

What is the Wrath of God?

Why should we aspire to learn the definition of “the wrath of God”? We think that the wrath of God manifests in thunder, lightning, wars, famine, pestilence, blood and gore. And back of it is an invisible God, saying “This hurts me more than it hurts you,” grinning joyfully, as He notches up the level of torment.

Is this the wrath of God? Although Scripture *may* convey this impression to surface readers, it is not what the Bible *means* to tell us about the wrath of God. What does the Bible say? “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8, RSV). Scripture actually defines the *wrath* or *anger* or *indignation* of the Lord.

Let’s start with this definition of the wrath of God:

Because sin is chosen, God withdraws, resulting in trouble. This equals His wrath.

We can make this into a **code** and place the code within our Scripture text:

[Because sin is chosen] *Results in Trouble*
God withdraws **/Equals His wrath/Here is our first text:**

“My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’ And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods” (Deut. 31:17, 18).

Now, where within this Bible text shall we put our **code**? Where do we find a reference to His “wrath?” Here it is. “Anger.” So we put the code for “Equals His wrath” around “anger.”

/anger/

Since there are no more references to His *wrath*, we shall go on to the next entry—“because sin is chosen.” This is what they did to merit God’s “*anger*.” There are a couple of references to this in our Scripture’s context; “evil,” and “because they have turned to other gods.” Find these two references in our text and code them.

[evil]
[they have turned to other gods]

Now, where do we find reference to God’s withdrawing? Can you find and code them?

I will forsake them
I will hide my face from them
God is not among us
I will surely hide my face

Now, the last entry: “Results in Trouble.” How many references to this can you find and code?

devoured

evils and troubles

Can there be any question as to the definition of “the wrath of God”?

How many times must Scripture say something before we hear it and know it’s true? Only once. But Scripture also says, “No one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness” (Deut. 17:6, NIV; Matthew 18:16). God wants to give us more than one witness to testify regarding the wrath of God. I’m going to offer you five witnesses who are going to say that we have been wrong about the *wrath* or *anger* or *indignation* or *fury* of the Lord.

But just to make sure, we’re going to do the same coding on these references.

“I will slay in My anger and My fury all for whose wickedness I have hidden My face from this city” (Jeremiah 33:5).

Can you get all four codes into this quotation? What is the wrath of God in this reference? Right. “Anger” and “fury.” What happens when God gets angry? “I have hidden my face from this city.” What happens when God hides His face? The people are slain because they are wicked, because they have chosen sin.

How about these references? Can you code them similarly?

“For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God ... Therefore the wrath of the Lord fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he has given them up to trouble. . . ” (2 Chronicles 29:6, 8).

“For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their wooden images provoking the Lord to anger. And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin” (1 Kings 14:15, 16).

“They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore, the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight.... The Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight” (2 Kings 17:17-20).

“For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry” (Isaiah 57:17).

“They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—. . . You deserted the Rock who fathered you . . . The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. ‘I will hide my face from them,’ he said, ‘and see what their end will be['] for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. For a fire has been kindled by my wrath. One that burns to the realm of death [*sheol*] below. It will devour the earth and its harvest and set afire the foundations of the mountains” (Deut. 32:16-22, NIV).

Now count them. There are five witnesses, two speaking twice, that identify God’s wrath. When He goes away, leaves off His protecting duties, and leaves that person or area vulnerable to Satan or whatever the environment holds that can potentially hurt them, He calls it His “wrath.” His wrath is when He “stands down” and doesn’t exercise His power to protect and save—when He says to the wicked, “Have it your way,” leaving him or her to whatever they prefer instead of Him—leaves them to activities in which He cannot participate. And when He goes, His protection goes with Him.

There are innumerable references in the Bible that give this picture of the anger of God. Most of them offer two or three of the elements or code. But these seven texts offer all four of the elements. It seems that God seriously wants us to understand His wrath.

-

Phrases to Watch For

You will recall that Jesus, in the persona of sin, was “delivered up” for destruction. Some Bible translations say “handed over” rather than “delivered up.” These and other phrases occur regularly in Scripture in connection with statements of God's “wrath” or “anger.” Watch for them. You may wish to begin your investigation with the book of Psalms, in which this relationship particularly stands out. (See also Judges, 2 Chronicles 1-36, and other places). Other phrases to watch for are “gave him/them over” “abandoned,” “forsook/forsaken,” “rejected” or that God “hid His face.”

Once you begin noticing them, you will find them everywhere in Scripture, connected with those passages dealing with God's wrath. They mean that sin has caused the departure of God and, thus, His protection.

For More Information

- www.4Adventists.com
Two Books Titled: *Light Through the Darkness: A Vindication of God*, 157 pages, and an *Adventist Supplement*, 72 pages.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBZfdgggyXw&feature=youtu.be
(or) <http://youtu.be/hMaItpis72c>
A Video Titled: *A New Look At the Character of God*
- www.GodsCharacter.com
A Book Titled: *Servant God: The Cosmic Conflict Over God's Trustworthiness*, 418 pages
- www.TeachServices.com/as-he-is-4th-angel-publications-paperback-1si/
A Book Titled: *As He Is: Issues in the 'Character of God' Controversy*, 334 pages (Contact straub@direct.ca for alternate pricing.)

