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## The Wrath of God

To believers and unbelievers alike, the idea of God being angry with mankind has been handed down ever since sin entered the world. Today, some terms used about God are: demanded a sacrifice; angry at man for disobedience; cross a propitiation (appeasement) for sin; wicked will physically suffer eternally in a burning hell. I remember watching the Bill Cosby Children's program as he talked about Adam and Eve. He told the kids that God was ticked off because Eve had eaten an apple. Since reading Paul's definition of God's wrath in the book of Romans, I look for the concept in the Old Testament, because those were the writings, along with the Greek version of the O.T. (LXX), through which the Lord revealed to him how wrath applies to God and man. There are dozens of scripture in the KJ and other versions that read as if God is angry and brings about some form of punishment for the disobedient. There are phrases like, "the wrath of God is upon them," that I pray as our understanding progresses we will know what they mean. One thought to always bear in mind when seeking an understanding of scripture - does it fit the character of God's love?

**Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28:** (The student should read verses 18-32 to grasp the entire context). *18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.... 24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.... 26. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.... 28. 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;*

The word translated gave is the Greek word, *paradidomi*<sup>(G3860)</sup>, which has a basic meaning of to surrender, and translated 63 times to deliver. God is attempting to save every person on this planet. However, He does not force the will, as He has given free choice to everyone. When a person continually chooses to listen to other than the voice of the Spirit, God will back away, give them up, or deliver them to reap according to their own decisions (cf 1Cor 5:5). You have heard it said "You reap what you sow." Did God demand a sacrifice for sin? Will the wicked suffer an eternal burning hell? Does God become angry when we sin?

God's turning away, or giving up: Psalms 38:1: 1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath<sup>(H7110)</sup>: *neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*<sup>(H2534)</sup>. There are at least six Hebrew root words, plus several derivatives, translated as anger, rage, wrath, etc. A parallel of this verse states it the same way but uses a different Hebrew word for wrath, and translates it as anger: Psalms 6:1: O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger<sup>(H639)</sup>, *neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*<sup>(H2534)</sup>. *Chemah*<sup>(H2534)</sup> literally is *heat* used as a figure of anger. One idiom we use for anger is "hot under the collar." *Ap*<sup>(H639)</sup> is rooted in a word that means *to breath hard*, and so this noun is properly *breathing place*, or *nose*, as it is translated 25 times. We can know that a person is angry when their face turns red, they breathe hard or talk loud. God's anger, turning away, giving up, is described in human terms such that we can know that God temporarily steps aside to let us for awhile reap what we sow, and hopefully repent and change what we are doing. The idea is to let us go through with a fleshly desire in order for us to experience the way that does not work and which often brings suffering.

**Psalms 38:1-3:** 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* 2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presses me sore.* 3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* Historians attribute this and several other Psalms of David to a time of repentance because of his transgression with Bathsheba. *Thine arrows stick fast in me:* Arrows are symbol of sharp words (Ps 64:3), in this case *rebuke* from Yahweh. Any rebuke from God, in no matter what form it comes, should be taken as instruction. **Proverbs 3:11-12:** 11. *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:* 12. *For whom the Lord loves he corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights.* **Psalms 39:11:** *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou make his beauty <sup>(H2530)</sup> to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity.* The Hebrew word for H2530 is a verb meaning to delight, desire, covet, being used here as an verbal adjective describing how the desires of the flesh are consumed when the rebuke of the Lord is received. In chapter 38, David feels as though he is about to drown in his iniquities (verse 4), and the wounds he carries stink because of his foolishness (verse 5). He confesses that he was as a deaf man that would not hear (verses 13, 14) and acknowledges his sorrow for what he has done, which is the first step in repentance (verses 16, 17). When I look back on my own experiences I can see the weaknesses of my flesh and many times how I ignored the pricking of the Spirit in my conscience.

**Psalms 38:21:** *Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Forsake me not, do not leave me, do not let go of me or turn away from me.* God may pull back temporarily to get your attention so that you feel the rebuke of your sins, but because of His longsuffering and patience, He does not easily turn away. Each time Pharaoh rejected the Lord's request through Moses and Aaron, a judgment followed. When the story is viewed allegorically, it can be seen that the firstborn that must die is self. Literally, Pharaoh did not die to self which resulted in his drowning in the sea, another spiritual picture of a person who hardens their heart to the point that God lets them go into spiritual death. Self must die so that we stop listening to the serpent (metaphor for the sin-nature) and only listen to the voice of the Savior.

**Isaiah 47:5-6:** 5. *Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.* 6. *I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou did shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.* While Babylon is being rebuked, the Lord states that He is the one that gave Judah into the hand of the Chaldeans.

**Isaiah 54:6-8:** 6. *For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou were refused, saith thy God.* 7. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.* 8. *In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.* In verses 1-10 of this chapter, Israel is pictured as a "widow," a "woman forsaken" of her husband, when the Lord hid His face for a short time.

Again, because of Israel's idolatry the Lord hid Himself from the nation - i.e. withdrew His protection: **Isaiah 57:17:** *For the iniquity of his (Israel's) covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he (Israel) went on froward in the way of his heart.* The last phrase would be better translated: *he (Israel) walked in the way of the apostasy of his heart.* After Moses died there was reason for discouragement by those weak in faith. However, the Lord encouraged Joshua by telling him, *I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee* (Josh 1:5; cp Heb 13:5). Judas Iscariot believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but not doing according to his own expectations according to the things he had been taught. God left him to carry out his desires, but it was Judas who chose to separate from God.

**God returning: Psalms 6:4:** *Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.* David is asking the Lord to return, because he is feeling forsaken. God's return has to do with our attitude and not His. To repent is to change the direction of our thinking toward God. When we do this it is because we are ready to listen, and in this sense God returns because we have quit pushing Him away. **Psalms 78:40-41:** *40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41. Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.* Just as Israel, we are the ones who provoke the Lord to leave us, and by our fleshly decisions limit *the Holy One of Israel*.

**Psalms 90:3, 7-17:** *3. Thou turn man to destruction; and say, Return, ye children of men. 7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. 9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. 10. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away [faint]. 11. Who knows the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. 12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. 13. Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. 14. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. 16. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. 17. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.* How does God turn man to destruction? By allowing man to carry out his own fleshly desires. The result of man's decisions without the Lord's input is self-destruction, affliction and trouble on every side.

The human cycle is that all fall into sin, some eventually see the error of their ways and seek the Lord. This is seen again in **Zechariah 1:2-3:** *2. The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. 3. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.* The call is to all humanity, but like Israel of old, many will not heed the call: *Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord* (verse 4).

**Punishment: Zechariah 8:14-15:** *14. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; As I thought to punish<sup>(H7489)</sup> you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath (i.e. to leave you), saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not: 15. So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.* The words "punish" and "punishment" are in the scriptures at least 55 times, but translated from different Hebrew words. Strong gives H7489 the proper meaning of *to spoil* (by breaking), *to make good for nothing* (construed to be evil). How does the Lord make us good for nothing? When He leaves us, we prove it by the things we do. For those who will listen, He will show them that the carnal way of thinking is good for nothing (cf Rom 8:6-7).

**Zephaniah 1:7-8:** *7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 8. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.* The Hebrew word rendered *punish* is *paqad*<sup>(H6485)</sup>, which means *to visit* (with friendly or hostile intent), *to oversee* (watch over), *direct, closely inspect, to attend to*. When the Lord visits, it is to bless or to reveal a curse. **Genesis 21:1-2:** *1. And the Lord visited<sup>(H6485)</sup> Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.*

The idea of "punish" is foreign to the character of God. If He is not imputing our sins (2Cor 5:19), why would

He punish us? Yet, because of man's idea about God, many verses are translated with the Pagan idea of God punishing when He is displeased with man's actions. **Exodus 34:7: 6.** *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (KJV)*

Verse 7 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV): *I keep my promises to my people forever, but I also punish anyone who sins. When people sin, I punish them and their children, and also their grandchildren and great-grandchildren."*

Verse 7 from the Living Bible: *I, Jehovah, show this steadfast love to many thousands by forgiving their sins; or else I refuse to clear the guilty, and require that a father's sins be punished in the sons and grandsons, and even later generations."*

How do you understand the phrase from the Living Bible that Jehovah *require that a father's sins be punished in the sons and grandsons, and even later generations?* This Bible contradicts itself in **Ezekiel 18:20:** *The one who sins is the one who dies. The son shall not be punished for his father's sins, nor the father for his son's. The righteous person will be rewarded for his own goodness and the wicked person for his wickedness.* When the translation of Exodus 34:7 is rendered from other meanings of the same Hebrew words to reflect the true character of God, it should read: *Keeping mercy [kindness] for thousands, [lifting up] iniquity and transgression and sin, and acquits him who is not innocent; visiting the iniquity of the fathers (that is) upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.* All are guilty, but God delivers those who hear and do His instructions.

What does it mean for the Lord "to visit?" What happens to those the Lord visits? **Zephaniah 1:12:** *And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and visit the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* The purpose of the Lord's visit is to search Jerusalem with candles in order to make a change, but by a decision of the individual. *The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly* (Pr 20:27). Your spirit is what reveals your thoughts. God wants you to see that man's ways lead to spiritual death and eventually eternal death.

The "day of the Lord" is a day of wrath: **Zephaniah 1:14-18:** *14. The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastens greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of tempest and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18. 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 shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land. Fenced cities are the mind-set of the wicked who have built their walls from man-made bricks (false spiritual concepts). Day of the trumpet and alarm is a time when God speaks truth through His people, and the fleshly understanding of the people is darkened and many are shown to walk like blind men. For those who reject the message it becomes a day of wrath, or a time when God gives them up to their own delusions. **Psalms 89:31-32:** *31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod (of correction - Pr 22:15), and their iniquity with stripes.* God does not easily give up. He attempted to correct the King of Egypt 10 times, until Pharaoh's heart became so hard that it could not be changed. Will God do no less for all humanity?*

**Numbers 14:22-24:** 22. *Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles (signs), which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted (tested) me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23. Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.* All the generation that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb. Israel's experiences can be viewed as spiritual types today, and the promised land as the faith of Christ promised to those with ears to hear (cf Gal 3:7, 11, 14).

The Lord visits His people to bestow on them a previous promise, or to reveal the error of their ways. He visits to bring about reformation, which may come via a message, usually through another person, and will confirm it in your heart. Two such instances are given in symbolic language. Isaiah, concerning Israel, stated: **Isaiah 29:6:** *Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.* Thunder almost always accompanies a storm. Thunder represents the rebuke of the Lord: **Psalms 104:5-7:** 5. *Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. 6. Thou covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasten away.* At the rebuke of the Lord the waters (thoughts of man, Pr 18:4) flee away. The rebuke creates a shaking (earthquake) in their thinking.

Other prophets spoke in similar language: **Hosea 4:6:** *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.* **Amos 8:11-13:** 11. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: 12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. 13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.* Does God stop people from hearing the truth? No - they choose to stop listening (Mt 13:15).

Summary: **2 Chronicles 12:5-7:** 5. *Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. 6. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The Lord is righteous. 7. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.* The Lord was taking credit for the coming destruction, when all He did was to back off and allow natural events between nations take place, and prevented them when the people repented.

The day of the Lord's visitation is a time when people are tested by the truth. Those bringing the message have already been visited; their sun (knowledge of God) and moon (understanding of the Bible) have been darkened; and they have come through the earthquake (inward shaking) to serve the Lord. For those who do not have ears to hear, it is a day of the Lord's wrath, when He gives them up to reprobate minds to carry out the lusts of an unclean heart. This is one way God's wrath resides on people (cf Isa 51:17-20). Following, is the God I have come to know: **Joel 2:12-13:** 12. *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repent him of the evil.* Amen.