

Let's do a comparison study on that word "consume" in Ezekiel 33:10. "Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we *pine away* in them, how should we then live?" If our sins and transgressions remain on us, if we cherish our sins and transgressions unto ourselves, if we do not give them to Jesus, we will "pine away" in them. Those sins will consume us and we will die an eternal death. The NEB reads, "Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us and we are *rotting away* in them. How then can we survive?" And the New International Version offers, "Our offenses and our sins weigh us down and we are *wasting away* in them. How then can we live?"

The next verse tells how we can live: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Do you see the heart of God? Do not try to atone for your *own* sins. Do not try to merit your *own* salvation. Give your sins to Jesus Christ because they *will* consume you. They will crush you. They will destroy you. They will rot you away while you are standing on your feet. And God has no pleasure in that kind of death for anyone. Turn ye, turn ye, and live.

In love, God shows us *now* the conclusion of His plan to save His people. He wants us to understand the scope of the plan of salvation *now*. He wants us to turn from sin *now* and not wait for the terror of the judgment. Because, the same gospel that speaks peace and hope and love to us today, will be a terror in that day.

Notice this prophecy in Isaiah 28:16-17 (NKJV): "Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation [Jesus Christ is the foundation stone, the cornerstone, from the foundation of the worlds]; whoever believes will not act hastily. [*Will not act hastily* here means "will not be disturbed." We will not be disturbed by the gospel report if we believe in Jesus.] Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet."

What is justice? According to Romans 3:25 in the NIV, God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins to *demonstrate* His justice. 1 John 1:9 declares that He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins. Justice is revealed at the cross, along with mercy. So, justice (or the cross of Christ) will be the measuring line and righteousness will be the plummet (the standard). "Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol [the grave] will not stand; when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it, . . . for morning by morning it will pass over, and by day and by night; it will be a terror just to understand the report" (Isaiah 28:18-19, NKJV).

This revelation is going to take some time to be completed. And the

gospel will be a terror to understand in that day. As the scourge passes over morning by morning, and night after night, as the history of six thousand years of sin passes before all, those who have rejected this message will have no rest day or night. They will have no rest until the full revelation of their rejection of that gospel consumes them. This is God's strange act. Why? Because He has held us back from this revelation until that day. He has refused to give us up. The whole universe has looked on as, in mercy, He has held His wrath in check—day after year after century after millennium. Even at the second coming of Jesus, He allows the wicked to flee to the mountains and caves, and allows rocks to fall on them to hide them from the Lamb and the face of Him that sits on the throne. But, finally, there is no place found for them. They will see the revelation of their chosen path reflected against God's pure character. Then they, too, will testify to the glory of God, as relentless, merciful flames claim them.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:11 (NKJV): "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" and again in verse 14: "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died." There is no contradiction in these two statements. God is not a terror on one side of the coin and a God of love on the other. The love of God, revealed in Christ's death on the cross, will be a terror only to those who persist in rejecting that truth and, in turn, in rejecting their only defender from the transgression of that truth, Jesus Christ.

And then will be revealed the truth of Proverb 8:36 (NKJV): "But he who sins against Me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate Me love death." When we sin, we injure ourselves. As we turn away from God, we are turning away from life, from the only source of life, and are embracing death, the wages of sin. How the heart of God churns! How He agonizes and weeps, even now! How can He give us up? How can He let us go? Please come and accept the wonderful gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Amen.

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#### STUDY 13 OF 13

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(541)988-3333 • www.lbm.org



# GOD'S LAST MESSAGE TO THE WORLD 13

Misunderstanding the wrath of God has brought terror to the hearts and minds of millions. God has been viewed as vindictive, even cruel and vengeful. Not so, as we are about to find in our final quest to understand God's last message to the world.

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8). According to the Bible, all nations have misunderstood the character of God, but now Babylon is falling and the fourth angel, that lightens the earth with God's glory, says, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Now notice a striking comparison between the second and third angels' messages: The second angel calls his message "the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8). The third angel refers to "the wine of the wrath of God" (Revelation 14:10). Do you notice a difference between the two? Both refer to "the wine." Both say "of the wrath." But one points to "of her fornication" and the other to "of God." If the biblical definition of God's wrath is His giving up persistent sinners to their sin and its wages, it follows that the wine of the wrath of God in Revelation 14 is when He *gives up the lost* to the wine of the wrath of Babylon's fornication. Or, in other words, God's wrath (the wine of the wrath of God) will give sinners up to that which they have chosen (the wine of the wrath of Babylon's fornication). And the wine of the wrath of her fornication brings death.

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Yet we are not dead. Why?

Because God has not allowed those wages to come upon us. In mercy, He has held back our wages. But if we refuse to let go of sin, we insist on receiving its wages. And, by the way, wages for sin is the *only* thing we can earn. We cannot earn our salvation. The only thing we

## The Wrath of God

Part 2

Revelation 14 Study Guides

# The subject of the wrath of God, misunderstood, has brought terror to the hearts and minds of millions.

can earn, according to the Bible, is the wages of sin because salvation is the gift of God—free, unmerited, unearned.

Consider another reference to the wrath of God in Hosea 11:8 (NKJV): “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?” Question: Hand Ephraim over to what? Give him up to what? Answer: To his own choices; to the wages of sin; to the wrath inherent in sin’s fornication. But some may ask, “How can God hand sinners over? How can He give them up? God is love. His love is relentless. He does not give up on us!” Amen. God *is* love, but *because* He is love, He will eventually honor our free choice. He will not force His love upon us; He will not extract obedience against our will. “Love does not demand its own way” (1 Corinthians 13:5, New Living Translation).

Understand, dear friend, that God has a hard time handing any of us over to our own lusts, to our own sin. Continue reading in Hosea: “How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? [Admah and Zeboiim were plains cities that perished with Sodom and Gomorrah.] My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred” (Hosea 11:8, NKJV). Do you have restless nights? Do you worry, spending anxious, sleepless nights in concern for your loved ones? Think about God in heaven. The Bible says that He who watches Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (see Psalm 121:4). God is *ever* watching over us. Why? Because there are people out there who do not know Jesus Christ. They know little, if anything, of God’s love. God is watching over them. He hasn’t handed them over yet; He hasn’t given them up.

God struggles with giving up any. He does not want to do it. He *intensely* does not want to do it. And He will not do it until He first lightens the earth with His glory. Every single person, that means *everyone*, must have an opportunity to accept or reject Him. And probation will not close as long as there is one person left to reach. You say, “That’s terribly painful to think that war and sin and suffering and violence and abuse are going to continue just because one person hasn’t heard the gospel message.” Well, if that thought is painful to you, just think how painful it is to God. Glimpse into His heart. One soul is more valuable in God’s sight that worlds and galaxies and the universe. Christ would have come to this earth to die for one, just one (see Galatians 2:20). That is why Revelation 22:11-12 says, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold I come quickly.”

As soon as the earth is lightened with the glory of God, as soon as everyone has made a decision, as soon as Jesus can look upon this vast world and say, “If I let probation go on for another year, or month, or week, or day or even another second, it would make no difference. Everyone has made a decision for or against Me. He that is unjust would

continue to be unjust. He that is unrighteous would choose to remain that way. It’s time.” How important it is to lighten the earth with the glory of God! How many lost souls are waiting to hear this final message to the world—the revelation of God’s true character.

Yes, the Bible says, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Why does God say this to us? Is God consoling the saved here? Is He saying that, eventually, He is going to get even with all who have crossed Him? That He wants to have the last word? That He wants the privilege of revenge because He’s been hurt the most? No, not at all. God is essentially saying, “My wrath, My righteousness, works differently from your wrath. Vengeance *is* Mine. You can leave it to Me because I have My own way of doing this and it’s totally different from yours.” Notice what He says in Romans 12:20, NKJV: “Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

The coals of fire on our enemy’s head first speak of the fire of conviction that God’s goodness brings to the sinner. Hopefully, a good spirit or attitude or deed will win him over. He will be convicted by the fire of God—the fire of the Holy Spirit—and will accept the truth of the gospel. But if not, then what? Notice what Romans 2:4 (NIV) says: “Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, [for His] tolerance, and [for His] patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed.” Is God storing up wrath against us? No! We are storing up wrath against ourselves by resisting and hardening our hearts against the day of God’s wrath when He will give us up to our chosen sins.

The gospel cannot be revealed without revealing the works of the wicked. The whole gospel message is in the context of unrighteousness. Jesus was on the cross because of our sins. One cannot be revealed without disclosing the other.

Romans 2:4 speaks of a time “when His righteous judgment will be revealed.” God’s righteous judgment is the way He has dealt with sin from its inception. Reading further in Romans 2:6 (NIV), we find that “God ‘will give to [judge] each person according to what he has done.’” All of mankind, *everyone*, will face the revelation of what they have done in the light of how God has dealt with sin. That is His righteous judgment. He will not attribute to anyone more than that person has done. He will merely reveal to them their works, and the influence of those works on others, in relation to the cross of Christ.

Revelation 20 presents a panorama of the white-throne judgment and the multitude of unnumbered hosts like the sand of the sea gathered around the New Jerusalem city. Suddenly, the wicked multitude will behold the “great white throne and Him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the

heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Revelation 20:11). No place to run. No place to hide. No place apart from the awesome, omnipotent presence of God.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life” (Revelation 20:12). What is written in the Book of Life? Is the story of redemption chronicled there? Is the cross of Calvary embossed on its pages? Are the good deeds of God’s people recorded in that Book? Is each time we fed our enemies and gave water to relieve their thirst noted there? How about those times when we turned the other cheek and went the extra mile? Are they in the Book too? What is written in the Book of Life? Just this: every good deed done in the spirit of Jesus Christ is recorded there.

Remember, God said, “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay.” And now, the record book will stand open for all to view. The plan of salvation will be revealed in the Book of Life. And the dead will have been raised to be judged according to their works—works of the flesh in contrast to the deeds clearly written in the Books.

And what will God be doing during this scene? Will He be satisfied? Will He be smug? Will He be appeased? No, not at all. His heart of love will break anew for each dying soul. “How can I do this? How can I give you up? How can I let you go?”

Back in chapter 14, the third angel followed the second, “saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, . . . and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:9-10). The final judgment cannot happen any other way. The torment brought upon the wicked *is* the realization of the gospel rejected and the torment takes place in the presence of God and in the presence of the Lamb. That word “Lamb” signifies the cross, the sacrifice, the sin-bearer. Only in the presence of the Lamb of God “which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) can the final judgment come to an end.

As the revelation of the cross and all that God has done to save mankind pierces the understanding of the wicked, fire rains down from heaven and consumes them. And yes, there is literal fire. But that literal fire is yet another facet of God’s mercy. The wicked entreat the flames to consume them and to hide them from the terrible reality of their guilt and rejection of the gospel. They *long* for the flames. And so, in mercy, the Lord declares, “This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (Zechariah 14:12).