



Most of us prefer not to think about the “wrath of God”. It is too daunting. In fact, some criticise the very existence of God based on how they perceive Him in this regard. Others prefer a more benign, gentle, grand-fatherly God-figure.

Is Jesus only gentle and long-suffering, or is He really coming back again but this time as a Conquering King? Jesus’ own words give us a good insight as to what we might actually expect. And the truth may surprise us!

Sometimes when we see cataclysmic events, like the suffering and devastation experienced, for example, in the recent earthquake that hit Haiti, we turn our thoughts, albeit momentarily, to God. In fact, insurance companies often categorise these kind of events as “acts of God”.

Let’s take a compelling look into what God’s wrath is, and what isn’t.

To date some 200,000 people have lost their lives in Haiti. Thousands have suffered horrific injuries; surgeons performed some 4000 amputations. The earthquake caused infrastructure like roads and communication to be all but destroyed. Corpses littered the streets for weeks, and amidst the blowflies and stench there seemed to be very little relief in sight. The United Nations initially reported that it couldn’t adequately cope with this scale of devastation.

What happened in Haiti is reminiscent of the Asian tsunami a few years ago, where again, some 300,000 people died. Or, can we forget, the 3000 people who were killed in 2001 when the World Trade Centre was destroyed?

So, if you’re a thinking person, then you probably have further questions: What does Jesus have to say about all this? Is there anything in the scriptures that might help reconcile what’s happening in our world? Is it even worth thinking about?

Interestingly, Jesus, had a lot to say about just these sort of things. He said that the many calamities that we regularly face range from accidents to outright terrorism. An act of brutal terrorism occurred in the temple in His day, where the blood of the worshippers was mixed with their sacrifices. In another disaster, many were killed when a city tower collapsed. The accounts are worth reading in Luke 13, because Jesus then asked His disciples:

“Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Luke 13:4-5)

Jesus drew an important distinction between natural or man-made disasters as opposed to the coming wrath of God. The things that “happen” are often quite horrible and certainly strike fear into us. But the wrath of God is something that, as the Bible teaches, is coming, and unless we repent it will cost us our lives!

Jesus said – and listen to this – that such calamities would increase in the future and that there would be enormous suffering as never before (or ever again). Jesus spoke in terms of wars and earthquakes and famines and pestilence! He said that these are just the beginning of sorrows – that they’re just the “warm up” for what’s coming!

“For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and

never to be equalled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.
(Matthew 24:22)

Tie in what Jesus said here in Matthew 24 with Luke 21, as well as with the Book of Revelation, and we have a compelling “wake up call”.

You see, the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation is Jesus’ final word to us via His disciple John. Jesus asked John to write down everything he would see and experience in vision on God’s “day of wrath”, events that would hastily come on the whole earth. The escalation of natural and man-made catastrophes would cause *“no flesh to be saved alive”* (Matthew 24:22). And, if that weren’t bad enough, the book of the Revelation paints a vivid picture of the very wrath of God that cuts time short, in an apocalyptic manner, as He brings His Judgement upon all that have ever lived!

The bottom line, is that according to Jesus, just before He returns, the earth will experience devastating events as never before. For example, Jesus specifically told us of solar activity – a scorching sun that burns up a third of the world’s vegetation. He spoke of cataclysmic wars that take another third of human life, economic upheaval, a poisoned sea, ravaging pestilence, and so on.

Taken at face value it’s not a really cheerful picture, is it – but there is a silver lining – there is good news!

It’s natural to ask, of course, why all this? Isn’t God supposed to be kind and loving and compassionate? Surely He won’t allow anything like that, would He? Yet, many in today’s society see God as not much more than folklore, and therefore basically irrelevant in our “educated” society? Surely we don’t really need the trappings of this God myth, do we? – because didn’t we evolve into existence?

Well, we’d better wake up to the fact that number one: we didn’t evolve, and two: God exists—He is our Creator – He’s the One who made us; and three: that God will do what it takes to get our attention.

According to the scriptures, at the appointed time, Jesus is coming back. This time however, He’s coming not as a suffering saviour, but now with great power and wielding the sword of Justice. Jesus has an iron-sceptre-claim to our affairs in this world!

I’m not making this up: these are Jesus’ words. The catastrophes and scenarios that Jesus spoke about are about the consequences of this world’s sins finally being redressed.

See God’s justice is about balancing the scales in our favour! It began with Jesus who became sin in our place. He was crucified and in His death and resurrection our forgiveness and reconciliation to God became possible. Yet, Jesus still has some “unfinished business” here, and, it is based on Justice. You see, justice is the silver lining of “God’s wrath”.

It pays to remember what sin looks like from God’s perspective. Firstly, all of us have sinned, and therefore all of us are sinners. The fall of humanity from a perfect relationship God happened right in the Garden of Eden, right from the first humans. We, who are created in God’s image and likeness – and having been given freedom of choice – have in sin turned away from God. The result, because of sin and its consequences, is that our world is characterised by so much violence and immorality.

Did you know that our wrong choices affects God? To an ancient people not dissimilar to ourselves, God said,

“In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD your Redeemer. (Isaiah 54:8)

Remember how God felt – and dealt – with violent humanity in the days of Noah! From the book of Genesis we read:

The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

So the LORD said, “I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.”

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.
(Genesis 6:5-8)

What God saw on earth in those days grieved Him deeply. And again, listen to God’s thinking, His sense of justice, when He visited Abraham:

Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” (Genesis 18:20-21)

God is a God of grace, as much as He is a God of justice. His hand isn't random or ill-advised. God isn't capricious. The resulting destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are testimony to how God ultimately deals with unrepentant and wicked people.

Moving the spotlight away from history, and focussing on our day: Are we, here in this age, any better than those people? No, not at all! Our actions still reflect our fallen condition before God. Because, if we think about it, aren't we guilty, for example, of having murdered millions of people in the name of "abortion". No amount of "legislation" can make this acceptable at any level! To God this wickedness is not acceptable. It grieves His heart, as it should ours.

John heard a voice coming out of heaven saying: *"For her sins [the sins of this society] have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."* (Revelation 18:5)

"Therefore her plagues will come [all at once]—death and mourning and famine. And [this society] will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her." (Revelation 18:8)

John was given a detailed view of God's wrath on an unrepentant society – which we read in quite some detail in Revelation 16.

The first plague God pours out on sinful people are painful sores. These are those, who instead of worshipping God, follow a powerful and dominating world leader.

The next plague is a poisoned sea, where every living creature dies. Next, rivers and streams turn into blood!

Then, *"The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him."* (Revelation 16:8-9)

This is then followed by intense darkness, after which evil spirits gather world leaders for battle. Finally, in the words of scripture:

Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. (Revelation 16:18)

From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God

on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible. (Revelation 16:21)

And with that, finally God's wrath comes to an end. It's over. The old sinful ways of life in this world are now ended.

God's work of recreation can now begin – and history can be re-written in a way that's worth remembering. Everyone will come to know God, to learn His ways, from the least to the greatest of everyone who has ever lived.

The question I think we have to ask ourselves is: Have we become so anti-God as a society today that it takes all this for Jesus to get our attention?

Because, Jesus is coming. Everything He says is true and on cue. In His grace and longsuffering, God gives everyone ample time to repent. For example, God gave the people of Noah's day some 120 years to repent! There - was - no - excuse. Sadly, too few really listened!

"Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19:15)

The results of the "wrath of God" heralds some of the best news we could ever hear! Our survival depends on God's intervention – to save us no matter what the cost. If God were to allow our sinful nature to run its course, it would mean nothing less than total destruction! God cannot afford to forbear with our folly forever. He will respond to our wickedness in a righteous and timely manner.

As much as the wrath of God in the death of Christ gave peace to those who repent in this life, so will the coming wrath of God on this world bring about lasting peace to everyone.

God is our Father. His is strong and holy and true. He is gracious and compassionate. And while His anger is fierce, He is loving and tender and gentle.

John heard a loud voice from heaven, attesting to what God's plans are:

Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."
(Revelation 21:4-8)

Jesus' words of encouragement, exhortation and insight are worth heeding, because God only intends good for us – as a doting parent who loves and nurtures and disciplines His children.

The angel in the vision told John that God means what He says. God's justice is coming in Jesus' return – to save us from annihilation, either from the scorching sun, or from our own nuclear folly.

The question that remains, of course is, on which side of the fence are we? Will we rejoice at Jesus' coming, or will we be among those who curse Him? Are we amenable to the call of God in our lives? Are we willing to change our ways? Will we totally surrender to Jesus because He is the only means to life and to escape the wrath to come?

Don't put it off. Now is the time to accept Jesus as our Saviour. History can be re-written, but only if we turn to God.

To those who are faithful, Jesus says:

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. (Revelation 3:10-11)

May we have eyes to see what's really happening around us; may we have ears that take to heart every one of God's words, and may we have a mouth that tells future generations of God's love, His power and His justice in Jesus Christ.



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