



## Is God's Wrath Stronger Than His Love? (Part I)

***Deuteronomy 7:2: (NASB) and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.***



There are MANY things in the Bible that are easily misunderstood and therefore easily misrepresented. Perhaps the most singularly misrepresented subject in the entire Bible is the nature of God Himself. There are many who accuse God of being angry, vengeful, cruel and unjust, especially because of the Old Testament. They write Him off as unworthy of respect, and laugh when the New Testament presents Him as just, loving and merciful. The contradiction, they say, is untenable and glaring. When we read certain Old Testament verses without explanation or context, we can begin to identify their perspective. What we know based on the study

of Scripture and history is that they are wrong. God DOES show anger, wrath and harshness in the Bible, but there is a plan behind it if we are willing to search it out!

At the time of this podcast, there is a devastating war in Ukraine and in other places around the globe, causing massive suffering that will impact people for years to come. On the macro level, we have an endless cycle of war and death - why is a God of love not intervening to stop all war?

A new study estimates at least 5.2 million children globally have lost a parent or caretaker from COVID-19. Why does a God of love not intervene for these innocent children and stop diseases?



(Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/24/health/covid-parent-caretaker-deaths-study/index.html>) At least 5.2 million children globally have lost a parent, grandparent or family member who helped care for them to COVID-19, a new study says. The study, published Thursday in the medical journal *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, looked at COVID-19 mortality data from 21 countries from the start of the pandemic in March 2020 through October 2021 and estimated the number of children who lost a parent or caregiver. The number of children affected rose by 90 percent from the end of April 2020 to the end of October 2021.

On a micro level, why does a God of love not step in and heal our loved ones? Why are we born, only to spend a lifetime suffering before we die? To say "God is love" is the opposite of what people experience. When we look around at the world, it does not make sense that there is a God of love.

Over this two-part series, we will answer these and other questions as we take a reasoned approach based on Scripture.

Skeptics and agnostics love to point to many specific scriptures in the Old Testament, where God looks like He is vengeful, cruel and unjust. Let's bring up a few of those examples. What about when God instructed the Canaanites to be annihilated in the book of Deuteronomy? That does not sound loving.



Israel had been delivered from slavery and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. When the time finally came, Joshua was to lead them to take the land of Canaan.

### Moses gives Israel God's instructions:

**Deuteronomy 7:1-2:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, <sup>2</sup>and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.*

God is saying: *I am giving you (Israel) this land, and I will help you wipe out seven nations in the process.*



You mean this is all over land? Is there no other land in the entire world - does it have to be this specific piece of dirt? How could God view land as more important than human lives?

This is an important question, so, let's look at the scriptural answer. God saw this long before it happened.

### Over 400 years before this proclamation from Moses, God told Abram of these events, and what He said is the first key to understanding His intentions:

**Genesis 15:13-16:** (NASB) *<sup>13</sup>God said to Abram, Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. <sup>14</sup>But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. <sup>15</sup>As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup>Then in the fourth generation they (Your people - the nation of Israel) will return here (to Canaan), for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.*

- ① This prophecy from God was many years before Abram's son Isaac was born - Abram did not have any children yet, but here God was already guaranteeing that Abram's future generations would return to the land of Canaan.
- ① Moses was a fourth-generation descendant of Levi. Levi was one of the 12 sons of Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel, and whose sons became the nation of Israel). Jacob was Abraham's grandson, Isaac's son. Moses was in the fourth generation after Israel was established.
- ① Even though there were technically seven nations in the land who would be killed, here the term "Amorites" was used to represent all the peoples who inhabited Canaan. (See [Genesis 48:22](#) and [1 Kings 21:26](#).) The Canaanites were descendants of Noah's grandson named Canaan.



- ① God would not judge the Amorites until their iniquity (sin) grew to its full measure. This was a prophecy given many years beforehand. God is not impetuous. There is a distinct process here.

Before looking at the depth of the iniquity of the Amorites (representing the seven nations in the land) on which God pronounced judgment, we need to pause and observe the character and methods used of God as He dealt with humanity:



1. Sin always brings consequences.
2. Sin also brought hope.

**Genesis 2:15-17:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>The LORD God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup>but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

There were clear and relatively simple guidelines for Adam and Eve.



But Adam and Eve had no concept of what death was. All they did was take a bite of fruit! The resulting punishment on them and in turn, all of us, does not seem to fit the crime.

However, if we put this into perspective scripturally, we will see a whole different picture over the course of this 2-part series.

**Inevitably they did not need an understanding of death, as they would ultimately follow a new allegiance:**

**Genesis 3:4-5:** (NASB) <sup>4</sup>The serpent said to the woman, you surely will not die! <sup>5</sup>For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Adam and Eve chose Satan's leadership instead of following God's. Satan said they did not have to worry about dying. Adam and Eve put dying out of their minds because they chose to not follow God and follow Satan's lead instead.

**This new allegiance would only grow through the history of sinful man:**

**Ephesians 2:1-2:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.



Could it be that those who blame God are basically defending themselves because they do not want to be judged for their own behavior?

There is something to this. When we look around at the world, we see a lot of this behavior. We get full of ourselves. We want what we want. We say: *Don't judge me! I can do what I want. I have my rights, and I am following my own dreams. What others think is irrelevant.* We have made ourselves God. Of course, we do not want to be judged, so we say it is all God's fault.

If we stop here, it looks hopeless. Satan is the ruler of the world and Adam messed things up; where do we go from here? Yet, God planted hope where the course of events made things look hopeless.

There are four ways **God planted hope** at the very beginning of mankind. Let's look at these points that present hope before we get into details about the darkness and evil of the Canaanites.

1

### God pronounced the eventual end of Satan's dominance:

**Genesis 3:15:** (NASB) *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed (Satan's followers) and her seed (Jesus); he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*

Ultimately, Jesus will deal a death blow to Satan (you kill a snake by crushing or bruising its head). But Satan does damage in the meantime by drawing man ever deeper into sin and by killing the man, Jesus. This is a prophecy saying Satan took the allegiance of mankind. He himself will eventually suffer the consequence of death for doing such a thing.



2

### God clothed/covered Adam and Eve in their sinful state with the skin of an animal (perhaps a sheep?):

**Genesis 3:21:** (NASB) *The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.*

Though they sinned, God was gracious and gave them a protective covering for their bodies. The cost was the life of an animal - a sacrifice - a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus that would cover mankind's sin. **This was a seed of hope in the midst of sin entering the world.**



3

### Because of other scriptures we know that God had preplanned for sin's dominance and would use it as an eternal lesson for all to experience.

**God knew there would be this intervening period of darkness before it became light again.** This reminds us of going through surgery. It is painful, bloody and scarring, but in the end, it is worth that comparatively short recovery time in order to fix whatever was wrong. Going through recovery can seem endless. But once it is done and we look back, we find it was worth the pain and suffering.

**1 Peter 1:19-20:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>*but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.* <sup>20</sup>*For he was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.*

God planned for the Lamb (Jesus) to be slain *before the foundation of the world*. God knew the need for a savior before the world's foundation was even laid. **Preplanned hope was already in place.**

**John 1:29:** (NASB) *The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*



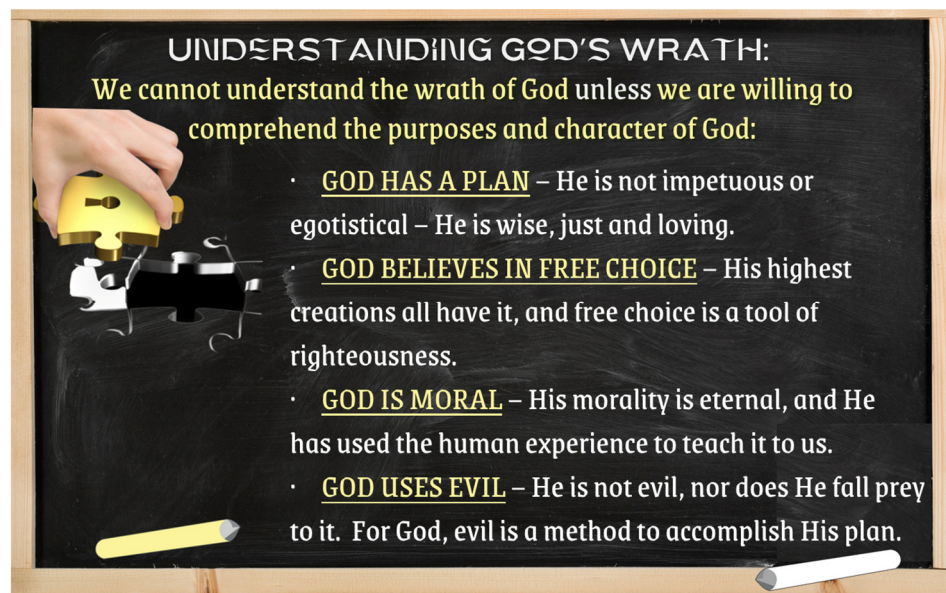
*The sin of the world* - the **WHOLE** world! Not just Israel and not just Christians!

#### **4** ➤ **God followed through on His promised consequences and allowed His masterful plan of learning through sin to unfold:**

Genesis 3:22-23: (NASB) <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever <sup>23</sup>therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

God removed them from their source of everlasting life - the *tree of life* - which meant their lives would eventually cease. God followed through. Sin happened; consequences had to follow.

We suggest four points regarding the purposes and character of God:



These four points help us understand the ultimate good that will come from the experience of evil.

If some are going down the road of judging God's actions, they had better be careful to have **ALL** the facts!

**If God has a pure character and pure intentions,  
then why did He tell Israel to destroy seven nations?**

Let's remember that God was not arbitrary here. He saw the evil in the nations of Canaan and would not act against them until that evil grew to its full measure. We can ask who decides what that full measure looks like, but the obvious answer here is that God knows and proclaims such things.

The problem is that many question God at every turn, because they want to be God - they want His authority - and want it their own way! Evil teaches us that God's way is the only way.



## Here Moses is speaking to the people in preparation for their eventual conquest of Canaan:

**Deuteronomy 9:1-6:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, <sup>2</sup>a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, Who can stand before the sons of Anak? <sup>3</sup>Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you.*

The Anakim or Anakites were Canaanites. The Canaanites were one of those seven groups of people we read listed in Deuteronomy 7:1 - the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

The Anakites were physically large, menacing warriors. When the Israelite spies went into Canaan long before this, they saw the Anakites and said: *Oh no, we cannot fight them!* Moses is saying that God would go before the Israelites *as a consuming fire*.

To the skeptical hearer, this is obvious unfair treatment. God, for no other reason than favoritism, will plow these nations under so that Israel, His favorite people, can just have their land!

### But let's read further:

*<sup>4</sup>Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. <sup>5</sup>It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>6</sup>Know, then, it is **not because of your righteousness** that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.*



God makes the point of letting the Israelites know three times that this was not done because of their righteousness.

There does not appear to be any overt favoritism here. It is important to note that God did NOT command the destruction of the Canaanites just to take control of their land. They were being destroyed because the depth of their sin was so immense. And God was patient - He waited hundreds of years before their immorality became so rampant as to have no recovery or possibility of repentance. The context is so important.

### God had a judgment against these people that came to its full measure. What was it based on?

**Deuteronomy 12:29-31:** (NASB) *<sup>29</sup>When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, <sup>30</sup>beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise? <sup>31</sup>You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.*

They murdered their children; that is sickening.



The world sees God  
as impetuous and  
egotistical.

Here is the problem: People look at God like they look at the gods they create because the gods they create are built on the image of man. Their gods are impetuous, sensual, emotional, jealous and are full of warring and hate. God is NOT like this!

Burning these children in sacrifice to the god Molech was to ensure good crops. Children up to four years old were burned alive! It is hard for us to understand how they could be so dark and evil, but let's look at present-day practices. Some of the more controversial legal late-stage abortion techniques are difficult to justify as well. Think about the inhumane treatment back then and now. Are we on the same level?

Evil is fascinating. There is something in us that likes to see how far we can take things. It sounds like these Canaanites went down every road God sees as hideous and abominable.

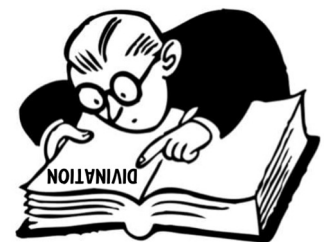


**Observation:** When we read secular writings about battles in the ancient world, there is often a glorification of conquests with graphic descriptions of what was done with the bodies of the enemy. We do not find that in the Bible. God and Israel did NOT take pleasure in the killing of these people.

**The depravity of the Canaanites was bigger and even more graphic than the Scriptures detail:**

**Deuteronomy 18:10-12:** (NASB) <sup>10</sup>There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, <sup>11</sup>or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. <sup>12</sup>For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.

We do not often use the word "divination." This means seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means like fortune telling, mediums and spiritists. Often, to find out the future, ancient diviners and oracles cut open birds and animals to read their entrails.



There is a lot here that once analyzed gives a broad-based description of people who were obsessed with pleasing their gods and wanting to predict the future for selfish needs. They did this by committing unspeakable acts. We will just mention some of these things as we observe God's judgment.

(Source: Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, 144-145) The Canaanites had an essentially pragmatic approach to worship. They wanted abundant harvests, so at their hilltop shrines they indulged in practices which they considered might encourage fertility and growth. Their worship-patterns became little else than sexual orgies with a religious scenario...

Though these practices may seem interesting, they threw out the sacredness of human relationships.



(Source: Raymond Brown, *The message of Deuteronomy*, 146) Canaanite worship was socially destructive. Its religious acts were pornographic and sick, seriously damaging to children, creating early impressions of deities with no interest in moral behavior. It tried to dignify, by use of religious labels, depraved acts of bestiality and corruption. It had a low estimate of human life. It suggested that anything was permissible, promiscuity, murder or anything else, in order to guarantee a crop at harvest.

(Source: Clay Jones, "We Don't Hate Sin So We Don't Understand What Happened to the Canaanites," "An Addendum to 'Divine Genocide' Arguments" pages 57, 64) It is verifiable that around the time of the exodus, many penalties for things which the Canaanites once saw as questionable were made very lax.

Penalties for actions the Canaanites had previously considered questionable, became very lax at about the time of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. Just about anything was permissible. There were no penalties for heinous acts - in fact they were encouraged. From the sacrificing of children to lying, cheating and bestiality, divination and sorcery - this was all part of their culture. For this, God destroyed them.



We do not like uncertainty. Humans quickly turn superstitious to try to make sense of things. When the Canaanites were worried about crop failure, they turned to horrible acts to convince the gods to improve the harvest. The Israelites received the Law from God to keep them pure and give them real guidance and real truth.

Contrast the moral code of the Canaanites with the basis of the Jewish Law. The Ten Commandments are all about respect and morality, the sacredness of life and the care for one another.

### The Commandments did not change down through the centuries:

Exodus 20:3-4: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>You shall have no other gods before Me. <sup>4</sup>You shall not make for yourself an idol...

Exodus 20:7: (NASB) You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain...

Exodus 20:8-10: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

Exodus 20:12-17: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother... <sup>13</sup>You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup>You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup>You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.



This is a great study resource showing how the Law protected the sanctity of life.



**Applying the Ten Commandments to Our Lives Today**  
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There is a **STARTLING** difference between a Law where the Commandments honor God and those around you, and the Canaanites' belief based on a fundamental disregard for life, base sensuality and the dark arts of divination.

Divining and magic called upon the dark spirit world that offered only darkness and evil with no guidance on how to live godly and productive lives. They were plugged into that dark world.

**God's warnings about keeping any shred of this evil society intact were clear and justified:**

**Deuteronomy 7:2-5:** (NASB) <sup>2</sup>and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. <sup>3</sup>Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. <sup>4</sup>For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. <sup>5</sup>But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

God's instructions were very clear: Leave no trace of the abominations and heinous acts. As we said, humans find sin fascinating, which is why the verses above warn that if they *intermarry* with the Canaanites, they will be drawn away from God. The Canaanites will not be drawn to the sacredness of the Israelitish practices; the Israelites will be drawn to the darkness. God is emphatic about the destruction of every shred of evidence of their sins.

AS BAD AS THIS IS, DOES ALL OF THIS JUSTIFY KILLING EVERYONE?



God is saying: Right must be pure, and wrong or evil has to be obliterated. There is no gray area.

In ancient cultures, individuals rarely had the capacity to deviate from the norm - it was kill or be killed. God saw the evil, and it was so rampant that it could no longer be tolerated.





When we point our finger to blame God, it is often because we want to protect ourselves from feeling judged. We feel that we should be able to do whatever we want to do. God does not operate that way, and we have no right to judge Him because of OUR feelings.

It is so important to do the hard work to find the rest of the story before we draw any conclusions regarding God's character.

**This one example of God's judgment of evil is dramatic and detailed.  
What about other examples?**

The Old Testament has several other examples that at first glance can make God look overreactive and vengeful. As we consider some of these, let's remember what we are trying to accomplish: Our objective is to see the broad picture of why God did certain things so we can appreciate His character and plan. We do not want to get lost in narrowly looking at what we might presume to be harsh at first glance.

**Some say the Bible admits that God is the creator and perpetrator of evil:**

Isaiah 45:7: (KJV) I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

(Source: Biblical commentary by J. Vernon McGee) "And create evil"—the word evil does not mean wickedness in this instance, but rather "sorrow, difficulties, or tragedies"—those things which are the fruit of evil, the fruit of sin.

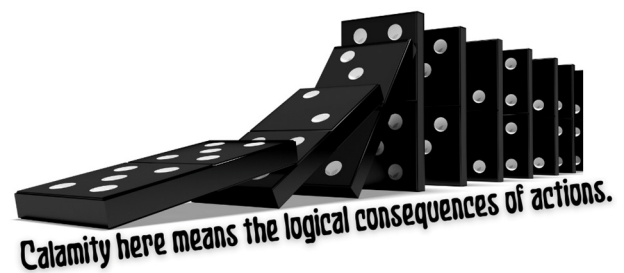
God does NOT *create evil*, but He allows the harshness that follows evil to develop a logical consequence.

**These verses read more clearly in the New American Standard Version:**

Isaiah 45:6-7: (NASB) 'That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, 'The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.

Here the Hebrew word translated into English as *evil* in the King James Version is translated as *calamity* in the New American Standard Version. We have seen that God DOES bring hardship and difficulty, as He is our eternal parent. Does He bring calamity? Yes, because **a good, loving parent brings "calamity" (tough love, to use a modern phrase) to a child going in the wrong direction to alter their course.**

Calamity means the difficulty, trial or consequences **for the purpose of teaching the child.** Calamity does not mean: *You did that wrong, so I am going to send COVID or a hurricane to wipe you out!*



**God is a God of justice. Where sin exists, consequences follow:**

Romans 6:23: (NASB) for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Sin will always bring death. This is ultimately where Jesus comes in, and this will be developed more in Part II. However, unavoidable consequences will always follow sin.



**Episode 779 and 783:  
Does the Same God Rule in  
the Old and New Testament?**

God's role and approach in the Old Testament

**(Parts I and II)**



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**WHY DOES GOD LET BAD THINGS HAPPEN?**

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God will often use the guidelines the sinful world puts in place saying: *This is what you would have done; I will allow it to happen to you!* We can bring justice upon ourselves when creating judgments on others. God can easily turn those back on us.

Let's move to another example of instruction from God of the annihilation of a people in the Old Testament.

**King Saul was Israel's first king. Here the prophet Samuel tells him to destroy the Amalekites, a desert tribe living in the area south of Canaan - even the women, children and animals:**

**1 Samuel 15:1-3: (NASB)** <sup>1</sup>Then Samuel said to Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD of hosts, I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. <sup>3</sup>Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

This sounds as extreme as the destruction of the seven Canaanite nations!



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**WHO WAS KING SAUL? PARTS 1 AND 2**

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### As we dig deeper, we will see there was an inherent evil in this people also:

**Deuteronomy 25:17-19: (NASB)** <sup>17</sup>Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, <sup>18</sup>how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. <sup>19</sup>Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

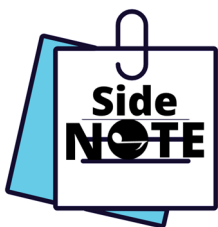
Israel was in captivity for a long time in Egypt. They were finally released and began the long walk away from their captors. They were unarmed and not dangerous; they had been slaves for hundreds of years! Unprovoked, the Amalekites came up from behind the column of Israelites and killed the stragglers, the weary, the faint and the sick, those who could not keep up with the rest.

The Amalekites did this just because they could. They lacked a respect for the sacredness of life. God does not treat this lightly. When someone disrespects the sacredness of life there are inevitably consequences.

The Amalekites were there several times to fight Israel, and in some instances alongside the Canaanites. These were a hateful and murderous people. In the end, King Saul disobeyed God's order and allowed the Amalekite king to live, causing disastrous results. For hundreds of years afterwards they raided villages of the Israelites and even took two of King David's wives hostage.

While these were hard commands (that Saul did not obey), we see a continued focus on standing against acts that violate the sanctity of life.

God's law of strict justice was there to identify the degradation of sin. An eternal plan requires strict boundaries. Further, God's actions were just in the context of an unjust world, and He handed out the same harsh punishment to the enemies of His people as the enemies would have executed upon the Israelites.



A thousand years later, a direct descendant of that Amalekite king shows up in the Book of Esther as the murderous villain Haman, who tried to exterminate all the Jews. If not for God's overruling through Queen Esther, he would have succeeded. That is why it is important to look at these periods of time from God's larger perspective to understand why certain events are allowed.



Learning from Esther to stand heroically against all odds

King Saul had the prophet of God, Samuel, standing in front of him - he had a direct line to God Himself! There was no misunderstanding of the directions received, but Saul ignored commands.

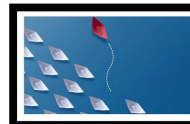




## Saul had rewritten God's commands to him given through Samuel and therefore suffered consequences:

**1 Samuel 16:14:** (NASB) *Now the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.*

For a detailed study of  
**1 Samuel 16:14:**



**Episode 1208:  
Do We Really Have  
Free Will?**

Understanding the power of free will and why we have it

Saul committed two serious acts of disobedience - once by inappropriately offering a sacrifice that was supposed to have been done by Samuel, and the other by not killing all of the Amalekites (for selfish reasons) we talked about before. Did God actively send an evil spirit or does this mean the hedge of protection from Him was removed and any old thought would be permitted to take root?

Yes, God removed His protection and evil filled the void. Evil is attractive and fascinating to humans.

The higher one goes in the favor of God, the more responsible they become to that favor. Saul was favored above all as the anointed king of Israel, even though God advised the Israelites against having a king. When Saul rejected God's way, God rejected Saul. As we saw in the Garden of Eden, God permitted Satan's influence to become Saul's chief guide.

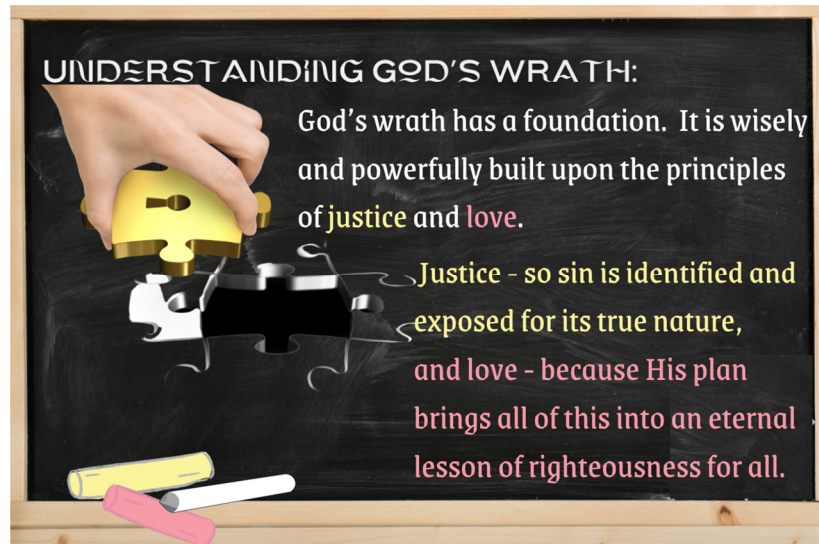
### What does it mean that an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized Saul?

**1 Samuel 16:14-15:** (NASB) *<sup>14</sup>Now the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. <sup>15</sup>Saul's servants then said to him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you.*

God withdrew His favor, His overseeing of Saul's reign, His support, as well as Samuel's mentoring who never saw Saul again after this day. Without God's protection, the darkness that arose from Saul's natural personality began to flood in. *Spirit* can be translated as "an influence" or "unseen power." The unseen power of Saul's own heart needed God's grace to be an honorable king. When God's grace was removed, Saul's own natural propensities returned in full. They had been overridden by God's grace and provision for many years at this point; this was just the final incident. Saul went mad all on his own. God only removed the dam that held the water back.

**1 Samuel 16:14-15:** (this time from YLT) *<sup>14</sup>And the spirit of Jehovah turned aside from Saul, and a spirit of sadness from Jehovah terrified him; <sup>15</sup>and the servants of Saul say unto him, 'Lo, we pray thee, a spirit of sadness from God is terrifying thee.*

We make ourselves vulnerable when we step outside the protection of God.



All the killing and annihilation had an eternal purpose. God's anger IS big because the human sin and degradation He is responding to is a massive, life-draining tumor.

**After looking at these examples of evil, sin and their harsh consequences, can we better appreciate God's wisdom?**

Appreciating God at this point would still be difficult for many as what we have seen so far are severe responses to heinous actions. We can appreciate the protectiveness of these responses, but we do not yet have the full picture in place. We see hints of God's love and God's plan, but do not yet see their full impact.

We have not yet fully answered the question about God's wrath. We have reviewed several difficult scenarios but there is more to put in place.

Let's review what we have observed about God's purposes and character:



- **GOD HAS A PLAN** - He is not impetuous or egotistical - He is wise, just and loving.

We can certainly see that God does have a plan and is not showing Himself to be impetuous, but it is still hard to grasp the wisdom and loving part. Those are still a little hazy.

- **GOD BELIEVES IN FREE CHOICE** - His highest creations all have it, and free choice is a tool of righteousness.

We can see the free choice very clearly, even with Satan reigning. But seeing it as a tool of righteousness is still out of focus because, where is the righteousness? Where is the good ending when free choice goes wrong? There is just death and destruction!

- **GOD IS MORAL** - His morality is eternal, and He has used the human experience to teach it to us.



While His morality is evident, the “teaching” part seems to only work for some and not for others - we have a bunch of people who are now dead! How does God teach someone who is dead? Is there an inconsistency here?

- **GOD USES EVIL** - He is not evil, nor does He fall prey to it. For God, evil is a method to accomplish His plan.

It is obvious that evil does not escape God's sight, but His method for using it seems random and even a bit frightening at this point.



There are still questions regarding these four points, so we need to dig deeper.

All of this killing! Where is God's mercy? It was being developed.

If we look closely at the entire Old Testament, we will see that **a pattern of a promise was being developed to defeat evil as a principle of practice**. This pattern of promise for hope began in the Garden of Eden with veiled references of salvation. It continued as God later chose Abram as the father of the nation of Israel that would ultimately fulfill God's eternal plan of righteousness and subdue evil.

Does choosing Abram indicate favoritism? Did God think Abram was just gullible enough to go along with His directions? No.

**Notice what God required of him:**

Genesis 12:1-3: (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>Now the LORD said to Abram (later called Abraham), Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;*

God told Abram to leave everything familiar and comfortable and follow strict guidance and direction from God. He would then be given generational blessings.

**But first he would have to drop everything and walk away.**

**Abram does this:**

*<sup>2</sup>And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;*

While Abram did not have children at this time, God promised to make a great nation from his lineage. This blessed nation would be the conduit through which evil will ultimately be subdued.

**God's laws and ways would be communicated through this nation so that the rest of the world would see them and understand God's requirements:**

*<sup>3</sup>And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*

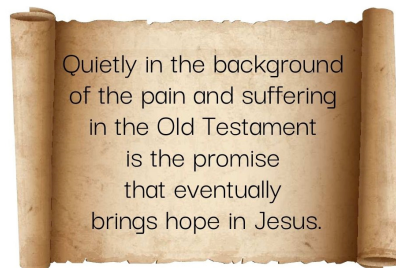
*All the families of the earth will be blessed* - the whole of humanity will eventually benefit because of this one nation! Through Abraham's lineage, Jesus - a “son of Abraham” - would ransom the world away from sin and back to God. However, this massive promise given to Abraham was NOT one-sided. He had to obey, follow and comply with all of God's instructions.



The results then (keeping Israel in God's favor), now (Israel becoming a nation in 1948) and in the future (Israel will become the nation to help bless all the families of the earth) are worth it!



Clarifying the purpose of the ransom and the process of salvation



**It is important to acknowledge that God was hard on His chosen people, as they often abandoned Him for other gods:**

Jeremiah 2:4-5: (NASB) *<sup>4</sup>Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD, What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me And walked after emptiness and became empty?*

God laments through Jeremiah about the idolatry of Israel bringing emptiness, darkness and evil. He gave them blessings, but they walked away.

Amos 3:1-2: (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

A good parent punishes so that the child learns.

We see God's justice applied to Israel as well, and they suffered consequences for their actions.



There is a big difference between making mistakes and making poor choices. A mistake is: *I picked up the wrong pen to write with. Oops!* It was their choice to worship idols. It was their choice to seek out divination. It was their choice to be unfaithful to their spouses. The consequence for choices is greater than simple mistakes.

We do not want to minimize wrong. When we do that, we make God the culprit. We inevitably try to take the attention off ourselves and put it on God, saying it is somehow His fault we are in this situation. This is wrong.

It is also important to recognize the depth of sin and destruction that humanity has inflicted upon itself without God.

It is difficult to find reliable statistics on how many people are killed at the hands of other humans. Milton Leitenberg "is an American academic specializing in arms control and weapons of mass destruction." (Wikipedia) Fifteen years ago, in 2006, he wrote a paper called, "Death in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century" as part of the Cornell University Peace Studies Program. Through a series of detailed calculations, it is thought from 1900 to 2006, approximately 231 million people died in wars, conflicts and "by human decision" including genocide, political terror, and war-exacerbated disease and





malnutrition. This does not even include just “everyday homicides.” Reading about the accounts around the world of what happened to calculate these numbers is, frankly, nauseating. It is because of ego, abuse of power, racism, inhumanity to humankind - and behind it all is sin and satanic influence.

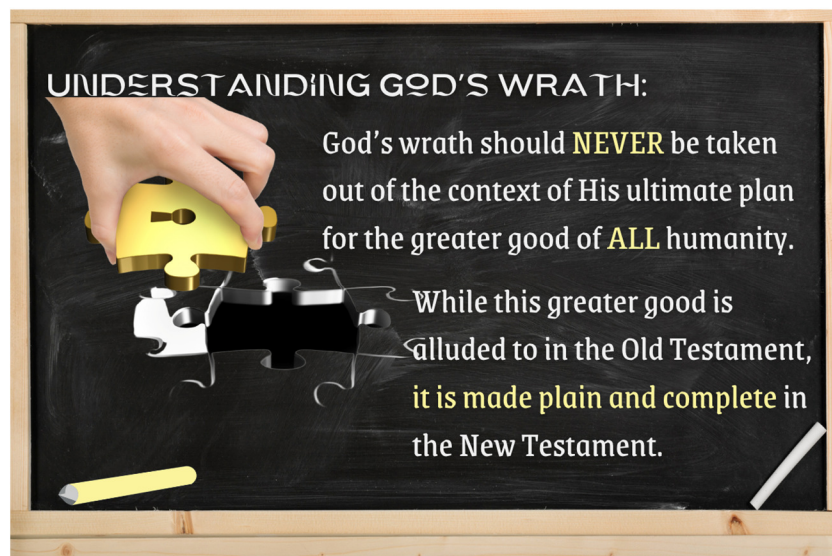
(Source: Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century - Milton Leitenberg - CORNELL UNIVERSITY PEACE STUDIES PROGRAM OCCASIONAL PAPER #29 3rd ed. ©August 2003, 2005, 2006 “A Beastly Century”) It was a phrase used by Margaret Drabble, a British novelist, in an address to the Royal Society of Literature in London, on December 14, 2000. But of course it was no more than a human century. In 1994, the historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote that 187 million people were “killed or allowed to die by human decision” in what he called the “short century”—a period of about 75 years from 1914 to 1991.... Given that Hobsbawm is a Marxist historian, his choice of the category “by human decision” was particularly significant. However, the sum that he provided was low by just about 44 million people for the full twentieth century, during which approximately 231 million people died in wars and conflict and, in very large numbers, “by human decision.”

We love to point the finger at God saying, “Look what He did back then...” without looking carefully at the details about Him responding justly to dark evil. How do we explain all of the killing of humans by other humans because one side decided the other side should not live? This is godlessness. **Sodom (another Canaanite city) was destroyed because of their evil. However, we generally do not think about Jesus’ perspective on that destruction:**

**Matthew 11:23-24:** (NASB) <sup>23</sup>And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. <sup>24</sup>Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.

Wait! The evil city of Sodom destroyed by God would have an easier time in the future? They will have an opportunity to turn their lives around?

This is what we need to look at in order to finish the story. Here Jesus gives us the link to understanding God’s wrath in relation to His full plan and purpose. What does it mean that this evil city has a future opportunity?





We have looked at the perspective of evil, darkness and destruction and God's role in the annihilation of people in the Old Testament. There is much more to this lesson in the New Testament. Part II will further show the character of God shining through and tie up the loose ends. God has this all under control.

***So, is God's wrath stronger than His love?  
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on March 7, 2022  
Ep. 1219: Is God's Wrath Stronger Than His Love? (Part II)

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

A few other examples of misinterpreted Old Testament scriptures regarding God's wrath.

#### Did the God of the Old Testament slaughter innocent children for merely being immature?

**2 Kings 2:19,21-25:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>Then the men of the city said to Elisha, Behold now, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful. <sup>21</sup>He went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, thus says the LORD, I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer. <sup>22</sup>So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. <sup>23</sup>Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead! <sup>24</sup>When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number. <sup>25</sup>He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

(Source: John Gill's Exposition of the Bible) There came forth little children out of the city; the word for "children" is used of persons of thirty or forty years of age; and though these are said to be "little," they were so well grown as to be able to go forth out of the city of themselves, without any to guide them, or to take care of them; and were of an age capable not only of taking notice of Elijah's baldness, but knew him to be a prophet, and were able to distinguish between good and evil; and, from a malignant spirit in them, mocked at him as such, and at the assumption of Elijah.

The Hebrew word for *young* here means "young, small, insignificant, unimportant."

Did God do this? No, but He did allow it. He allowed the forces of nature to depict the wrath of the Creator of nature upon the mockery of those who would represent Him, especially after the prophet had just cured the waters of the city of bitterness.



## Did the God of the Old Testament order cannibalism? Might want to check the context on that:

**Leviticus 26:3-5:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, <sup>4</sup>then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. <sup>5</sup>Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land.

## So, walk with God and the land will produce:

**Leviticus 26:21-29:** (NASB) <sup>21</sup>If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins. <sup>22</sup>I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted. <sup>23</sup>And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me, <sup>24</sup>then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. <sup>26</sup>When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied. <sup>27</sup>Yet if in spite of this you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, <sup>28</sup>then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. <sup>29</sup>Further, you will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you will eat.

In other words: The consequence for continued disobedience will be ever more severe until you reach a point of utter desperation. Notice that it is all about the land and the physical people.

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# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1218: Is God's Wrath Stronger Than His Love? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1218-gods-wrath-part-i/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**  
SHOW NOTES

1. What did God promise the Israelites as they entered Canaan? How did this promise relate to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16? Why did God wait over 400 years to punish the seven Canaanite nations? (See Deuteronomy 7:1-2)
2. In what four ways did God plant hope at the beginning of mankind? What aspect(s) foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice that covered mankind's sin? When did God create His plan to rescue man from his sin? (See Genesis 3:15, 21-23, 1 Peter 1:19-20, John 1:29)
3. What four points show the purposes and character of God? What do they help us understand?
4. Did favoritism for Israel cause God to want to help Israel wipe out the Anakim and other Canaanite nations, so that Israel could have the land of Canaan? How do we know this? What were some of the evil practices of the Canaanites? (See Deuteronomy 9:1-6, 12:29-31, 18:10-12)
5. Contrast the morality of the Canaanites with the Ten Commandments given to Moses as the basis of the Jewish law. How did the Canaanitish culture change during the time of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt? What did God warn about the fascination of sin? (See Deuteronomy 7:2-5, 18:10-12, Exodus 20:3-17)
6. Does God create and perpetrate evil? Explain Isaiah 45:6-7. Why did he bring *calamity*, trial and consequences on mankind? What is an example of a logical consequence that happened in your life because of a poor choice you made? (See Romans 6:17-23)
7. Why did God want King Saul to annihilate the men and even the women, children and animals of the Amalekites? What did Saul do with this command? What was God's reaction? How did Saul's actions come back to hurt the Jews in Queen Esther's time? (See 1 Samuel 15:1-35, 16:14-15, Deuteronomy 25:17-19, Esther 3:1)
8. Describe the "pattern of promise" God developed throughout the Bible. What did God require of Abraham in order for him to receive this massive promise? What is the Abrahamic Promise? What has it already delivered, and what will it deliver in the future? Did Israel ever require correction? Explain. (See Genesis 3:13-15, 12:1-3, Jeremiah 2:4-5, Amos 3:1-2)
9. When we choose to minimize wrong, where does this lead us? What should we expect if we make poor choices in our lives? How should we interpret the consequences of those choices?
10. Now that we have seen why God demanded the destruction of the evil and depraved Canaanites and Anakim, how do we explain Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:23-24 about Sodom, another evil Old Testament city? What is the hint here about the future for those annihilated in the past?