved—reward—or out of fear of being lost—punishment.

Rather, they follow Him by the motivation of the Tree of Life: out of their own free will, out of a deep love for Him, because they have known the love He has for them. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4: 19). They have an appreciation and admiration for this new God they have come to know and love.

To the one hundred and forty-four thousand, Jesus has become a much beloved leader and teacher, and as a result, they no longer allow Satan to teach them lies about God. They believe whatever Jesus teaches them, and they fol-

low His example of *agape* love, which He gave throughout His life. They love Jesus so much that they even do “not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12: 11). They would willingly give their lives for Jesus and His cause of revealing God’s *agape* love, this knowledge that means salvation for each one of us.

It is interesting that the hundred and forty-four thousand were not only redeemed from the “earth,” from all that is earthly and satanic, but they are also “redeemed from among men.” This means that they are different from the rest of all the world at this time, who according to Revelation thirteen are following the beast:

And all the world marveled and followed the beast (Revelation 13: 3, emphasis added).

But the one hundred and forty-four thousand are not an elitist group. They remain separate from the world because they have caught a glimpse of the war between God and Satan, and they see that in order to save even more people, God needs them to fully consecrate themselves to the cause of His kingdom. Thus, they are “firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.” This means that they are the first of many more to come. They are “the first installment, or pledge, of the great harvest” (SDA Commentary, Vol. 7). The “great harvest” is that great multitude spoken of in the Book of Revelation:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands (Revelation 7: 9).

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God (Revelation 19: 1)!

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns (Revelation 19: 6)!

The one hundred and forty-four thousand are also “those who are victors in the great conflict with the beast and his image” (SDA Commentary, Vol. 7). Their victory over the beast, who is the principal agent of Satan in the last days, is a victory on behalf of all humanity. They stand strong against the world’s influence and pressure to join them in their delusions. If need be, they will even give up their own lives for this cause.

The response of the hundred and forty-four thousand to the beast from the earth—the beast who tells “those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived” (Revelation 13: 14), and who threatens that no one can “buy or sell” except one has its “mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13: 17)—is the same as that of Daniel’s three friends in Babylon when faced by a similar situation:

O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3: 16-18).

The one hundred and forty-four thousand stand strong for God against the world not because they are motivated by pride or insanity. Instead, they are motivated by *agape* love for the very people who are pressuring them to conform to their violent ways, who are using violence to make them join their ranks. Their victory will mean redemption for many—for they are the firstfruits of the great harvest of the earth.

Finally, we are told about them, that “in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” What is this “deceit,” this “guile” about? This deceit is referring to all the deceptions of the serpent, who was the most cunning of all God’s creatures (Genesis 3: 1), “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12: 9).

There are no more lies about God’s character in the mouth of this group of people. They no longer believe Satan’s lie that God is an accuser, a harsh judge, a vindictive ruler, a destroyer of sinners. They now understand and believe that God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4: 5), which is the condition of the entire human race (Romans 3: 9-18). Thus, they now know that all are freely pardoned, freely justified and beloved of God.

Although they are fallen human beings, the one hundred and forty-four thousand know that in God’s estimate, in His eyes of *agape* love, they are completely without fault. They know that their salvation is not based on their own goodness, which in the Bible is compared to menstrual rags:

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags [MENSTRUAL RAGS]; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away (Isaiah 64: 6, emphasis added).

The one hundred and forty-four thousand know that their salvation is based on the love of God shown on the cross by the God who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3: 16) as a ransom to redeem us from the lies of Satan, the Destroyer, and his band of destroying angels.

Thus, as they no longer speak lies about God, the one hundred and forty-four thousand are then prepared to proclaim the “everlasting gospel” about the eternal God. Their message, their good news about the *agape*-love-character of the eternal God is proclaimed through the heavens:

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made

heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14: 6-7).

The message of the hundred and forty-four thousand rings out with incredible speed, authority, and power—it flies “in the midst of heaven.” They “preach,”—*euaggelizō*—which means “to proclaim good tidings.” And the “good tidings” they proclaim reaches all “who dwell on the earth”—“every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” These messengers say “with a loud voice,” that is, with authority and power:

Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water (Revelation 14: 7).

The one hundred and forty-four thousand tell the world that in worshipping a god of violence they are in effect worshipping an idol, a false god, the god of this world. They point them to the true God, to the One who is a Creator, not a Destroyer: “Fear God and give glory to Him!” “Stop worshipping Satan the Destroyer god and worship instead the true God, the Creator!”

They beckon the human race to worship the God “who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” Who is this God “who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water”? Speaking of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote to the Colossians:

He [JESUS CHRIST] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (Colossians 1: 15-17, emphasis added).

The message of the one hundred and forty-four thousand points us right back to Jesus, the One who created all things. Do we want to see God as He truly is? If so, then there is no way out of it—we must look to Jesus!

Just as the double portion of manna—which was a type of Jesus—was poured out in the desert on the sixth day, Jesus is now, at the very end of the *sixth prophetic day*—in the *sixth millennium*—also pouring out a double portion of light regarding Himself—the antitype of the manna—because He is the express image of the true God, the “true manna,” “the bread of life.”

Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. **Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.**” Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.**” Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? **Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’**” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the**

true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” And Jesus said to them, **“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst** (John 6: 26-35, emphasis added).

Jesus is “the true bread from heaven,” because He is the One who gives us the truth about the Father’s character. “Moses did not give” the “bread from heaven,” because Moses was “earthly,” he had an earthly view of God’s character. Jesus was “from above,” therefore He has much more authority than Moses. Notice what John said in this regard:

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. **For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.** The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but **the wrath of God abides on him**” (John 3: 31-36, emphasis added).

Jesus, then, is our *double portion of manna* that comes straight from heaven, from the Father, to us living right now at the end of six thousand years of sin. And He will continue to do this special work of pouring down the truth, which we could call a work of *intercession*, until every living person on this earth makes his or her decision for or against God. This decision-making process is being made by us. Who do we appoint as our king, God or Satan? Which moral law do we choose, *agape* love or the moral law of Good and Evil? Under whose jurisdiction do we want to be?

The special work Jesus is doing at this time is the work of the High Priest. In Moses’ sanctuary, which is a type for us to understand the plan of salvation, the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place once a year to cleanse it of all the sins of the people. We have previously talked about *sins* and *the sin*. *Sins* are all those transgressions we commit daily, like lying, stealing, etc. *The sin*, however, is “missing the mark” about who God is. The sin—this :missing the mark;—is exchanging God for Satan, which is what happened when Adam and Eve ate of the serpent’s tree. *The sin* is what Paul explained in Romans chapter one, the chapter on “the wrath of God”:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and **changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.** Amen (Romans 1: 22-25, emphasis added).

The sin, the lies about God, is the *root cause* of all our *sins*. We commit *sins* because we first commit *the sin*. Only Jesus can take *the sin* away from us, because He is “the Lamb of God who takes away *the sin* of the world,” (John 1:29, emphasis added). Only Jesus, the pure, white, non-violent Lamb can take away our wrong understanding—the missing the mark—that God is a violent God. This false view of God came into the world through Satan and his moral law of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

As we said, right now, Jesus is pouring upon us a *double portion* of the truth about God’s character—He is revealing the “eternal gospel” through His followers here on earth. He is doing this through what He Himself accomplished by His life, His teachings, and His death. Right now, He is teaching us everything we need to know about the true God. This is part of that “hour of His judgment has come,” spoken of in Revelation fourteen.

Once the “everlasting gospel” is given to every person on earth, then everyone will have the opportunity to make his or her final decision about who God really is. Our decisions will be expressed either through thought, word, or action.

The message of the one hundred and forty-four thousand is a *sealing message*. Those who accept and believe it will receive the “seal of the living God.” They will belong fully to His jurisdiction, and Satan’s destructive wrath will not be able to affect them. They are protected by God, and the winds that harm the earth and the sea will not come near them. Like the Passover in Egypt, they are *covered* by the blood of the Lamb, and the Destroying angel cannot enter their abode because he has no power in that jurisdiction.

When this happens, Jesus our High Priest who has been in the Most Holy Place cleansing God’s character of all the lies which Satan has attributed to His character, will finish His work of cleansing our hearts and minds. Those who accepted Him are sealed and safe, and those that have remained in Satan’s jurisdiction will receive Satan’s seal—the mark of the beast.

Jesus’ work in the Most Holy Place, that compartment of the plan of salvation that contains the truth about the Most Holy God (the law and the mercy seat, the throne of mercy), has been to pour out a double portion of understanding of God’s Most Holy character based on His life and death here on earth. This is the latter rain. This revealed knowledge of God is what cleanses the sanctuary from *the sin*, that foundational sin of “missing the mark” about who God really is.

“Missing the mark” about God’s character is the darkness that has enveloped the earth for six thousand years due to the enemy’s lies about Him. When this *sin* is removed from us, all other sins follow suit. And then we are cleansed, because by “beholding” Him, by seeing His true character, “we are changed into the same glory”:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the

Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3: 18).

Jesus' intercession in the Most Holy Place means that He has been doing the same work the high priest in the earthly sanctuary did. A high priest offered sacrifices for sins. Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin "once for all":

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption** (Hebrews 9: 12, emphasis added).

Jesus, our High Priest, entered the Most Holy Place—the place where God's true character is revealed—with His own blood. His own sacrifice as the offering for our *sin*. With this sacrifice He revealed God and is now pouring out truth to us about Himself and the Father. He is sending us a double portion of Himself, the Bread of Life, on the *sixth day* of the week—the *sixth millennium*.

During this phase of the plan of salvation, this period of time of the ministry in the Most Holy Place, this antitypical Day of Atonement, Christ is interceding *with us*, pleading *with us*, beseeching *us* to choose Him who is the Word, *the True Witness*, "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14: 6).

If we reject Jesus' testimony of who God is, then we are left with the only other alternative, which is Satan's lies about who God is. Isaiah also describes what will happen to the group that rejects the true knowledge of God:

Bind up the testimony, **Seal the law** among my disciples. And I will wait on the Lord, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the Lord of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.

And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? **To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**

They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that **they will be enraged and curse their king and their God**, and look upward. **Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness** (Isaiah 8: 16-22, emphasis added).

"To the law and to the testimony!" To the law of *agape* love, to the testimony of Jesus regarding the character of God. If they do not speak according to this word—according to God's law of *agape* love and the True Witness' testimony—then "there is no light in them!"

What will be the consequence of rejecting this final message? Look at verse twenty-one. They will be enraged at God, because when they look to all the destruction Satan is causing on the earth, they will think it is God who is doing it. Then they "curse their king and their God." Like Job's wife they will say, "Curse God and die!" Thus, they will be driven into *utter* and

outer darkness—the darkness that is present outside of God’s kingdom of light. There, there will be gnashing of teeth:

And cast the **unprofitable servant** into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Matthew 25: 30, emphasis added).

Jesus’ words above are directed in particular to *believers*. They are “unprofitable servants”—they have been working for the Master. He makes this even clearer in the next verse:

But **the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness**. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8: 12, emphasis added).

Satan’s portrayal of God is a false portrayal. The character he ascribes to God is actually his own character of Good and Evil. Those who worship this god of Babylon, will “drink the wine of the wrath” of Babylon’s “fornication” which we will discuss in the next chapter.



24

GOD'S FINAL STRANGE ACT

The final manifestation of the “wrath of God” involves the prophecy of the king who exalts himself in Daniel chapter eleven, and which coincides with the beast from the earth in Revelation chapter thirteen.

This will be the antitypical Day of Wrath to which all the types have been pointing. All the types were localized, but the last episode of “the wrath of God” will be global. This is why Daniel calls it “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time” (Daniel 12:1). Notice how the Book of Revelation describes this last Day of Wrath in several verses:

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! **For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand** (Revelation 6: 15-16, emphasis added)?

The nations were angry, and **Your wrath has come**, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11: 18, emphasis added).

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! **For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath**, because he knows that he has a short time (Revelation 12: 12, emphasis added).

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of **the wine of the wrath of her fornication**.” Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “**If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation**. He shall be tormented

with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb (Revelation 14: 8-10, emphasis added).

So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and **gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God** (Revelation 14: 19, emphasis added).

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: **seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete** (Revelation 15: 1, emphasis added).

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls **full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever** (Revelation 15: 7, emphasis added).

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, **“Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth”** (Revelation 16: 1, emphasis added).

Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. **And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath** (Revelation 16: 19, emphasis added).

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury” (Revelation 18: 3, emphasis added).

“All the nations have drunk of the wine” of Babylon’s fornication, which is Babylon’s teachings from the false god, the god of Good and Evil, the reward and punishment god. Like the Philistines, and the Amorite alliance of five kings, the enemy of God’s people has made an alliance with the kings of the earth to persecute them. He is described here as the king who exalts himself:

Then the king shall do according to his own will: **he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished**; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all. But in their place **he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things**. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a **foreign god**, which he shall acknowledge, and **advance its glory**; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain (Daniel 11: 36-39, emphasis added).

What identifies this “king” is the fact that he speaks blasphemies against the “God of gods”—against the true God. He also acknowledges a “foreign god” and advances “its glory.” He “shall prosper till the wrath has been ac-

completed.” This “wrath” is the last, final “wrath.”

In Revelation chapter thirteen we see a similar description about the beast that comes out of the sea. This beast also blasphemes God, and in particular it blasphemes His name, which is His character. It makes war with the saints and persecutes them:

And he was given a **mouth speaking great things and blasphemies**, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in **blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven**. It was granted to him to **make war with the saints and to overcome them**. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13: 5-8, emphasis added).

Earlier in Daniel chapter eleven, in verse thirty-two, there is a king who is also seen persecuting God's people, and interestingly enough, God's people there are portrayed as “the people who know their God”:

Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; **but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering**. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. **And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time** (Daniel 11: 32-35, emphasis added).

In the Book of Revelation, all the nations of the earth and their kings have joined the beast that blasphemes God. Not only that, but another beast, another power arises, upholding all the values of the beast from the sea. This new beast arises from the earth:

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he **had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon**. And he **exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed**. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and **cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed**. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to **receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name** (Revelation 13: 11-17, emphasis added).

This beast, “who exercises all the authority of the first beast in his pres-

ence,” persecutes the people who remain faithful to the God whom Jesus Christ revealed—the God of *agape* love. The world follows after the beast, and by persecuting those who remain faithful to the Lamb, they fill their cup of iniquity and seal their rejection of the gospel.

Then Michael, Jesus, stands up to *sustain* his people. Furthermore, His standing up points to the fact that those who have rejected God and His principle of *agape* love have reached the limit of their iniquity. By persecuting God’s people, they fill their iniquity and reject the gospel. God honors their freedom of choice and releases them to the leader they have chosen. The destruction that follows comes in suddenly, like a sudden breaking of a dam, like a breaking of the waters.

A time of trouble such as never was—the seven last plagues—follows. But these are not punishments from God. The seven last plagues are the work of the Destroyer. Satan is punishing the people of the world. With the seventh plague comes the end of six thousand years of sin:

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: **and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Revelation 16: 17-21, emphasis added).

Satan’s *modus operandi* is unchanged. In the last plague he destroys with hail—just as he destroyed the Amorites as they were coming down the mountain.

Over and over, we see the same mechanism at work: the Lord rises up when a nation or nations reject the gospel of Jesus Christ by going to war against God’s people. Their rejection of the gospel manifests itself in the form of persecution of God’s people. Then Jesus, the great intercessor, the One who stands in the gap for us, rises up to sustain His people. The Lord then turns aside—He departs from the rejecters of His grace when their iniquity is full. Then there is utter confusion and discomfiture among those who have rejected the true and living God, and the destroyer is given complete freedom to work out his own will in destroying them.

What appears to be an act of punishment from God is really an act of giving freedom. This is in line with His principles of righteousness and with His law of love. It is thus, by giving freedom, that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.”

Ultimately, it is the cross that explains what happens in God’s Strange Act of giving up those who reject Him. Because although Jesus did not reject His

Father, He chose to pass by this horrible experience for our sakes:

He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 21: 11-15).

If we look at Jesus on the cross, we can see what will happen to those who will suffer “the wrath of God.” It is not God’s will that any of us experience “the wrath of God.” God is calling us all to come out of Babylon, to come out of the Babylonian principles that identify us with Satan’s kingdom:

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, **“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.** For her sins have **reached to heaven**, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; **in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.** In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ **Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine.** And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her (Revelation 18: 4-8, emphasis added).

We can hear God pleading with each one of us in the above text. “Come out of her, My people!” Come out, “lest you receive her plagues.” God is calling us to come out of Satan’s violent kingdom of Good and Evil and to find shelter in His kingdom of grace. It is our earnest prayer that this book will help the reader to make that decision as soon as possible.



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