

THE SECRET OF HIS PURPOSE .... THE PLAN FOR THE FULLNESS OF THE TIMES  
**TO HEAD UP ALL THINGS IN THE KING,**  
EVERYTHING IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH,  
**IN JESUS....**

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#60

***Wrath of God***

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In about the year 2239 BC, when the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, He determined to blot out all that He had created on the face of the earth, except Noah and his immediate family (Genesis 6:5-8). For 120 years, Methuselah and Noah preached righteousness to the masses, but the day came when enough was enough, and it was time for God's judgment.

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."  
(Genesis 6:13 NASB)

As this well-known story goes, the flood came and only eight people and select pairs of animals survived by riding it out in an ark. After a year, they all emerged from the ark, and Noah built an altar that pleased the Lord.

The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:21-22 NASB)

Notice that the Lord promised not to give the earth and all its creatures a repeat performance. He promised to never destroy the earth as long as it remained. So, contrary to what many say today, the world is not going to end, be annihilated. It will eventually change character as the kingdom of our Lord takes root, but it will not be obliterated. It will be transformed as the Father's eonian plan progresses to achieve His ultimate purpose of being All in all.

But take special note that the Lord had no allusions about the heart of man. The flood did not remove the evil intent of man's heart; it was simply preserved in the ark through the genetic code of Noah's family.

Then, God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying...

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in

the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." (Genesis 9:8-17 ESV)

God established an irrevocable, unconditional covenant with the entire earth and all flesh that dwells upon the earth for all successive generations from the time of Noah on. This covenant states that God will never destroy all flesh on the earth in one fell-swoop, so to speak, ever again. We should be grateful to the Lord for making such a covenant that is not dependent on any of us; otherwise, undoubtedly, there would have been ample opportunity for Him to hit the reset button once again and wipe out all flesh on earth.

However, God knew that there were many rough roads ahead for the race that He created in His image. Again, He saw the evil intent of man's heart and knew that men would slay one another. With this in mind, God established capital punishment: "*Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man*" (Genesis 9:6). It seems that this one statement intimates that, although God would never again judge as He did in Noah's day, He, nonetheless, would judge man for his wickedness, and the maximum sentence or punishment a man would receive is death. Of course, we know that Jesus forever and unequivocally settled the matter of death and man's sin on the cross, for His cross was and is a 100%, absolute success in the eventual (but, not all at the same time) salvation of all humanity.

In Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order.... (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 ESV)

Until we ALL arrive at the consummation of the ages, God will continue to judge in a variety of ways.

See *Judgment of All* — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art58.html>

Now, this article is about an aspect of God's judgment called *the wrath of God*. We could say that it is the more aggressive form of God's judgment, but it is not for ultimate annihilation or eternal torture, at least as far as I, and many others, see in scripture

Of course, there are those who believe that God is so angry at sinners that He is determined to torment them forever in hell, and they see no contradiction in the fact that God is love. We must not look at the wrath of God in the same light as the wrath of man. In his rage, man often seeks to destroy and "to get even." God's wrath has no such quality. His wrath is judicial and corrective. It is to set things right not to perpetrate another level of wrong.

It is true that no one is able to stand in the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16-17), but this does not mean that this wrath continues endlessly upon billions of billions of people created in the image of God. In a sense, God's wrath is simply death! As seen in the first covenant God made with the earth, death is the ultimate judgment. However, the most important covenant God has given us in, by, and through His Son demands that death be abolished (1 Corinthians 15:26). If there is no more death, then there is no more wrath and no more judgment, and everything is brought into life, the life of the Son. This is truly good news!

What I know without any doubt is—God is love; God so loves the world; love conquers all; love never fails; and with God all things are possible. The entirety of Adam's race and creation itself are destined to be immersed in the Father's love.

### Hebrew Wrath

There are two primary Hebrew words that speak of wrath: *qetseph* [Strong's H7110], which means "a splinter (as chipped off); figuratively rage or strife," and *chêmâh chêmâ* [Strong's H2534], which means "heat; figuratively anger, poison (from its fever)." The latter comes from the root word *yâcham* [Strong's H3179], which means "to be hot; figuratively to conceive, as in mating." Inherent in these words is an intense passion that is likened to the act of mating that leads to conception. In other words, something is birthed through wrath. As noted later, this plays into the Greek meaning of the word *wrath*.

There are two other Hebrew words that, depending on the translation, are translated as *wrath* or *anger* (*angry*). The first is a primitive root *anaph* [Strong's H599], which means "to breath hard." Examples are discovered in the Lord's dealings with His ancient people, such as in Deuteronomy 1:37; 4:21; 9:8, 20; 1 Kings 11:9; 2 Kings 17:18. From *anaph* is derived the word *aph* [Strong's H639], which is "properly the nose or nostril, hence the face; from the rapid breathing in passion." There are many references to the use of this word, so you are encouraged to search them out through a concordance. However, here are a few references: Deuteronomy 29:20, 23, 24, 27, 28; 31:17; Psalm 30:5; Nahum 1:3, 6.

The main point to keep in mind for all these Hebrew words is that they are associated with a passion and characterized by heavy or rapid breathing that is often associated with the act of mating and a resulting conception. Another point that must not be lost is that these words were often associated with God's ancient people.

To begin, the first mention of H7110 appears in Numbers 15:3, and the last mention is in Zechariah 7:12, and in between there are many instances in which God poured forth His wrath upon nations and cities.

"But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there will be no wrath on the congregation of the sons of Israel. So, the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony." (Numbers 1:53 NASB)

The Levites were different from the other tribes in that they were given charge of the tabernacle and its Most Holy Place. Only this holy tribe could tend to the tent, make sacrifices, and worship within it. If any other Israelite attempted to do so, the wrath of God would fall upon them and they would die. Non-Levites were considered strangers to the tabernacle.

'And in the journeying of the tabernacle, the Levites take it down, and in the encamping of the tabernacle, the Levites raise it up; and the stranger who is coming near is put to death.'  
(Numbers 1:51 YLT)

This first mention establishes how far God's wrath goes in dealing with man; we could say that the maximum sentence is death and no more. Throughout scripture, there is never any indication of eternal (never-ending) torture in an afterlife or in any other state of being, for that matter. Again, it appears that God's wrath is best described as death.

At first, the Israelites agreed to follow God's commands, but it didn't take very long until their rebellious hearts surfaced in defiance of God's law. In the wilderness, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, along with 250 leaders, men of renown, from the congregation tried to stage a coup against Moses and Aaron and his priesthood. They considered the whole of the congregation holy and, as such, had a right to the priesthood (Numbers 16). As the story goes, Moses set up a test to see who was right in the sight of the Lord. Well, the rebels lost the test, and God arranged a sinkhole to swallow up alive the four men, their families, and all the men associated with them, as well as a great fire to consume the 250 men of renown. As if this were not enough insult, the next day, the entire congregation grumbled against Moses and Aaron, which resulted in the Lord sending a plague on them. After witnessing God's judgment through a sinkhole and fire from heaven, what were they thinking when they decided to test Moses again? How blind can one be? But, then again, there go I but by the grace of God!

Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone forth from the LORD, the plague has begun!" (Numbers 16:46 NASB)

When it was over, 14,700 died from the plague. This was the wrath of God. By the way, those who were swallowed alive by the sinkhole also died. They were not brought down into some *hellhole* deep in the earth to be tormented. They perished from the midst of the assembly. Even in our day, sinkholes have swallowed up people alive, and they died (perished) as they were smothered (suffocated) by the soil.

As the years advanced, the rebellious heart of the Israelites surfaced over and over again at which time they suffered the wrath of God. The last mention of wrath pretty much sums up their history and their ultimate fate as a nation. Not only did many physically die, but their nations (Israel and Judah) both died.

"Thus, says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made

their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore, great anger came from the LORD of hosts. "As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the LORD of hosts, "and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus, the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate." (Zechariah 7:9-14 ESV)

But, the wrath of God is not just reserved for His ancient chosen nation, for Jeremiah makes it clear that the king of the nations extends His wrath to the nations.

But Jehovah is the true God, He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to stand His indignation. (Jeremiah 10:10 LITV)

Now, the first mention of the second Hebrew word for *wrath*, H2534, is found in Numbers 25:11, and the last mention is in Zechariah 8:2.

Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the sons of Israel while he was zealous for My sake among them, so that I did not consume the sons of Israel in My jealousy. (Numbers 25:11 LITV)

Again, the sons of Israel rebelled, but this time they played the harlot with the daughters of Moab, joining themselves with the Baal of Peor. This angered the Lord and He sent a plague upon them that killed 24,000 Israelites before Phinehas intervened and checked the plague.

Moving ahead in their history, Jeremiah recorded the Lord's jealous anger and wrath that was poured out on Shiloh and later on Jerusalem.

"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD. "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. (Jeremiah 7:11-12 NASB)

Psalms 78 records what happened at Shiloh where God's people became His adversary.

Elohim heard, and He was enraged, And He utterly rejected Israel." Then He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, The tent He had made to tabernacle among humanity." He sent His strength into captivity, And His beauty into the hand of the foe." He closed His people over to the sword, And He was enraged with His allotment." Fire devoured their choice young men, And their virgins had no nuptial song." Their priests fell by the sword, Yet their widows could not lament." Then Yahweh awoke as from sleep, Like a master jubilant from wine." He smote His foes backward; He gave them an eonian reproach. He rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim." Yet He chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which He loves." (Psalms 78:59-68 CLV)

The word *enraged*, translated as wrath in other translations, comes from the Hebrew root word *ebrah*, which means "overflow, arrogance, fury." With this in mind, Jeremiah warned of the wrath to come upon Judah in his day.

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched." (Jeremiah 7:20 NASB)

"Therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place." (Jeremiah 7:32 NASB)

The valley of the son of Hinnom later became known as *gehenna*, the garbage dump outside Jerusalem in Jesus' day that became synonymous with capital punishment that would later befall apostate Jews and Jerusalem. Jeremiah prophesied of a *gehenna of fire* in his day, and Jesus prophesied of a *gehenna of fire* that would come upon the generation of His day.

There are many examples of God's wrath poured out upon other nations. One such example is the judgment of Nineveh, as recorded by Nahum.

Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken up by Him. (Nahum 1:6 NASB)

But it is the last mention of God's wrath in relation to Zion and Jerusalem that truly gets to the heart of the matter.

Then the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath [H2534] I am jealous for her.' "Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.' (Zechariah 8:1-3 NASB)

Here we discover that God's great wrath is a jealous wrath that, we could say, burns with a passion that will not let Zion and Jerusalem go. Thus, God's wrath is not an end unto itself, but a means to an end. It is not wrath for wrath's sake, but for the good of the recipients! The Lord's great wrath is for restoration, not eternal destruction. It is for a live birth, not a still or aborted birth. This is intimated in the Hebrew word for *wrath* used in this verse that means "to be hot; figuratively to conceive, as in mating." There is a jealous passion involved that is determined to conceive, not to abort. Perhaps, we could call this passion a *conceiving* wrath.

However, we need to be reminded that the Zion and Jerusalem the Lord has in view here is the heavenly Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22) and New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). It is not ancient Jerusalem or a city in the Middle East called *Jerusalem*, no matter the history of the place. According to Paul, the present Jerusalem must be cast out (Galatians 4:21-31).

See *Cast out the Bondwoman* — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art25.pdf>

Now, the jealous or conceiving wrath of God leads to the primary Greek word for *wrath*.

### Passion of Love

In the New Testament, the most common Greek word translated as *wrath* is *orge* [Strong's G3709], which means "*desire, (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy) violent passion.*" One commentator claims the root of this word implies the deliverance from sin. This presents a very interesting meaning to the wrath of God, for perhaps it leads to deliverance, not ultimate destruction or endless torment.

Elwin R. Roach, in his online posting *Hell & the Lake of Fire*, writes that the word *wrath* speaks of "Christ's blazing passion and unwavering strength." He goes on to write:

It is active. It reaches out and accomplishes the burning desire of the soul, whatever it may be. The passion (*orge/wrath*) we see in the scriptures is usually in the context of heated determination.

Wrath in the Biblical sense is not a condition of rage, as the word implies in the English, but is generally associated with adamant punishment toward those in rebellion; yet it does not end with punishment alone. We see that it ends in deliverance, especially at the judgment of the Last Death, the Lake of Fire.

The passion of Christ, the wrath of the Lamb, is no doubt grievous to the carnal man, for it means the end of his lustful, self-indulging life. It is similar to a father's wrath when he punishes his rebellious son. It is not enjoyable to either of the two, yet it is done with understanding and in love, knowing the pain is but for a season and very necessary for the spirit of rebellion to be broken. This is in all of God's judgments toward His fallen creation."

Just like *conceiving* wrath, perhaps, we could call this wrath *deliverance* wrath.

Now, the first mention of *orge* wrath is used by John the Baptist as he warned the religious Jewish elite of that day.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath [*orge*] to come? (Matthew 3:7 NASB)

John was not alone in the use of this word, for Jesus used it in the same context, but He extended it to all the Jews of that day that rejected His Way as they held onto Judaism.

"Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath [*orge*] to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be

trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:23-24 NASB)

Paul picked up the same theme in regard to the Jews who demanded the Lord's crucifixion.

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath [*orge*] has come upon them to the utmost. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 NASB)

In these few verses, we read of a wrath that was upon the Jews and a wrath to come because they killed the Lord Jesus, as well as stood against Paul and those with him. Clearly, the wrath of God was on the Jews in that day.

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29-31 ESV)

It truly is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and the generation of apostate (unbelieving) Jews in that day experienced God's wrath. As if to confirm this thought, Paul wrote that the Israelites/Jews were vessels of wrath.

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath [*orge*] and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath [*orge*] prepared for destruction? (Romans 9:22 NASB)

In a general sense, the wrath of God abides on all sons of disobedience.

'He who is believing in the Son, hath life age-during; and he who is not believing the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath [*orge*] of God doth remain upon him.' (John 3:36 YLT)

But, according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou dost treasure up to thyself wrath, in a day of wrath [*orge*] and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.... (Romans 2:5 YLT)

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath [*orge*] of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6 NASB)

## Wrath to Come

At this point, let us pause for a moment and consider the matter of the wrath to come as mentioned by John, Jesus, and Paul.

This article is not about end-time eschatology, but a question is raised as to the nature of this wrath. Was the wrath to come fully accomplished in a first-century generation, or is it yet to come at the end of our age? Or, is there ample room for both scenarios? It is hardly necessary to make the point that many in our day see all the references to *the wrath to come* as pointing toward a great event at the end of our present age. I have held this view for many years, but lately, especially as I have studied *wrath*, have been challenged to reconsider it. I have pondered several questions: Could the wrath that the disciples expected be the wrath that came upon the Jews and Jerusalem of their generation? Could this have been the day (or, a day) of the Lord? Is there room for a generational wrath (i.e., first century) involving the Jews of that day and an end-time wrath that will conclude our present age? Could this be the day (or, a day) of the Lord as well? If these questions challenge your thinking, then join the club!

Although I have stated elsewhere that I am purposely not addressing such issues as this in my writings, I must confess, for full disclosure, that I am leaning toward the premise that the wrath Jesus, John, and Paul pointed to was the coming wrath upon Jerusalem and the Jews in 70 AD. There is no doubt that God sending the Roman army to destroy the city and the temple was His wrath of judgment for rejecting His Son. I am strongly leaning toward the book of Revelation being primarily a prophecy of this wrath that John saw before 70 AD, probably in the mid-60s.

Holding this view, however, does not rule out that a form of God's wrath will come upon the nations and all wickedness at the very end of our age. I'll leave it at that.

With these questions in mind, let us consider a few points, starting with the wrath that came upon Jerusalem.

'Serpents! brood of vipers! how may ye escape from the judgment of the gehenna? 'Because of this, lo, I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and of them ye will kill and crucify, and of them ye will scourge in your synagogues, and will pursue from city to city; that on you may come all the righteous blood being poured out on the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous, unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar: verily I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:33-36 YLT)

Some commentators argue that this generation does not refer to the generation of people that existed in that day but, rather, to the ones who will be alive at the end of our present age. This school of thought (i.e., futuristic school) is especially prevalent among those who see either all or part of Matthew 24 as an end-time event and not one that has already been fulfilled. They see Matthew 24:34 as a reference to those alive on earth at the end of our age: "*Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*" However, there is little reason to think that Jesus spoke of two different sets of generations. Logic says that the same group of people is in view throughout. After all, Jesus was answering the questions posed by His disciples:

"Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). The end of what age? What if the age they had in view was the end of the Mosaic age?

Let us assume that the generation in view was the first-century Jewish generation. What were all these things that were to come upon that generation?

And Jesus said to them, 'Do ye not see all these? verily I say to you, there may not be left here a stone upon a stone, that shall not be thrown down.' (Matthew 24:2 YLT)

Jesus was referring to the temple that stood in Jerusalem in 33 AD. But, how was it to be dismantled? Jesus had already given the answer to this question in His parable of the wedding feast.

"But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. (Matthew 22:5-7 NASB)

In this case, the king is God the Father. Jesus prophesied that not only would Herod's temple be destroyed but so would the entire city of Jerusalem. There were two reasons for this judgment. First, they had been warned that if they did not repent and bear kingdom fruit, judgment awaited them. This was the message of John the Baptist: "*The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (Matthew 3:10). Second, their religious system of sacrifices and Levitical priests called *Judaism* was about to become obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13). The entire book of Hebrews is devoted to this subject, which was written well before 70 AD.

However, God knew it was no easy task to rid His people of Judaism, and He had to ensure that Christians of that day did not revert back to it. So, He sent His Roman army, headed up by Titus, to set their city on fire. History tells us that on September 8, 70 AD, the Roman army sent by God finished the job. Jerusalem suffered God's capital punishment called *the gehenna of fire*. By the way, the siege on Jerusalem and the surrounding areas began around 66 AD and ended seven years later in 73 AD when Masada was taken. Over one million Jews were killed and thousands taken and sold as slaves.

As the Lord's people, they insulted the Spirit of grace, and they suffered the capital punishment of *the gehenna of fire*, which was swift and temporal. Once it started, the fire could not be quenched until all was burned up, then the fire itself burned out, since it had nothing left to consume.

See *Hell – Reality or Pagan Imagery?* — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art59.html>

For a historical account of the fall of Jerusalem, you are encouraged to read Josephus' *The War of the Jews*. Josephus was a Jewish historian who stood in the ranks of Titus and recorded the

events of that day. Upon reading Josephus' works, one gets the sense that much of what he described was foretold by Jesus about thirty-three years earlier, as recorded in Matthew 24.

To make the point, consider a few quotes from Josephus.

In describing the stone catapults used by the Romans against Jerusalem, Josephus wrote...

As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone, for it was of a white color, and could therefore not only be perceived by the great noise it made, but could be seen also before it came by its brightness; accordingly the watchmen that sat upon the towers gave them notice when the engine was let go, and the stone came from it, and cried out aloud in their own country language, "THE SON COMETH:" so that those that were in its way stood off, and threw themselves down upon the ground; by which means, and by their thus guarding themselves, the stone fell down and did them no harm. (*The Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 6, Section 3.272.)

The translator of Josephus' works was caught by the phrase *the son cometh* but had no good explanation for it. What did it mean? Could it be a reference to the Son of Man coming? To the Jews of that generation, Jesus did come but not as one would expect. He came in power and might to destroy the city and its people in fulfillment of the prophecy of Matthew 24:29-30. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. The white stones were like white clouds, and they came with great power to destroy. THE SON COMETH!

In describing the misery and carnage of the assault on Jerusalem, Josephus wrote...

Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them, for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of these bodies, as they ran upon such as fled them. (*The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 1.275.)

A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. (*The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 2.285.)

Jesus said: "*For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will*" (Matthew 24:21), and "*False Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect*" (Matthew 24:24).

There is intrigue in Josephus' work as he recounts the visible signs of that day.

Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus, there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus, also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskilled, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it; who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if Gog did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So, these publicly declared that the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after the feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius, [Jyar,] a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable nature as to deserve such signal; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover, at the feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the temple,] as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." But, what is still more terrible, there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in a very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereupon it is our custom for every one to make tabernacles to God in the temple, began on a sudden to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say any thing for himself, or any thing peculiar to those that chastised him, but still went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon our rulers, supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator, where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet he

did not make any supplication for himself, not shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him, Who he was? and whence he came? and why he uttered such words? He made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him. Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come. This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, "Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!" And Justas he added at the last, "Woe, woe to myself also!" there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost. (*The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 3.)

One cannot help but wonder if there was something rather unique going on in that day as the wrath of God was poured out on Jerusalem and Judea. Was this the wrath to come spoken of by the disciples? It does seem that Paul, Peter, and James had a sense that there was wrath (judgment) in the air, so to speak, and it was coming in their generation.

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 NASB)

For God has not destined us for wrath [*orge*], but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.... (1 Thessalonians 5:9 NASB)

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (1 Peter 4:7 NASB)

You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. (James 5:8-9 NASB)

Could it be that these three men, who knew that the temple and Jerusalem were going to be destroyed based on Jesus' word, were speaking of the wrath that was coming on that generation of Jews and saw this as the coming of the Lord? After all, they seemed to have certain immediacy in view and not a 2,000-year stretch. Besides, Peter and James wrote to the Israelite tribes (all 12 tribes; James 1:1) that were in dispersion. Although Paul wrote to those called out of the nations

(uncircumcision), he, nonetheless, was very much aware of the fate of the Jewish nation of that generation. I believe that evidence is pretty strong that this is the correct way to interpret this.

Now, what about the book of Revelation that graphically portrays the wrath of God and of the Lambkin? (Greek transliterated words are added to scripture for clarity.)

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath [*thumos*] of God is finished. (Revelation 15:1 NASB)

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath [*thumos*] of God, who lives forever and ever. (Revelation 15:7 NASB)

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath [*thumos*] of God." (Revelation 16:1 NASB)

The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath [*orge*]. (Revelation 16:19 NASB)

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath [*orge*] of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:15-16 NASB)

The word *wrath* in the first three verses comes from the Greek word *thumos* [Strong's G2372], which means "passion." The root word for *thumos* is *thuo* (verb), which means "to rush (breathe hard, blow smoke)." We can see the same general intense passion as conveyed in the word *orge*, as well as in the Hebrew words previously cited.

Regardless of how one interprets these verses or the entirety of Revelation, for that matter, there is one unavoidable conclusion to be made. There is an end to God's wrath; it is not endless as in a place called *hell* or any other place that man conjures up by his fertile pagan imagination. God is love demands an end to His wrath and even to His judgments.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." (Revelation 16:17 NASB)

Consider the exhortation Paul has given us in two of his epistles.

Let all bitterness and wrath [*thumos*] and anger [*orge*] and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31 NASB)

But now you also, put them all aside: anger [*orge*], wrath [*thumos*], malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. (Colossians 3:8 NASB)

If we are exhorted to put aside all wrath, both *thumos* and *orge*, don't you think that God Himself will put aside all wrath as well? How could God do something other than what we are instructed to do?

Well, before concluding, let us revisit the questions posed earlier.

Could the wrath that the disciples expected be the wrath that came upon the Jews and Jerusalem of their generation? Again, as I have professed: Yes; it seems apparent that it was.

Could this have been the day of the Lord? If not *the* day of the Lord, it surely qualifies *as a* day of the Lord.

Is there room for a generational wrath (i.e., first century) involving the Jews of that day and an end-time generational wrath that will conclude our present age? Could this be the day of the Lord as well? Perhaps. Maybe. After all, it seems that God needs to get the attention of our generation if He is to wrap up our present age and usher in the next age. How else to rid the world of every form of false religion but by bringing His wrath upon all of it? Of course, He could do all of this through tribulation and not necessarily wrath. His call, not ours! So, for those who like a nice clean systematic eschatology to hold onto, I am sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot deliver one, and actually believe these schools distract us from the underlying heart of God that loves.

## Conclusion

Well, let us conclude. There are six takeaways regarding the wrath of God.

1. God's wrath is a jealous passion that is determined and will succeed to ultimately conceive and deliver, not to destroy or abort. All who suffer God's wrath will be brought into God's all *eventually*. A good reminder of the heart of God for all is found in Isaiah, which is later quoted by Paul in Philippians 2:9-11.

"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. (Isaiah 45:22-23 NASB)

2. The worst-case consequence of God's wrath is death and no more. There is no *endless* (as opposed to temporal) torment or torture involved in His wrath. Could one suffer physical and mental anguish, even extreme pain, as a result of God's wrath? You bet! But it is always temporal and often swift. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah!

3. God's wrath has an end to it. In Revelation, with the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls of wrath, the angel announces that *it is done*, meaning the wrath of God and of the Lambkin is finished; there is no more to come, not even in the lake of fire. If as the Lord's body, we are told to put aside all wrath and anger, then does it not follow that our head (especially the gentle Lambkin) must also put it aside at some point?

4. Those who suffer death at the hand of God's wrath will face the judgment of the lake of fire, which is the second death. This judgment is never described as wrath; rather, it speaks of God's consuming spiritual fire that is for purifying, cleansing, chastening, restituting, and correcting.

See *Second Death—the Lake of Fire* — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art61.pdf>

5. Believers are not destined for the wrath of God. Tribulation; yes; judgment, yes; wrath, no!

For God has not destined us for wrath [*orge*], but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.... (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

Why? Because God is love (1 John 4:8), and neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Messiah Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

6. Finally, we started with God's irrevocable, unconditional covenant with the earth and how God places the rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with the earth. Every time we see a rainbow, we too should be reminded of God's covenant. God so loves the world. He is not going to destroy it in wrath. He is going to restore it, even if He must shake it up a bit or even a lot. After all, who possesses the earth? The Son!

'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.' (Psalm 2:8 NASB)

How could the Father ever pour out His wrath on the earth in such a manner that it is totally wiped out again? What would His Son have to inherit?

Rainbows appear after rain has fallen that refreshes the earth. The air is clear and bright as the sun shines on the water vapor that lingers in the air. Also, clouds linger in the sky. This is a picture of the Son coming. The Son of Man comes on the clouds. He is the source of life (water), and He is the Son (sun). Only He can refresh the earth; only He can clear the air. Only He can wash away the pollution (corruption) of the world and usher in a new day in which righteousness dwells. Only He can fill the whole earth with the glory of God.

As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. *And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.* (Ezekiel 1:28 NASB)

Every time we see a rainbow, let us declare—*The Son Cometh!*