

**WHAT ABOUT**

# THE FLOOD OF NOAH?



**A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE IN RELATION  
TO GOD'S CHARACTER OF LOVE**

**TROY J. EDWARDS**

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God's Character of Love**

*By Troy J. Edwards*

***Vindicating God Ministries***

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible.

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## **A Unique Perspective in Relation to God's Character of Love**

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*To Arelia Pendergrass*

Because you asked

## Chapter One

### God is Not Willing to Destroy

*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (Psalm 103:8-10)*

A number of individuals doubt God's kindness and benevolence because of the flood that occurred during Noah's lifetime. All people and animals on Earth were wiped out by this deluge, with the exception of Noah, his family, and a few chosen animals. These lessons will teach us that man truly brings disaster upon himself and that God goes to great lengths to deliver him from the effects of his wickedness.

#### **The Purpose of these Lessons**

We must be clear about what these lessons *are* and *are not* about before we can go further into this topic. These teachings are not intended to argue for the flood story's historical authenticity. These lessons assume that the Bible is the Word of God and is historically accurate.

In addition, these lessons are not about defending the scientific accuracy of the flood story. There are many other books for that purpose written by those who are much more qualified to deal with that particular subject. I am confident that the flood is historically true and has a scientific basis. Nevertheless, even if human scientists can find no scientific basis for the flood, I still take the Bible's account over the word of men regardless of their educational credentials. As a result, the lessons in this

book presuppose that the deluge happened exactly as stated in Scripture.

Finally, these lessons are not about the Nephilim controversy. While I personally believe that the “sons of God” are fallen angels who served Satan and that the Nephilim were real literal giants, these lessons are not given to make this case. Again, there are already numerous books and videos dealing with this subject and there is no need for me to add to it.

The lessons in this book are about a subject that is seldom dealt with concerning the flood story, which is defending and vindicating God’s character of love. The flood, apart from a thorough examination, depicts God as vindictive and destructive. A full examination of this event with all of the Biblical revelation about God will show us that God is neither destructive (in the literal sense) nor vindictive.

### **Is God a Destructive Psychopath?**

To begin, we must acknowledge that the Bible ascribes destructive language to God in reference to the flood. At least three times in Genesis 6 God threatens to destroy:

*And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*  
(Gen. 6:7)

*And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.* (Gen. 6:13)

*And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. (Gen. 6:17)*

Jesus confirms the historical fact that the flood did occur and that it destroyed the people of Noah's time:

*They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:27)*

Without a doubt, the deluge occurred during Noah's time and was a devastating force directed against anyone who preferred to behave immorally. Some Bible critics have labeled the God of the Bible and His actions as “psychopathic” because of the severity of this incident:

“This is pure and simple infanticide and cruelty to animals; you don't like your children because they won't behave, so you kill them, just as real parents, by law, can have unruly children stoned to death .... There is a great deal of psychopathic behavior in the Bible, which the psychiatric and psychological communities must agree with if their DSM-IV<sup>1</sup> is as universal as they contend.”<sup>2</sup>

This is only one example of how some people interpret the biblical God in connection with the flood events. We received a lengthy two-page letter to our church a while back from an anonymous source who did not leave their name or return address. The individual was harshly critical of a number of occurrences mentioned in



the Bible. Noah was saved for last by the author. This person refers to God as a “sociopathic murderer” in this brief excerpt from the otherwise lengthy letter:

“I’ve left the story of Noah until last because it is extremely unpleasant to deal with. The book of Genesis shows us very clearly that the god of the ancient Hebrews is a sociopathic murderer who does not know the difference between right and wrong, does not experience normal emotions, has no conscience, and feels no remorse for his actions or empathy for his victims.”

Much of the animosity toward God stems from the misperception of His involvement in Noah’s flood. While Biblical scholars have given us helpful material on the historical and scientific validity of the flood of Noah, thus proving the Bible and its God to be authentic, most of it has not helped to reveal God as the good, benevolent, loving, and caring God that the Bible describes Him as. Therefore, there is a need to understand God’s character in relation to this horrific event.

### **Our Heartbroken God**

Those who condemn God for the harsh judgments recorded in Scripture take sin to be a light thing and fail to understand its destructive impact, not only on those committing the sin, but the damage it does to others and to the universe as a whole. We will look deeper into this truth later. Meanwhile, the fact that many of our theologians have portrayed God as “impassible”—that is, devoid of feelings and passions—hasn’t helped either. God certainly has no *sinful* passions like fallen man has but He is definitely passionate.

One thing that many who criticize the Bible and God forget to acknowledge is how deeply God is grieved by man's violence and evil. Bible scholars must bear a great

deal of the guilt for this, as they show God in a cold and uncaring manner. According to Stuart Briscoe:

“It would be incorrect to assume God’s disinterest and non-involvement in human affairs as it would be to assume His callous harshness in judging the erring creation .... In a very real sense God was not exempt from the pain and anguish which sin had introduced into the creation.”<sup>3</sup>

God is not capricious, cold and vindictive. The divinely inspired writer tells us how God’s heart was broken and in pain over man’s wickedness:

*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and **it grieved him at his heart**. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Gen. 6:5-7)*

“Grieve” in Gen. 6:6 is the Hebrew “*atsab*” which means, “to hurt, pain, grieve, displease, vex, wrest” (studylight.org). The Random house dictionary defines the English word as follows:

“lament, weep, bewail, bemoan; suffer. Grieve, mourn imply showing suffering caused by sorrow. Grieve is the stronger word, implying deep mental suffering often endured alone and in silence but revealed by one’s aspect: to grieve over the loss (or death) of a friend.”<sup>4</sup>

God indeed suffers when His creation has turned to wickedness. The seriously damaging effects of sin affects God greatly because he loves His creatures. Note that God is not angry as an offended party who has been disrespected, but *hurting* as someone who deeply cares about the damage His beloved is doing to each other. As Theodore Epps stated:

“The word ‘grieved’ reveals that God lamented the misery of others. God did not grieve because of something within Himself but because of the misery that sin had caused others.”<sup>5</sup>

McKeown adds:

“... the passage shows that God is deeply disturbed by human behavior. However, it is grief and not anger that is prominent in God’s reaction to the situation. This shows that ‘he is not an angry tyrant, but a troubled parent.’”<sup>6</sup>

Some translations of Gen. 6:6 give us more clarity on this. The Common English Bible says, “*The Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and **he was heartbroken***” and the New International Reader’s Version reads, “*The Lord was very sad that he had made human beings on the earth. **His heart was filled with pain.***”

### **Judgment not Based on Personal Offense**

Here we see that God was in pain over the wickedness of men. This is due to His nature of love and compassion and *not* anger and hatred. We should not read the flood story as if God was angry and personally offended by the actions of men and then based on that offense brought their destruction. If God destroyed men because they personally slighted Him then Jesus had

every opportunity to demonstrate this characteristic of God. Yet, He did the exact opposite:

*And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. (Luke 9:52-56)*

A Samaritan village had just slighted Jesus. The disciples recommended bringing divine retribution by way of destruction. If God was as men have portrayed him in relation to Noah's flood, the Lord would have agreed, and the Samaritan village would have been demolished instantly.

However, Jesus shows us a God who has no desire to destroy even those who intentionally offend Him. He loves them still and desires their salvation. Another translation says, “*The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives. He came to save them from the punishment of sin.*’ They went on their way to another town.)” (Luke 9:56; New Life Version). The gospels show us that Jesus is “God in action”:

*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but*

*the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:10-11)*

*Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)*

*Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. (John 8:19)*

There is absolutely no difference between the God of Noah's time and the God of the New Testament. They are one and the same. As a matter of fact, Jesus is the God of Noah's time. The whole triune Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were present during the time of Noah. God did not all of a sudden become nice in the New Testament. He *never* changes (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). It has never been God's desire to destroy anyone, not even those who insult Him (Matt. 23:37-38; Luke 19:41-42; 23:34).

## Chapter Two

### The Reluctant Judge

But God is so unwilling that men should perish, that He always acts as one reluctant to punish .... That he rises up so slowly to do the work of the Just Judge, proves His reluctance to proceed against the rebel, even when the argument on the side of justice is most strong.<sup>1</sup> (J. P. Millar)

In the book of Lamentations we are told, “*For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men*” (Lam. 3:33). The New English Translation reads, “*For he is not predisposed to afflict or to grieve people.*” In other words, there is no inclination or desire in God to bring judgment upon rebels.

The Easy-to-Read Version renders Lam. 3:33 in plainer language: “*The Lord does not want to punish people. He does not like to make people unhappy.*” This flies in the face of how the flood of Noah is often depicted by both God’s critics and some Christians. When the flood is seen from the perspective of God’s unwillingness to see men harmed, it sheds an entirely different light upon the topic.

#### God’s Reluctance to Judge

In the previous chapter we read in Gen. 6:6 how much pain God suffered as a result of the sinful violence of men: “*And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*” Scripture connects God’s grieving and repenting to His reluctance to judge and destroy:

*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? **mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.** I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city. (Hab. 11:8, 9)*

Note the struggle that God has with having to judge His people for their sins. This is the God who is grieving because He does not want to see His people hurt or destroyed. It is the same God that we find in the flood narrative who tells us that He was grieved and repented of having made man in the first place. This God really does not want to punish. Terrence Fretheim writes:

“The flood story focuses on God and God’s commitment to the world. This God: expresses sorrow and regret; judges but does not want to; goes beyond justice and decides to save some...”<sup>2</sup>

One must read the story about the flood with the idea that God truly loathes the fact that He will have to bring judgment. Scripture tells us that for God to bring judgment is considered a “strange act” – something that is foreign to His nature:

*For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. (Isa. 28:21)*

God's need to bring judgment upon His people is referred to as His "strange work" and His "strange act". Judgment is something unusual for Him. Albert Barnes offers some insight on this passage:

"The word Perazim is from.... *Paratz* to tear, or break forth as waters do that have been confined; and is indicative of sudden judgment, and of a complete overthrow.... The work of judgment and punishment may be called the strange work of God always, inasmuch as it is not that in which he delights to engage; it is foreign to the benevolence of his heart."<sup>3</sup>

Barnes believed that punishment of wickedness is strange to God because He has no pleasure in bringing it about. Jack Blanco paraphrases the passage appropriately:

"The Lord will rise up against Israel as He rose up against the Philistines in the days of David, or as He did against the Amorites in the days of Joshua when the sun stood still. It will feel strange to Him to do this. It will be alien to His nature, but He will do what He needs to do."<sup>4</sup>

Judgment and punishment are alien to God. It is not something He ever desired to do. Even in light of the flood that occurred during Noah's time, the New Testament teaches that God is not willing to wipe out humankind:

*For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept*



*in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:5-9)*

Peter, connecting this to the flood of Noah, states that God is unwilling that any should perish. Some other translations of verse 9 make this clearer:

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some people think of slowness; on the contrary, he is patient with you; **for it is not his purpose that anyone should be destroyed**, but that everyone should turn from his sins. (2 Pet. 3:9; Complete Jewish Bible)*

*The Lord isn't slow to do what he promised, as some people think. Rather, he is patient for your sake. **He doesn't want to destroy anyone** but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change the way they think and act. (2 Pet. 3:9; God's Word)*

Again, God was not having a divine temper tantrum in relation to the flood of Noah. He really and truly did not want this to happen. A commentary note on 1 Peter 3 in the VOICE translation is helpful here:

“Peter also describes how God is not slow, but patient. God wants to allow the time needed for as many sinners as possible to turn from their sinful ways. Unlike some depictions of God as vindictive and enjoying inflicting punishment on people, the God we see here desires that all be saved and not destroyed. If we had true spiritual insight, we would not be amazed by the severity of eternal judgment but by the intensity of God’s mercy.”<sup>5</sup>

This understanding of God’s reluctance to judge and punish wickedness is brought out by Ezekiel:

*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? (Eze. 33:11)*

The Easy-to-Read Version is helpful here:

*“You must say to them, ‘The Lord my Master says: On my life, I promise, I don’t enjoy seeing people die—not even evil people! I don’t want them to die. I want those evil people to come back to me. I want them to change their lives so they can really live! So come back to me! Stop doing bad things! Why must you die, family of Israel?’ (Eze. 33:11; Easy to Read Version)*

If God were the cold hearted, impassible deity often presented to us by scholastic theological intellectuals then He would not be so heartbroken over what is happening to the antediluvians in Genesis 6. God

loves His creation and is obviously grieved and pained over what it is doing to itself. God grieves over wickedness and violence because it hurts and destroys its victims. There is obviously something more to God's warnings of a flood than merely being *offended* by the actions of men. When someone is *insulted*, a selfish person is offended and seeks retribution. When someone is *grieved* by another's action, it is because they love the person and knows how the action is destroying that person.

### **Preaching to the Antediluvians**

God's reluctance to bring a flood to destroy the people of Noah's time is also shown in His commission to Noah to preach the truth to them:

*And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly (2 Pet. 2:5)*

If God were someone who delighted in destruction as many critics of the flood narrative seem to believe then God would never have sent Noah to preach righteousness to the people of that time. He would have simply told Noah to complete the ark and nothing in between. Yet, we are told that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, which means God attempted to reach the people through him.

A similar truth is found in the book of Jonah. The Ninevites of Jonah's time were a wicked people who had done much harm to Israel. Yet, God wanted to save the Ninevites. He sent Jonah to warn them of the coming calamity that would ensue as the result of their wickedness (Jonah 1:2). Jonah tries to avoid his task for a while until he eventually proceeds to preach to the Ninevites. In this instance, the people turned to God

(Jonah 3:4-5). Because of their repentance God withheld judgment:

*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. (Jonah 3:10)*

Since Jonah did not care for the Ninevites He was not exactly joyful at the success of his evangelistic crusade. Yet, in all of his exasperation, Jonah gives us a revelation of God's character that rightly fits, not only the Ninevites of Jonah's time, but also one that can be applied to the Antediluvians of Noah's time:

*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. (Jonah 4:1-2)*

Note the description of God by one of His most reluctant prophets: *God is gracious, merciful and of great kindness.* In other words, it is not in God's intrinsic nature to destroy people regardless of how wicked they are. Some of the more modern translations makes this point clearer:

*He prayed to the Lord, "Come on, Lord! Wasn't this precisely my point when I was back in my own land? This is why I fled to Tarshish earlier! I know that you are a*

*merciful and compassionate God, very patient, full of faithful love, and **willing not to destroy**.* (Common English Bible)

*So he prayed: Our Lord, I knew from the very beginning that you wouldn't destroy Nineveh. That's why I left my own country and headed for Spain. You are a kind and merciful God, and you are very patient. You always show love, and **you don't like to punish anyone, not even foreigners**.* (Contemporary English Version)

*He prayed to the Lord. Here is what Jonah said to him. "Lord, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That is what I tried to prevent by running away to Tarshish. I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. **You don't want to destroy them**.* (New International Reader's Version)

*So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. **You are eager to turn back from destroying people**.* (New Living Translation)

In his Emphasized Bible, J. B. Rotherham translates the latter part of that verse as, "... *and art*

*grieved over calamity.*” God so much hates to bring judgment that He is grieved to do it. Note that this is a **revelation of God given to us under the Old Testament**. Far too many people believe that God was stern and vindictive in the Old Testament but turned compassionate and forgiving in the New with the coming into the world of Jesus. Yet, Jonah refutes this false idea. The revelation of God’s love is seen in both testaments. Therefore, the goodness of God should have led the antediluvians to repentance just as it did the Ninevites (Rom. 2:4).

### **Why does God Have to Judge?**

Again, if we are to read the account of the flood in the light of God’s love, it is essential that we see Him as a very reluctant to judge in this matter. But if God is so reluctant to judge then why does He have to? Why must a flood come? There are two important reasons:

First, In the courtroom of Heaven God must answer the legal accusations of the accuser of the brethren. Second, Sin has far reaching effects and contamination that extends far beyond its present locale. Sin, if not contained, will eventually infect the universe. Let’s briefly tackle the first reason.

Satan, the accuser of the brethren, often brings charges against God before His loyal angels. Satan accuses God of unfairness in order to deceive and sway the minds of the loyal angels. Sin of the creatures that God loves gives Satan that occasion.

When King David committed adultery and murder God said, *“Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die”* (1 Sam 12:14). This does not apply only to human enemies, but to God’s primary enemies, Satan and his demonic kingdom. In the courtroom of heaven, Satan is always

looking for opportunities to accuse God and the creatures that He loves:

*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (Rev. 12:10)*

*Then the Lord showed me the high priest Joshua, standing before the messenger from the Lord, and the Adversary was standing by his right side to accuse him. (Zech 3:1; Common English Bible)*

*Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (Job 1:9-11)*

Satan's intent is to cast doubt in the minds of the loyal angels concerning God's love, justice, and righteousness. Satan is on a vendetta to prove that he was right to rebel against God and persuade a number of other angels to follow him. Satan believes that he might convince more angels to defect and join his unholy crusade.

Satan hates God passionately and is looking for every possible way to hurt Him. Satan works through God's overwhelming love and affection for mankind. He

will move men to sin horribly. He will persuade men to rebel against God and then tell God in the heavenly courts that if He is righteous and just as He claims to be then He has no choice but to destroy these creatures He loves so much. If God does not judge wickedness, then He gives ground to this wicked accuser and casts doubt concerning His righteousness and integrity to a watching universe. Hence, judgment must be brought after a certain point but He, as the sovereign of the universe, has the right to say *when* that happens.

The second reason that God must judge is due to the wide spreading effects of sin contamination. Sin destroys everything it touches and if allowed to spread then it will do more damage. Just before the flood of Noah we are told, *“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence”* (Gen. 6:11). Note how sin can corrupt, not only those who are sinning, but the very earth by which they sin upon. The VOICE translation says:

*“They lived at a time when the world had become vile and corrupt. Violence was everywhere. God saw that the earth was in ruins, and He knew why: all people on earth except Noah had lived corrupt lives and ruined God’s plans for them. He had to do something.”* (The VOICE)

Sin itself can ruin and destroy. Wickedness has damaging effects on the very environment in which it is being committed. If not put to a stop, it will continue to spread and cause much more damage. God’s first recourse is to help the sinner see the error of his ways, stop the wickedness, and thus stop the spreading of it. He can then heal the repentant sinner and the environment (2 Chron. 7:14). But if the sinner refuses to cease from wickedness,



God is under obligation to protect the universe from contamination, thus, having no choice but to judge the sinner and clean up the environment. This is alien to Him, but necessary.

## Chapter Three

### Key to Reconciling the Flood with God's Love

*And, behold, I, even I, do **bring** a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.*

In the previous chapters, we learned that God is loving and kind and is unwilling to destroy men. However, this begs the question that if God is a God of love and does not want to destroy then *why does He destroy?* Why did He destroy in such a horrible manner by *bringing* a flood if He were so reluctant to do so? Is destruction, no matter how horrible people are behaving, the correct response to their misbehavior? Is destruction consistent with the nature of love?

#### **Understanding the Bible's language**

Since the Bible clearly says that God destroys and since we believe the Scriptures to be the infallible inspired Word of God then we do not deny it. Yet, if we understand *how* God destroys then we will clear up what appears to be an inconsistency between His acts of destruction and His love nature that abhors the idea of harming His creation. Hence, the question is not, "*does* God destroy?" but *how* does a God of love destroy? The answer to this question determines how we relate to God and how we think of sin. The best way to clear this up, thus saving God's reputation and vindicating His loving character, is to understand Bible language.

The most important truth to understand when it comes to the teaching of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, is to remember that throughout Scripture God

is often said to do that which He merely allowed or permitted. Pastor Joe Blair writes:

In some cases, Old Testament writers and prophets did not bother to distinguish between what God did as an action of love and what God allowed to happen as the result of human choosing and action. The Hebrew mind at times attributed everything to God without bothering to distinguish between permitted judgment and the active judgment of God.<sup>1</sup>

We believe that a full understanding of this truth will vindicate God regarding the charge of destroying thousands or millions of men, women and children while at the same time claiming to be a God of love. We will learn in this lesson that the principle of “interpreting Scripture with Scripture” is the primary key to reconciling the flood of Noah with the Bible’s description of God’s character which is one of a loving God who desires, not the destruction, but the salvation of all men.

### **God Threatens to Bring a Flood**

While there are some who want to deny the historical accuracy of Scripture in an attempt to vindicate God, those of us who believe that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God cannot deny what some might find to be troubling statements. For example, there is no denying that in Genesis 6:17 God certainly says that He will *bring* a flood and that He will *destroy*: “*And, behold, I, even I, do **bring** a flood of waters upon the earth, to **destroy** all flesh.*”

Whenever we use the word “bring” in relation to a person we would normally define it in the sense that the person “caused it to come” or “caused it to happen.” This is a true definition in most cases but not always true when it comes to God. As Pastor Joe Blair stated, the Hebrew

mind did not always distinguish between *permitted* and *active* judgment. In relation to how God *brings* His judgments, Charles A. Leslie writes:

“.... as if every thing that God permitted were his order and had his allowance and approbation; and they run into this by not understanding such expressions of scripture as *This is from the Lord*, or *The Lord did this*, which often means no more than that **God did suffer men to do very wicked things, and by that means brings** his judgments upon them.”<sup>2</sup> (emphasis are mine)

Hence, quite often in Scripture God is said to “bring” or have “brought” some horrendous event. These statements are inspired Scripture and cannot be disputed. However, for the Bible student who seeks to vindicate God’s loving character against the criticism of those agents of Satan who look to Scripture for the mere purpose of gathering evidence to prove that God is a tyrannical, evil despot, it is necessary to get beyond the surface reading and study God’s methodology.

Since God’s nature is one of love and His actions are primarily salvific, then it is not in His nature to *literally* bring destructive events. Therefore, we must learn to interpret Bible language so that we can better grasp the truth regarding God’s character of love.

### **Comparing Scripture with Scripture**

We must keep in mind the important truth that Scripture provides its own definitions and commentary. As one who has a number of Bible dictionaries and commentaries, and who consults them often, I have found that the most reliable dictionary and commentary on the Bible *is the Bible*.

Most Bible dictionaries will give you the average dictionary definition of the word *bring*. However, a search

through Scripture will help us to understand better the truth that God is only said to bring that which He permitted to happen due to man's lack of repentance. Again, Genesis 6:13 says, "*And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh.*" Now let's compare this statement to another passage in Ezekiel:

*And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. (Ezekiel 6:3)*

Note in both passages God says "I, even I" do bring or will "bring upon" the rebellious ones some painful circumstance (a "flood" or "the sword"). Now, as we read further along in Ezekiel, God explains *how* He intends to *bring* upon them the sword:

*I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known.... They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. (Eze. 32:9, 20)*

"Delivered" in Ezekiel 32:20 is the Hebrew word "nathan" and "The Hebrew word 'nathan,' means to suffer or permit."<sup>3</sup> Here we see the "how" of God's "bringing" destruction. He will "bring" it upon His people by *allowing* their enemies to destroy them in war. In other words, God will offer them no protection against their enemies. According to Scripture, "delivering" (or

“permitting”) Israel into the hands of their enemies is God’s normal method of destroying them (Ezra 9:7; Jer. 15:9; 18:21; 25:31; Micah 6:14). Another translation removes any action on God’s part from the text:

*They will fall dead among those who were killed by swords. Nebuchadnezzar is ready to use his sword against them. Let Egypt be dragged off together with its huge armies. (New International Reader’s Version)*

Based on the root definition of the word “delivered” this is a more fitting translation. The NIRV makes clear that God destroys by His *lack of intervention*. He “destroys” by allowing those forces already prepared to bring destruction to have their way.

The Bible, in many places (and we will later discover that it is just as true of the flood) explains that God’s method of destroying is to *forsake* the recipient of destruction. Scripture also helps us to see that God’s method of “bringing” catastrophic events is by His *forsaking* the individual or nation:

*Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, **I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah**, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. **And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and***

*a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day. (2 Kings 21:12-15)*

Note that God says that He is “*bringing*” horrendous evil upon Jerusalem and Judah. However, He goes on to define this “*bringing*” as His “*forsaking*” the people. When the people are *forsaken* then they are *delivered* to the enemy. God’s “*forsaking*” is the loss of His presence and protection:

*Then my anger shall be kindled 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, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? (Deut. 31:17)*

From a Biblical standpoint, we can define God “*bringing*” destructive events by His “*forsaking*” the judged and delivering them over to the consequences of their rebellion.

### **Modern English Translations**

Another method that helps us to understand what it means for God to *bring* a destructive judgement in light of His character of love is to compare some of the statements in the King James Version to modern English translations. For example, in Deuteronomy 28 we read:

*The Lord shall **bring** thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a*

*nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. (Deuteronomy 28:36; King James Version)*

Now, compare this with a more modern translation:

*The Lord will **let** you and your king be taken captive to a country that you and your ancestors have never even heard of, and there you will have to worship idols made of wood and stone. (Deuteronomy 28:36; Contemporary English Version)*

Where the KJV says that God will *bring* evil on this place the CEV interprets the language as God merely *letting it happen*. Dr. Jack Blanco is not too far off when he offers this paraphrase: “The Lord will allow your enemies to come and take away your king and you to a foreign land that neither you nor your fathers have known” (The Clear Word, p. 232).

The CEV continues to prove helpful in defining for us what it means for God to “bring” or have “brought” evil upon people:

*Wherefore the Lord **brought** upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. (2 Chronicles 33:11; King James Version)*

*So he **let** Assyrian army commanders invade Judah and capture Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose and tied him up in*



*chains, and they took him to Babylon. (2 Chronicles 33:11; Contemporary English Version)*

Note again the more permissive understanding of the CEV. “Brought” in the KJV is understood as “let” in the CEV, thus showing that God is no longer protecting the people. At the same time, it removes the idea that He exerts divine power to bring about their demise. Again, Jack Blanco is helpful here in his paraphrase: “So the Lord allowed the king of Assyria and his army to come against Judah” (The Clear Word, p. 522).

Let us look at one more example. Jeremiah 25:9 in the King James Version tells us how God will “send” and “bring” foreign enemies against His people as punishment for their rebellion:

*Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.*

Note how this passage uses two “causative” verbs in the English to convey God’s intentions. Once again we will appeal to the Contemporary English Version:

*.... and now I will let you be attacked by nations from the north, and especially by my servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia. You and other nearby nations will be destroyed and left in ruins forever.*

*Everyone who sees what has happened will be shocked, but they will still make fun of you.*

We can see that the CEV renders Jeremiah 25:9 in a more permissive sense which shows that the protection of God is withdrawn from rebellious people. He is not the direct cause of their demise but because He will no longer protect them, He takes responsibility for what happens when He says that He will “bring” their enemies against them.

### **How Other Translations Define “Bring”**

Other translations use the word “bring” in relation to God just as the King James does, but explain its relation with more clarity. For example, 2 Kings 17:20 in the Easy-to-Read Version says, “*The Lord rejected all the people of Israel. He **brought them many troubles**. He **let people destroy them**. And, finally, he threw them away and put them out of his sight.*”

God “brought” by “letting”. When God’s protection has been withdrawn and enemy forces are allowed to have their way, He is said to have *brought* them. Even the very curses listed in Deuteronomy 28 can be understood to be only *permissive* on God’s part rather than *causative*. In 2 Chronicles, the prophet relates to the king the threat of evil that the Lord says that He will “bring” because of Israel’s disobedience:

*Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will **bring** evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: (2 Chronicles 34:24; KJV)*

Without a thorough explanation it would appear that God will dispense this evil by using His divine omnipotent power. However, another translation, while stating similarly that God intends to “bring” about this judgment, also explains *how* God will “bring” it about:

*.... what I say. See, I am bringing much trouble to this place and to its people. I am allowing all the curses to come which are written in the book they have read in front of the king of Judah. (2 Chronicles 34:24; New Life Version)*

Again, we see that God’s method for “bringing” any catastrophe is not by using His omnipotence but by *removing it*. It was God’s omnipotent power that kept the people safe. It is now the *removal* of this omnipotence that will bring about the evil. God will no longer protect them from the inevitable consequences of their sin, thus, *allowing* the curses to come about.

In Exodus 12:23, in the KJV, the Lord threatens to pass through Egypt and smite the Egyptians. Within the same verse, He clarifies the language by stating that He will not *suffer* or *allow* the destroyer to come in and smite those who followed Moses’ directions. Note how The VOICE translation renders this passage:

*The Eternal will pass through the land during the night and **bring** death to the Egyptians. But when He sees the blood-markings across the tops of your doorways and down your two doorposts, He will pass over your houses and not **allow** His messenger of death to enter into your houses and strike you down. (Ex. 12:23; The VOICE)*

God threatens to “bring” death but then clarifies this by stating that the method of bringing death would be to allow the messenger of death to do it. Again, we learn that God is only said to *bring* that which He *allowed* or *permitted* to be brought by another agent, or that which He no longer protected people from.

What it boils down to is, that as 2 Peter 2:1 says, men “***bring upon themselves swift destruction.***” God merely *permits*, rather than *causes*, the destruction:

*Find them guilty, O True God; let their own devices **bring** them ruin. Throw them out, and let them drown in the deluge of their sin, for in revolt they brazenly spit in Your face.* (Psalm 5:10; The VOICE)

One cannot persistently spit in the face of God and expect Him to forever be patient about it. He loves all men and withholds consequences for as long as He can but eventually, He must allow the results of free-will actions to take place if no repentance is ever forthcoming. As one writer well stated:

.... but that the wicked execute the judgment of God by sinning, is not the fault of God, but comes to pass by the corruption of the wicked, which they have brought upon themselves, God neither willing, nor approving, nor accomplishing, nor furthering their sins, but only permitting them in his just judgment, when accomplishing his work and purpose through them, he either does not reveal his will to them, or does not influence their wills to regard his revealed will as the end and rule of their actions.<sup>4</sup>

God does not willingly punish anyone (Lam. 3:33). He does all that He is able to bring us out of our sin

and keep us from its impending destruction. But when men persist in destroying themselves, God allows them. This is how He is said to “bring” judgment.

### **Job: Primary Key to Interpretation**

The book of Job especially explains how God is said to *bring* catastrophic events. Job suffered a number of catastrophes (natural disasters, attacks from enemy armies, loss of children, loss of wealth, loss of health, etc.) Scripture says that God *brought* these things on Job:

*Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over **all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him**: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold (Job 42:11)*

Note that all that happened to Job was said by the inspired writer to be *brought* on him by the Lord. But how do we *interpret* the language in the book of Job? James Burton Coffman writes:

“... it is stated that, Jehovah had brought all these things upon him. Here we have enunciated the Biblical premise that God indeed does that which he allows to happen”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, William MacDonald in his “Believer’s Bible Commentary” tells us that one of several lessons that we learn from the book of Job is, “What God permits, He often is said to do.”<sup>6</sup> God often takes responsibility for things that occur when He no

longer protects a person. Notice the conversation between God and Satan in the first chapter of Job:

*Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:10-12)*

Satan complains about the protection that God has around Job which prevents him from getting to him. Satan then tells God to “*put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath.*” God complies, not by directly inflicting Job with all that he suffered, but by removing His protection, thus allowing Satan access to all that Job has.

Though Satan is the one who directly attacks Job, God takes full responsibility for Job’s destruction:

*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. (Job 2:3)*

God says that He destroyed Job without cause, thus, taking the full responsibility for what happened. Yet,

we can see that His only part was to *allow* Satan to destroy Job. This is the reason that such passages must be understood in an “allowing” rather than a “causative” sense. The New Life Version is helpful in its translation:

*The Lord said to Satan, “Have you thought about My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth. He is without blame, a man who is right and good. He fears God and turns away from sin. He still holds to his good ways, even when I **allowed** you to go against him, and to destroy him for no reason.” (Job 2:3; New Life Version)*

When God “allows” something to happen it is always the result of having removed His protection. The VOICE translation renders the latter part of Job 2:3 with this truth in mind, “.... *despite the fact that you provoked Me to wreck him for no particular reason, to take away My protection and his prosperity.*” Here we are to understand that God “wrecked Job,” not directly but by the removal of His protection. Charles Edward Fraser-Tytler said it well in his own comments on Job:

“Whatever is done by an agent, is said to be done by the power restraining and directing that agent. In like manner, it is usual in Scripture to attribute to the Supreme Power, acts which are virtually those of his instruments, and which he merely permits, in order to overrule and evolve good from them.”<sup>7</sup>

This is an important principle to always keep in mind when going through the Scriptures and reading statements that credit God with inflicting sickness, tragedy, disaster, hardness, deception, and other destructive acts.

## Chapter Four

### God's Restraint Upon Nature

And then the restraint on nature's forces is withdrawn, partially. The windows above opened, the subterranean under-ocean currents unleashed, and so the Flood. No event is so plainly indented deep in the earth's surface clear around the planet as the Flood.<sup>1</sup> (S. D. Gordon)

As we learned in the previous chapter, there are a number of causative verbs used in the flood narrative to describe God's action. Two of the most prominent words are *destroy* and *bring*. Our thorough examination of how the word "bring" is used in Scripture demonstrated that the word is often used in a *permissive sense* in regards to any destructive action on God's part.

#### God Is Said to Do What He Doesn't Restrain

When we say that the word "bring" is to be understood in a permissive sense, we are saying that God did not bring about the flood using His creative omnipotence but that He permitted it to occur. This is not to say that there was no miraculous intervention on God's part. The sin of man released destructive forces upon nature. In His mercy and overwhelming love for mankind, God *miraculously* restrained these destructive forces, to include an impending flood of water that could destroy every living thing.

The refusal of man to repent left God with no choice but to remove this miraculous restraint, hence, we say that God's part in the flood is *permitting* it and not *causing* it. One old dictionary defines "permit" as follows: "To permit; to allow; to suffer, to give leave or



power by a positive act; or negatively, to withhold denial or restraint; not to prevent.”<sup>2</sup> The reader will note the importance of this definition as we expound further upon this truth.

In the previous chapter we learned from Charles Edward Fraser-Tytler that when the power that restrains is no longer restraining, Scripture attributes the act to that person. This is an idiom of Scripture that has not been taught very often in current times. One scholar noted that, “... in the Scripture idiom, God is often said to do what he only permits, or does not interpose to prevent.”<sup>3</sup> Another writer states that this idiom is not a rare occurrence in Scripture but is used quite frequently: “But are there any instances in the Bible in which God is said to do what he only permits to be done, by not preventing it? We answer many.”<sup>4</sup>

In contemporary times, “prevent” is another synonym for “restrain.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, this is the phraseology regarding this idiom used by one more expositor of Scripture. Using the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart as an illustration of this truth, we are told:

So there are passages figuratively expressing positive action on the part of God, in the sins of men, that are to be understood only of permission or a withdrawal of restraints. So God is said to have hardened the heart of Pharaoh, when the meaning strictly is, that he did not soften it, or that he suffered it to be hardened.<sup>6</sup>

When this idiom of permission is fully understood, God’s love is easily reconciled with those difficult passages of Scripture that make it appear that He, by His omnipotent power, did some very unloving things. In his *Dictionary of the English Language*, one minister and scholar, Rev. James Stormonth defined the word “permit” as “to let loose, to free from restraint.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, in Biblical

terms, to say that God *permitted* an event to take place simply means He did not *prevent* or *restrain* it from occurring.<sup>8</sup> One more expert has noted:

On this subject there is a peculiarity in the phraseology of Holy Scripture, which has not always been duly considered; and a meaning has been attached to particular texts which they were never intended to convey. It has been justly observed by John Howe, an unquestionable authority in the case, that in the inspired volume “God is said to do whatsoever creatures do; whatsoever second or subordinate causes do, while He has them in His hand, or in His power, either to restrain or let loose their inclinations and natural tendencies as He pleaseth; though He do not prompt them to this or that thing.”<sup>9</sup>

This scholarly testimony makes a strong case for the idiom of permission.

### **How This Applies to the Flood**

But can this idiom be applied to the flood of Noah? There are some who will agree that in many cases it is a Biblically true axiom that God is said to *bring* that which He merely *allowed* or *permitted*, but they will make exceptions when it comes to such events as the flood of Noah.

As we dig deeper into the subject the reader will discover that the flood is not exempt from the application of this truth. Peter uses the flood story to illustrate how God will deal with false teachers, prophets and rebels:

*“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, **bringing** in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5)*

The phrase, “bringing in” is from the Greek word “epago.” The Expositor’s Greek New Testament says, “ἐπάγω is used of ‘setting-on,’ ‘letting loose,’ e.g. ‘dogs’”.<sup>10</sup> Note that one of the definitions of this word in the Greek is “letting loose”. The dictionary defines “loose” as “to let loose; free from bonds or restraint.... to release from domination or control.” Synonyms are “unbound, untied, unrestricted, unconfined.”<sup>11</sup> This is consistent with the Greek definition of the word. Rick Renner says this in his comments on 2 Pet. 2:5:

“The phrase ‘bringing in’ is from the old word epago (ep-a-go). We saw this word used earlier in Peter’s letter, back in Second Peter 2:1, where Peter depicts the judgment that false prophets and false teachers ‘bring upon themselves.’ As before, the word epago was first used to denote the letting loose of wild, vicious dogs upon a victim. These dogs were so ferocious that they literally ripped the victim to pieces, limb to limb.”<sup>12</sup>

So *epago* was used in the sense as to no longer restrain a vicious animal attack that was once being held back. R. A. Torrey also taught that this is the correct meaning of *epago*:

WHEN HE BROUGHT A FLOOD UPON THE WORLD OF THE UNGODLY: kataklusmon kosmo asebon epaxas (AAPMSN): Brought... upon (1863) (epago from epí = upon + ágo = lead away) means to cause something to befall one, usually something evil, although in the present context something quiet just and right because of their evil behavior. Epago was used to describe “setting on or letting loose” the dogs! The “Hound of heaven” so to speak will be let loose on these ungodly false teachers.<sup>13</sup>

Again, we can see from the understanding of *epago* that God's "bringing in" the flood means that He released what would have occurred had He not held it back. Kenneth S. Wuest, a well-known and respected Greek Scholar, translated 2 Pet. 2:5 as follows:

*".... and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah as the eighth person [to be preserved], a proclaimer of righteousness, **having let loose the deluge upon the world** of those who were destitute of reverential awe towards God."* (The New Testament: An Expanded Translation by Kenneth S. Wuest)

Wuest was not alone in translating the passage with this understanding. Now, look at how some other translations render 2 Peter 2:5:

*And, an ancient world, spared not, but, with seven others, preserved, Noah, a proclaimer, of righteousness, a flood, upon a world of ungodly persons, **letting loose*** (Rotherham Emphasized Bible)

*And did not have mercy on the world which then was, but only kept safe Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when he **let loose** the waters over the world of the evil-doers* (Bible in Basic English)

*if he did not spare the ancient world but kept Noah, the herald of righteousness, safe with seven others, when he **let loose***

*the deluge on the world of impious men*  
(James Moffatt Translation)

The truth that God is said to bring that which He merely allowed or permitted can be applied to the flood just as accurately as it can be to any other Biblical event.

### **Permitted and Not Caused**

It is sin that brings destruction and it is God that protects us, in His attempts to persuade us to repent, from the consequences of our sin. However, lack of repentance means that God must eventually *permit* the consequences to have their way. Quoting 2 Pet. 2:5 one minister wrote:

“All present consequences are in one sense mere warnings; all present experience of the evil of sin is but a prediction of what is to come; and all present sight and demonstration of what sin can do is but a foreshadowing and forewarning symbol of what it must do in eternity, when God lets loose his hold of consequences, and adopts the consequences as part of a just retribution.”<sup>14</sup>

If God “let loose” the flood then it means that He is not the direct cause of it, at least not in the sense of bringing it about by an act of His creative power. As one classic writer has noted:

The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows (or flood-gates) of heaven were opened. We are not to imagine that heaven hath windows or floodgates; but God did not put forth his mighty power to make small the drops of rain, but let it come all at once: those waters which were before bound up in the clouds, by the decree of God, were now, by his decree, let loose in a wonderful manner and measure, and came down, not in drops, but in streams and spouts.<sup>15</sup>

The flood, due to the damage that sin had done to the earth, was inevitable. He merely *permitted* it to have its way. God was actually restraining and keeping back the consequences of sin. When men refused to repent then God no longer restrained the consequences of their rebellion but “let it loose”.

Note the action that God had to take to stop the flood: “*The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was **restrained***” (Gen. 8:2). The New American Bible (Revised Version) renders the latter part, “... *the downpour from the sky was held back.*” The Collins English Dictionary defines “restrain” as “to hold (someone) back from some action, esp by force” and “to deprive (someone) of liberty, as by imprisonment”. Another translation of Gen. 8:2 says:

*And being held in check are the springs of the submerged chaos and the crevices of the heavens, and being shut up is the downpour from the heavens (Concordant Literal Version)*

Here we see that the flood did not come as a creative judgment via the use of divine power. If God, by the use of His divine power, brought the flood then He could have simply used that same power to miraculously stop it. However, in Genesis 8:2 there is something more going on. God is *restraining* or *holding back* the flood waters. He is keeping them from doing further damage. What we see in Genesis 8:2 is exactly what God had also done *before* the flood of Noah: He was restraining the waters, holding them back, and keeping them from flooding the earth. S. D. Gordon elaborates further:

The actual coming of the vast deluge of water would, of course, be simply through a partial withdrawal of the controlling Hand upon the powers of nature. Those forces were, and are, being held in check constantly by God's act for our sake. A brief partial withdrawal let the waters loose. The result that came to the crowds-death would have come inevitably as a logical result of their sin.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the refusal of mankind to repent God was left with no other choice but to let them loose. As Gordon again stated regarding the flood, "The moral results were allowed to work out their natural course materially without restraint at the last."<sup>17</sup>

When the flood is understood in this light then God is no longer seen as the militant tyrant who uses His omnipotent power to destroy because he was not getting His way. There is no divine temper-tantrum in the flood story. On the contrary, God is going out of His way to protect sinning mankind from his own stupidity.

At some point, when men continue to spit in God's face and ask Him to go away, He will comply with our wishes. God had no desire to *bring* a flood and it grieved Him to His heart to have to *let* it happen. But the flood is not a creative judgment. It is God allowing man's own destruction of the earth to finally have its way. However, because He removed the restraints He held on it, He adopts the Near Eastern way of speech in which He is said to do or bring that which He allowed or permitted.

## Chapter Five

### The Removal of God's Protection

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:1-2)*

In chapter three we learned the value of “interpreting Scripture with Scripture” in order to get a better understanding of how we are able to reconcile a loving God with the idea that He destroyed people and animals with a worldwide flood. In chapters three and four we saw that God actually “brings” judgment by permitting men to suffer the automatic consequences of their rebellion. In this chapter we will look further into how our loving God had always protected men from the flood and how unrepentant sin invited the destructive flood upon men.

#### The Watery Chaotic Earth

Genesis 1:1 describes how God created the heavens and the earth. Verse 2 is *not* about creation. It is informing us that the earth *became* a watery chaos during some period after the initial creation. The Concordant Literal Translation renders Genesis 1:2, “*Yet the earth became a chaos and vacant, and darkness was on the surface of the submerged chaos.*” Under the heading, “Chaotic Earth,” E. W. Bullinger in his Bible translation offers this interpretation of Genesis 1:2:

*And the earth became waste, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep*



*(Frozen Ice). And the Spirit of God moved (hovering, brooding); [the beginning of the heavens and earth which are now] upon the face of the waters. [Melted Ice].*

The earth was not created initially as a watery chaos. It became that way because of judgment against Lucifer and the angels that followed him in rebellion.<sup>1</sup> Understanding this truth will enable us to better understand God's part in the flood of Noah. God states plainly that He did not create the earth in the watery chaotic state that we find it in in Genesis 1:2:

*For thus says Yahweh, Creator of the heavens; He is the Elohim, and Former of the earth, and its Maker, and He, He established it. **He did not create it a chaos.** He formed it to be indwelt. "I am Yahweh, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:18; Concordant Literal Translation)*

Some scholars conclude from this passage that the chaos we find in Genesis 1:2 is not how God created it but is the result of the satanic rebellion and God's judgment of it.<sup>2</sup> Based on this Biblical data, we believe that there is a very lengthy time between verses 1 and 2 (perhaps millions or even billions of years). It was during this lengthy period between these two verses that Satan sinned and fell. This resulted in *chaos*. In Genesis 1:3 onwards, God begins a restoration of the earth.

### **A Canopy/Skydome Protecting the Earth**

Part of God's miraculous restoration of the earth included a "canopy" or "skydome" that would protect the inhabitants of the earth from deadly cosmic rays:

*God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. God named the dome Sky. There was evening and there was morning: the second day. (Gen. 1:6-8; Common English Bible)*

Hence, the watery chaos that came because of the satanic rebellion was used by God to create a barrier of protection over the earth. Rather than making the water just disappear, God makes use of it for the good of the creatures He is about to create.

However, the things that God creates or reutilizes in order to protect are the very things, when distorted and degraded by sin, can be the undoing of the creatures that God is trying to bless. Gregory Mobley, in his book, "*The Return of the Chaos Monsters*," is helpful on this point:

"Creation in Genesis 1 is not about making things out of nothing, it is about bringing definition and identity and differentiation to the amorphous chaos, the *tohu wabohu*, the 'wild and waste.' But the cosmic waters are not obliterated. They are fenced in behind a restraining wall (Hebrew *raqi'a*), a thin colander like skydome that holds back the bulk of the water but allows for rain through its perforations. This firmament is our hedge against chaos. But as the tale of Noah and the flood makes clear, the skydome can spring leaks, and the chaotic waters return .... In the Biblical flood story, the chaotic waters return because of human trespass."<sup>3</sup>

Mobley points out how God "restrained" these waters in order to bless those who dwelt on the earth and protect them from the former results of the satanic

rebellion. Interestingly enough, over 400 years ago, another Bible expositor named Nicholas Gibbons shared similar thoughts on this. In 1601 Gibbons wrote:

“By this we have to praise the bountifulness of God who provideth an habitation for man upon the dry land. Secondly, his wisdom that can make by drawing them together means in nature to purge and cleanse them and from these heapes refresheth the earth with springs and fountains. Thirdly, his long suffering unto sinners, for if God should not hold these waters by his word and set bars and doors unto them they soon break in over all the earth as in the days of Noah, but the Lord hath set them a bound which they shall not pass, they shall not return to cover the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

Gibbons understood the waters that would eventually return to the earth, flood it, and destroy much of God’s creation was something that could only happen when God, for moral reasons, no longer held these waters back.

Since God removed His restraint from what was already a potential chaos, we can interpret the flood narrative as God *allowing* the flood to occur rather than directly causing it. New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham remarks:

.... we should remember the way in which the earth was destroyed in the Flood. The waters of the flood are understood as the primeval waters of chaos or the waters of the abyss (Gen. 1:2; 7:11), which God in creation had restrained and held at bay, but had not abolished (Gen. 1:6-7). They symbolize the power of nothingness to undo creation, a destructive potential which remains to threaten the created universe with reversion to chaos. In the narrative of the Flood, God is represented as allowing the waters of the abyss to flood the world, returning it to chaos (cf. 1 Enoch 83:4).<sup>5</sup>

If this true, then the blame for triggering the flood does not rest on God, but on men who were given the responsibility for maintaining the earth. While God takes responsibility for the flood because He removed those restraints, the fault for its occurrence does not lie with Him but with men who pushed God away by their sin and rebellion.

### **Sin Brings Disintegration**

God did not supernaturally create destructive judgment when the waters flooded the earth during Noah's time. Those who fail to either study the Scriptures or study them with a prejudicial bias miss a significantly important truth concerning sin's negative effect on our environment. As Howard A. Snyder wrote, "Sin makes the earth suffer. So says Paul in Romans 8, 'the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now.' It was 'subjected to futility' or frustration and is in 'bondage to decay' (Rom 8:20-22)."<sup>6</sup>

Applying this truth to the "canopy" or "skydome" God created from the chaotic waters, Joseph C. Dillow writes:

".... The second law of Thermodynamics, the law of decay, which requires the canopy to diffuse to the surface, was not operative until the entire creation was subject to vanity with the fall of Adam (see Rom. 8:20-21). So had man not sinned, the canopy would have been maintained indefinitely; but with his sin a certain future judgment became inherently necessary."<sup>7</sup>

Paul R. Williamson adds, "In the flood, the creative process (bringing order out of a watery chaos) is thus reversed. Therefore, as Clines (1997:81) aptly

concludes, ‘The flood [*sic*] is only the final stage in a process of cosmic disintegration that began in Eden.’”<sup>8</sup>

The problem with sin is that we do not always see its immediate effects. This is why we often continue in it. It is easy to deceive ourselves into believing that our sin brings no harm when its destructive power is often gradual rather than immediate. Yet, continued sin that is not repented of will certainly bring about its wages (Rom. 6:23; James 1:12-15).

Nevertheless, as we are learning from these lessons, our sin has devastating environmental effects. In this case, the sin of the antediluvians corrupted the earth (Gen. 6:5-12), and this corruption released the waters within the earth. This was enough to cause a break in the watery skydome/canopy:

*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. (Gen. 7:11-12)*

Some refer to Genesis 7:11-12 as an “uncreation”. The earth in Noah’s time reverted to the watery chaos that we find Genesis 1:2 that came because of Satan’s rebellion.

### **God Released His Restraint**

Seeing that the skydome or canopy that God used to protect the earth had broken due to sin, we would have to say that God, in His love and mercy, restrained the effects of the disintegrated canopy from taking place as He attempted to lead the antediluvians to repentance through the preaching of Noah (2 Pet. 2:5). According to

Gen. 7:11-12, God finally *permits* the restraints to be removed. Again, Joseph C. Dillow writes:

“There seems to be little doubt that Moses saw the waters above (Gen. 1:6-8) as the source of the water that came through the ‘windows of heaven’ (Gen. 7:11). In view of the polemic intent of the writer, there seems to be a conceptual tie between these two passages. That tie is in the notion of the restraint and release of chaos. The ‘deep’ [tehom] is placed above the firmament and cannot come down until God says so.”<sup>9</sup>

When this restraint is removed then the earth reverts to the same conditions we find in Genesis 1:2.<sup>10</sup> Dillow also writes, “When they finally do crash down again to earth, a global deluge results, but it only happens as Yahweh allows it”<sup>11</sup>

In his commentary on Genesis, James McKeowen also notes that the flood is the result of God having removed the restraint He had over the chaotic waters:

“The description of the cataclysm itself suggests that the flood waters come from below as well as from above. This is creation in reverse, with the chaotic waters breaking through the bounds that have held them in subjection. For ancient readers the miracle of creation was that the powers of chaos were subdued, but now God withdraws the restraints and the chaotic waters overwhelm the created order.”<sup>12</sup>

Over a century earlier, G. H. Pember made a similar observation: “God withdraws His restraints from the element of water, and the flood ensues.”<sup>13</sup> Obviously, God wanted men to repent so that there would be no need for a flood. Sin causes disintegration and God, in His love and mercy for man, restrained the consequences of their rebellion because of His desire that they repent and

remain under His protection. Therefore, understanding the flood, not from the perspective that God used His omnipotent power in a destructive way, but instead, after a long period, ceased the use of His omnipotent power to protect men from the consequences of their rebellion, reflects much better on God's loving nature.

This is far from a new or novel idea. In 1601, Nicholas Gibbons addressed certain questions about the nature of the flood and God's role in it and came to similar conclusions:

“In nature it is acknowledged of all, that the place of the waters, is to be above the earth: and therefore when the Lord did withdraw them from the earth and couched them together in the sea the same was a supernatural work of his almighty power, Wherefore if God by his almightie power does restrain the waters in their place and make that natural unto them which is against the nature of their first creation, it is not therefore against their nature (although it be miraculous in the eyes of men) when soever he permitteth them to flow unto their original seat and place.”<sup>14</sup>

Gibbons used words such as “restrain” and “permitteth” (permits). Gibbons did not see God as the direct cause of the flood but understood Genesis 7:11-12 to explain that God was protecting man from the flood by restraining the waters. He was protecting the earth from the watery chaotic state we find in Genesis 1:2 where the whole earth is covered in water. During Noah's time God *permitted* (rather than directly *caused*) the waters to return to that chaotic state.

## Chapter Six

### How God is Said to Destroy

*For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter (Isa. 34:2)*

Thrice in Genesis 6 God said that He will destroy. In verse 7 God said, “.... *I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.*” In verse 13 God said again, “.... *the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*” In verse 17 He said once more, “*I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh.*”

Isaiah 34:2 describes exactly *how* God is said to destroy. In chapter three we explained that the Hebrew word for “delivered” in Isaiah 34:2 is “nathan” and it means to “allow” or “permit.” One scholar noted concerning this word, “The verb [nathan] signifies to permit .... This permission is given by God’s withdrawing His grace.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **God: Upholder or Destroyer?**

In the previous chapter we stated that man’s sin has an effect on his environment and continued sin causes a weakening of the earth’s structures. God protects man from his sin’s consequences, but He can only do this but for so long. Continued rejection of God leaves Him with no other choice but to depart, thus withdrawing His grace, and allowing the consequences of rebellion to take place. Hence, the flood that destroyed the earth in Noah’s day.

This understanding of the flood gives us a better grasp of God’s method of destruction, or rather, how God is said to destroy. God does not “create” destruction using



divine power. On the contrary, God uses His divine power to hold everything in the universe together:

*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3)*

God uses His divine power *constructively* and not *destructively*. Rather than getting frustrated with man's consistent disobedience, All things are mercifully upheld by God; He is the One who keeps everything together. Other translations bring out a better understanding of this truth: *"It is the Son Who holds up the whole world by the power of His Word."* (New Life Version); *"The Son holds everything together with his powerful command"* (Easy to Read Version); *"upholding and maintaining and propelling all things [the entire physical and spiritual universe] by His powerful word"* (Amplified Bible).

It was the Word of God that held the canopy above the earth and kept the water gushers inside from breaking forth and destroying it. Nicholas Gibbons adds:

*".... according to the authority of Scripture that the waters are restrained from overflowing the earth, only by the power and decree of God, which hath given that nature, whereby they cannot overflow, except by special liberty from God."<sup>2</sup>*

Here Gibbons tells us that these waters were restrained by God's decree (His Word) and His power. This is God in His protective mode. He is attempting to keep back that which sin's destructive power attempts to release. God told Ezekiel, *"I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed"* (Ezekiel 31:15b). Job

26:10 says, “*He hath compassed **the waters with bounds**, until the day and night come to an end.*” The Psalms also confirm this truth:

*Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: **the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled**; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. **Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.***  
(Psalm 104:5-9)

The language in the psalm reveals that God did not use His power to create a destructive judgment during Noah’s time, but instead used it to protect them from the potential chaos. It was God’s desire that the antediluvians would repent and turn back to Him. Theologian Jerome F. D. Creach explains:

“In Genesis 1 creation was characterized first and foremost by the control of the waters—waters above and waters below given set limits. **But the creation God once protected from these waters is ruined, so the waters bring it to an end.** This reversal of the order of creation is thus God’s reaction to humankind’s overstepping its bounds and spreading violence over the earth. Now the waters are allowed to go beyond their boundaries to address the problem.”<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis are mine)

God, who used His power to restrain the chaotic waters to protect mankind, is finally left with no choice but to permit these waters to destroy the earth and its

inhabitants. Due to the lack of repentance from the antediluvians, God “gives man up” to the consequences of his rebellion, which is a disastrous flood.

### **God’s Method of Destroying**

Many Bible readers will insist on the fact that the language clearly states that God will *bring* the flood and that God would personally *destroy* mankind. But, as we have learned, it is always good to “interpret Scripture with Scripture” in order to vindicate the goodness and love of God. We believe the entire Bible is accurate, hence we do not reject the wording in Genesis 6 and 7. However, the Bible also interprets itself.

Our argument here is *not* to deny that God did *bring* the waters and that He did *destroy*. Our argument here is concerning the “*how*” of His bringing the flood, or rather, the *method* of God’s destruction of the earth during Noah’s time. In the book of Job we are told:

*Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. (Job 12:15)*

Note that God is the One who withholds the waters. The word “withhold” is another word for “restrain.” The late Bible expositor, John Gill, wrote concerning this passage:

Or “lays a restraint in” or “on the waters”; either in the ocean, as he did at the creation, when he gathered the waters that were upon the face of the earth into one place, and restrained them there, even in the decreed place he broke up for them, called the sea, and set bars and doors to keep them within bounds, whereby the places they left became dry and the dry land appeared called earth; and so at the time of the flood, when the waters which covered

the earth and drowned the world were called off again, the face of it was dry, and so it remains, the waters of the great ocean being restrained from overflowing it.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, God's part is to restrain the waters that were already poised to destroy. But one may argue that Job 12:15 also states that "*he sendeth them out.*" The Hebrew word for "sendeth" is *shalach*. Hebrew language experts offer the following definitions:

"Other special meanings of this verb include letting something go freely or without control"<sup>5</sup>

"In a number of contexts, however, the meaning 'let (someone or something) go' in the sense of 'allowing' them to go is indicated."<sup>6</sup>

"It often takes the modifications expressed by permit, to declare or hold an, to help."<sup>7</sup>

"In like manner, in Psalm lxxxi. 12 [81:12], Shalach is rendered by Gesenius, 'relax, loosen, let go, especially one who has been in any way detained; give over into the power of anything.'"<sup>8</sup>

Hence "sendeth" (*shalach*) is a *permissive* verb rather than a *causative* one. It is consistent with one Bible expositor's sage wisdom in which he taught that, "God is said in Scripture to send what he can (but doth not) hinder from being sent."<sup>9</sup>

What we want the reader to see at this point is how Job 12:15 reveals God's mechanism for destroying. The Charles Thomson Translation renders the latter portion, "*when he let it loose, he overthrew and destroyed it.*" The New English Translation reads, "*If he holds back the waters, then they dry up; if he releases them, they destroy the land.*"

God's mechanism for destruction is not to utilize His creative power to create a flood, but to suspend the use of His omnipotence, which was sheltering men from the flood, and let it loose. Here are two more translations of Job 12:15 that I find to be helpful:

*He was to restrain the waters and it was to be dried up; He was to let them loose and it was to turn over on the solid grounds.*  
(Awful Scroll Bible)

*Behold, he restraineth the waters, and they dry up; or he suffereth them to flow, and they overturn the earth.* (Leeser Old Testament)

These accurate renderings of the Hebrew word for “sendeth” (*shalach*) present more evidence that the flood of Noah should be regarded in a *permissive sense*.

### **God “Let Loose” the Flood**

More evidence of how the word “shalach” justifies the permissive sense of Noah’s flood is found in the prophetic name of his grandfather, Methusaleh. Enoch, Noah’s Great-Grandfather, walked with God. He had a son that he named “Methuselah” and the meaning of his name was a prophecy of the coming flood (Gen. 5:21-29).

Westerners frequently name their children without considering the meaning of the name. However, this was not the case in Biblical times and is still true in many societies today. Many biblical names symbolize character and/or prophetic fate. This is true for Methuselah. His name provides additional insight into the way that God utilized to “bring” the flood that we have been discussing thus far:

“Thus also, Methuselah, is derived from *muth*, to die; and *Shalach*, to emit or *let loose*, i.e. the waters, for he died but a few months before the Flood.”<sup>10</sup>

Methuselah’s name means that when he is dead then the flood will come. Note that part of Methuselah’s prophetic name is derived from the Hebrew word *shalach*. This is important because *shalach*, though often translated as “send” in Scripture, as we have noted above, should be understood as “permit” or “let loose.”

Here we have more proof, based on the prophetic name of Methuselah, that God was *protecting* the antediluvians from the flood that was being triggered by their own sin. He restrained and held back this flood in His attempts to bring these people to repentance. When the period of probation was over God “let loose” the waters that He kept under restraint.

This is what many early Jewish writers believed as well. The apocryphal book of 1 Enoch contains an alleged conversation between Enoch and Noah:

And after that he showed me the angels of punishment who are prepared to come and **let loose all the powers of the waters** which are beneath in the earth in order to bring judgement and destruction on all who [abide and] dwell on the earth. And the Lord of Spirits gave commandment to the angels who were going forth, that they should not cause the waters to rise but **should hold them in check; for those angels were over the powers of the waters**. And I went away from the presence of Enoch. (1 Enoch 66:1-3; Emphasis mine)

While we do not consider the book of Enoch to be canonical or inspired on the level of our canonized sixty-six books of the Bible, it does give us some insight into how some of the early students of the Bible thought.

Since the book of 1 Enoch is somewhat of a commentary and interpretation of the events in Genesis, we see that the early Jewish community believed that God used His angels to “*hold in check*” the flood waters. When men rejected God to the point that He saw that they would never turn from the evil that was damaging the environment and each other, He commanded the angels to “let loose” the flood waters.

We are to read apocryphal books like 1 Enoch as commentary and not as inspired Scripture. Yet, the statements in this book are very much consistent with Biblical truth. In Revelation 7 we learn God’s “modus operandi” for bringing disaster. God’s angels are told not to “hurt” the earth until God’s servants are sealed. These angels “hurt” the earth by removing their protection:

*And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, **holding the four winds of the earth**, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, **Hurt not the earth**, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. (Rev. 7:1-3)*

Note that the winds were already prepared to destroy and the angels were *holding them back*. It is only when the angels released their restraint is when they could be said to “hurt” the earth. The ancient writers of the book of Enoch believe that this was the exact same scenario as the flood. God’s angels kept the waters in check that

would have destroyed apart from their protection. However, man's lack of repentance would cause them to "let it loose".

### **God Destroys by "Unleashing"**

We can also see this truth by comparing the common English Bible translations to some of the more modern ones. For example, in Genesis 6:17 we are told that God will "bring" a flood of waters:

*And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.*

In previous chapters we examined more closely the language being used in Gen. 6:17. The following translation provides a rendering consistent with our findings:

*Look! I am going to unleash a torrent and flood the earth to destroy all flesh under the heavens which breathes the breath of life. Everything that is on the earth will die. (The VOICE)*

The Random House Dictionary says that "unleash" means, "to release from or as if from a leash; set loose to pursue or run at will; to abandon control of." The Collins English Dictionary defines it as, "to release from or as if from a leash; to free from restraint or control." God did not use His creative power to cause the flood. He "brought" the flood by releasing the restraint and control that He had on it.



In his interesting book about “water,” Pastor David L. Knight believes that the removal of the restraint on the waters during the time of Noah is how God *governs* His response to rebellion:

“... the flood [is] a reversal of creation - the waters that had been corralled and bounded at creation are unleashed. In the same way that human civilization had eroded into Chaos, so the chaotic waters are unleashed to destroy the world. It seems that the story reveals a principle by which God governs divine response to human freedom. God permits us to experience the consequences of the choices we make. In the days of Noah that meant living free from the restraints of God-ordained order. Nature responded in kind.”<sup>11</sup>

Theologian Timothy Keller uses similar language to describe God’s action during the flood:

The wages of sin is disintegration, which is another way of saying death. What God was doing in the flood was unleashing the forces of chaos, which was a justifiable judgment. It was an appropriate judgment because when you turn away from the Creator you turn away from the goodness of creation and bring into your life decreation and disintegration—the reversal of creation.<sup>12</sup>

This understanding of the flood places God in a totally different light than how He has often been viewed regarding the flood. Many read the flood story and find a powerful but angry, vindictive God in it who has been slighted and is bent on destroying. However, the view we see here is one in which God holds back that which man is doing to himself until their failure to repent leaves Him with no other choice but to let them have what they want. Sadly, what they wants leads to their own destruction.

## Chapter Seven

### The Destructive Power of Sin

*The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. **And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt**; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, **I will destroy them with the earth.** (Gen. 6:11-13)*

In the last chapter we learned that God protected the antediluvians from the consequences of their own rebellion by restraining or holding back the waters that were prepared to destroy. In the next two chapters we will look further into the truth of how humanity's sin was the actual "trigger mechanism," rather than God exerting divine power, that brought the flood upon the earth.

#### Corruption of the Earth

Some limit the word "corrupt" in Gen. 6:12 to *moral corruption*. Certainly, moral corruption plays a major role here, but is that all that is being spoken of when we are told that the earth was corrupt? A study of Scripture will prove that wickedness has a *physically* corrupting effect upon the planet itself. The word "corrupt" comes from the Hebrew word "shachath". One website with knowledge of the Hebrew offers this insight:

"Verse 12 is among the saddest in the entire Bible: it says that God looked upon all He had made and it had gone to ruin. The Hebrew word used here is *shachath* and while 'corrupt' is a good translation the word corrupt in our modern vocabulary means

*dishonest* therefore making it as though the point of God's concern was that men were not dealing fairly with each other, and they lied, and they stole. That is not the sense of this word: rather, polluted to the point of ruin better catches the sense of *shachath*. Contrast this with what God said but a few chapters earlier, in the last verse of Chapter one: 'Now God saw that all He had made was exceedingly good!' God's Creation decayed from perfection to utter ruin in but a few generations."<sup>1</sup>

Here we see that *shacath* is the exact opposite of what we find in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1 everything on the planet was good. This was not just a reference to *moral* good but to *physical* good as well. Now in Genesis 6 the planet is no longer good but *shacath*. It is ruined and destroyed. David L. Knight connects this to *how* God is said to destroy the earth with a flood:

"Five times the narrator uses the word *shacath* which means to ruin, corrupt or destroy .... The earth as God had designed it had been *corrupted* by the ruinous conduct of the people. The same word is used to tell how God also will *destroy* the ruined earth. God will give us what we seek and will bring down upon the heads of the perpetrators the natural outcome of their destructive actions."<sup>2</sup>

Hence, we see that Genesis 6:11 is not limited to the fact that the people of the earth were morally deficient, but that their moral deficiency actually had a physical effect upon the earth itself. Some Bible translations and paraphrases tell us clearly that "***The solid grounds were to be corrupting***" (6:11a; Awful Scroll) and "***God saw that the earth was in ruins, and He knew why***" (6: 12a; The VOICE). Here are two more:

*"And the earth is ruined at the face of Elohim and the earth is filled with*

*violence: and Elohim sees the earth and behold, it is ruined; for all flesh on the earth had ruined his way. (Gen. 6:11-12; Exegeses Companion Bible)*

*And being ruined is the earth before the Elohim, and being filled is the earth with wrong. And seeing is Yahweh Elohim the earth, and behold! Ruined is it, for ruining is all flesh its way on the earth. (Gen. 6:11-12; Concordant Literal Version)*

It is *the earth*, the physical planet itself, which is ruined. Our sins not only morally corrupt our soul, but sin has a damaging effect upon our environment.

### **Corruption and Destruction**

Sin is not merely a personal thing. It has a tendency to destroy communities, kingdoms and the very environment itself. David Knight again writes:

“God permits us to experience the consequences of the choices we make. In the days of Noah that meant living free from the restraints of God-ordained order. Nature responded in kind. The flood highlights the holistic interconnectedness of the world. Our choices and actions affect our neighbors, shape society, and impact our environment.”<sup>3</sup>

Could it be that the destruction of the earth that God threatens in Genesis 6:13 means that He will no longer sustain the earth from the devastating effects that humankind’s sin has brought upon it? Could it be that the sin of men so degraded the earth that it released a flood that God would have held back if men had repented?

Peter compares the false prophets and teachers of his time to the wicked antediluvians and how their destruction would be similar. Peter states that it is the sinning one who brings about his own destruction:

*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and **bring upon themselves swift destruction** .... And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, **bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly** (2 Pet. 2:1, 5)*

Both “bring upon” and “bringing in” are from the Greek word “*epago*”. While God takes responsibility for the consequences of sin, we can see from this context He created the universe with a *moral order* in which sin itself automatically brings about its own punishment (Gal. 6:7-8). Therefore, people actually bring these consequences upon themselves. The Bible in Basic English renders the passage this way:

*But there were false prophets among the people, as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly put forward wrong teachings for your destruction, even turning away from the Lord who gave himself for them; whose destruction will come quickly, and **they themselves will be the cause of it** .... And did not have mercy on the world which then was, but only kept safe Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, **when he let loose the***

*waters over the world of the evil-doers* (2  
Pet. 2:1, 5)

Note that the blame for the destruction of the false prophets and teachers were placed squarely on their own shoulders. God merely “let loose” what they themselves brought forth by their sin. As another translation of the latter part of verse 1 says, “.... *And so they will quickly destroy themselves*” (Easy to Read Version).

God is not One who engages in creative destruction. Hosea says, “*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help*” (Hosea 13:9). The English words “corrupt” as related to man’s sin in Gen. 6:12 and “destroy” as related to God’s response to man’s sin in Gen. 6:13 are the exact same Hebrew word, “*shacath*.” God is going to “destroy” by allowing men to suffer the destruction they have brought upon themselves. Old Testament scholar, Terrence Fretheim, notes:

“The verb *destroy* derives from the same root as ‘corrupt’ (*sht*, ‘ruin/ruined,’ would capture the point well), which signals the functioning of the moral order (what goes around comes around). God does not need to introduce judgment into the situation (God does not need to trigger the destructive elements). The seeds of destruction are contained within the very nature of the situation.”<sup>4</sup>

In Revelation 11:18 we are told that God, “.... *shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth*.” God lets men “corrupt” or “destroy” the Earth by allowing the devastation they brought about to overcome them, thereby allowing them to reap the consequences of their actions.

### **The Self-Destroyers**

In the case of Genesis, men triggered a flood by their evil actions and God’s method of destruction was to

*permit it.* As Fretheim stated, the use of *shacath* in relation to both the sin of man and the punishment of God tells us that God's method of destruction is to allow men to reap what they have sown. He basically withholds His restraint and allows men to destroy themselves. Other scholars allude to this fact as well. Abraham Kuruvilla writes:

“The word (*shkht*, ‘corrupt’ or ‘destroy’) echoes in 6:11-13: the earth is ‘corrupt’ (6:11a, 12a, 12b) and God decides to ‘destroy’ it (6:13b). So ‘God’s decision is to destroy what is virtually self-destroyed or self-destroying already.... In a sense vv. 11-12 are a condensation of the narratives extending from Gen. 3:1 to 6:4’—a downward spiral of mankind’s sinfulness and corruption.”<sup>5</sup>

Kuruvilla tells us that the double word usage means that God will “destroy” what is already destroying itself. William P. Brown understands the double use of *shacath* as stating that God is merely taking this to its inevitable conclusion:

“Divine judgment, consequently, reflects creation’s downward slide into chaos. God’s declaration to ‘destroy’ all life from the earth means literally to ‘corrupt’ (*sht*), taking the earth’s corruption to its cosmic conclusion, judgment by unbounded water. The earth’s violence bears its own reward. Chaos for the priestly author is the natural consequence of corrupt conduct, which afflicts the earth like a virus, attacking its stability and demoralizing its integrity.”<sup>6</sup>

Note that the violence that has come on the earth brings with it a reward. Furthermore, Brown sees it as something similar to a virus that effects the integrity of the earth. Well over a century ago, F. B. Meyer made a similar statement concerning this antediluvian period

when he wrote, “Human sin had reached an awful climax. Sooner or later its results must have swept the human race from the earth, as smallpox will slay every native on some infected island. God only hastened by the Flood the inevitable result of wrong-doing.”<sup>7</sup>

While we would not fully agree with Meyer that God personally hastened the flood, he does present a truth not often taught by ministers of his time in which man’s sin was making the earth sick and that its destruction was the inevitable result.

The Bible is clear in its teaching that sin makes sick the very land upon which it is being committed. When a human is sick, his or her body may not be able to hold down what is in it and that person may vomit. James McKeowen comes to similar conclusions regarding the effects of man’s sin upon the earth:

“Human beings have brought God’s earth into a state of ruin, and now God brings ruin upon humankind. The corollary is that human rebellion leads not only to their own destruction but to the destruction of the earth, since God’s decision to destroy humankind (6:17) results in the earth losing its value as a life-supporting medium. Therefore, the behavior of human beings has repercussions, not only for their own welfare, but also the welfare of the land.”<sup>8</sup>

Hence, sin is not merely a personal action that effects the sinner alone. Sin causes environmental problems which means that mankind is completely at fault for the flood.

### **Sin and the Structure of the Earth**

William P. Brown states how the violence of the antediluvians destroyed the earth’s integrity:



“Together, ‘violence’ and ‘corruption’ subvert both the earth’s structural integrity and the inhabitants therein, tearing away life and its foundation. This is violence at its most unstructured and therefore wanton state. Violence and its accompanying effects make up the antithesis of creation’s ‘goodness,’ carefully wrought by differentiation and coordination. Chaos has arrived, enveloping the earth and prompting its dissolution.”<sup>9</sup>

Violence caused the earth to become the opposite of how God created it. This sin is enough to cause the earth to vomit and bring forth a flood. Dr. Dennis Holt believes that this is indeed the case:

The flood cleansed the earth from the accumulation of man’s sin and prevailed over the sinfulness of that flesh. It had suffered corruption for as long as it could stand it and when the bondage reached critical mass the earth rebelled with a vengeance. Nearly everyone knows about the Great Flood but most people think that the Father simply got fed up with His children and killed them all except for the family of Noah. It didn’t happen that way at all. Incorporated in the ceiling of most public buildings is a network of shower heads governed by a temperature sensitive switch.... God’s fail-safe system works with the same principle. When sin accumulates to a certain level in the earth, the fail-safe system kicks on and the purification process begins.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Holt’s illustration of the failsafe system is similar to the fact that the human body, when it is sick, vomits out the possible poisons that has made it sick in the first place. Sickness effects the body. Sin effects the earth in a similar way.

## Chapter Eight

### The Environmental Effects of Sin

We don't know the earth as it came fresh from the hand of our Father .... The hurt of sin is everywhere. The geologist finds it in the rocks, the astronomer in the stars, the botanist in the flowers. The orchardist must plan to offset its ravages in his fruit, and the farmer in the soil and in stock breeding. It's a world of beauty, but a hurt, a scarred beauty.<sup>1</sup> (S. D. Gordon)

We saw how sin contributed to the destruction of the earth in the last chapter. We discovered that the flood was unavoidably brought about by this destruction of the earth. We will look much more closely at what the Bible says about the consequences of sin on the environment in this chapter. We will therefore have additional evidence that the flood of Noah was caused by human sin rather than a direct act of God's destruction.

### The Effects of Violence on Our Environment

We learned in the previous chapter that in Noah's time it was *violence* that destroyed the earth. We believe that Gregory Mobley was correct when he wrote concerning the flood:

“.... Human violence threatens cosmic order and health. God created a world that works by controlling chaos behind a firmament. But the chaos is ever ready to break free from its restraints, and human trespass erodes the stability of the dam behind which the waters mass.”<sup>2</sup>

Commenting on Gen. 6:11 Gregory Mobley further writes, “This ethical breach compromises the terrestrial defense against chaos, leading to the return of the cosmic waters that had been restrained by the firmament.”<sup>3</sup> It is sin, and particularly, the sin of violence, that brought a disintegration of God’s protective barriers, thus opening up the earth to destruction by a chaotic flood of waters.

The Bible is clear that sin, especially violence, has a devastating effect on the earth:

*So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: **for blood it defileth the land:** and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.*  
(Num. 35:33-34)

The VOICE translation makes it even clearer:

*Failure to honor life in this way **contaminates the very land itself.** Do not pollute the land where you live by allowing blood guilt to go unpunished. Once the land has been subjected to such violence, it must be purified, so the blood of the one who caused bloodshed must be shed.*  
(Num. 35:33; The VOICE)

The same terrain and surroundings that violence is perpetrated upon become contaminated and defiled. Something turns toxic and harmful to live in when it is contaminated. Depending on what it is and how much of it is polluted, the infected object may be fatal.

People fail to see how sin—including violence—could affect anything in a way other than a moral one. This is a result of people's ignorance of sin's terrible ability to obliterate both the spiritual and material realms. It resembles radiation significantly. People don't realize the entire extent of the damage caused by radioactive poisoning leaks from nuclear plants until it's too late since they can't see it or smell it. Sin functions in the same manner.

Consider how America has accepted the abortion of innocent unborn children as something normal and casual. They do not see it as having any negative impact on our environment. However, the Bible assures us that killing innocent unborn children has a contaminating effect on the land:

*Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and **the land was polluted with blood.** Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. (Psalm 106:37-39)*

The subject of abortion is not a mere “political” issue. This killing of innocent unborn children affects us in devastating ways. Our selfishness of offering up innocent children to the idols of sex and the god of convenience is not without its repercussions. We are guilty of the idolatry of believing we own these bodies that actually belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This line of thinking is demonic in nature.

One reason we see such an increase in natural disasters is due to abortion. The VOICE translation helps us to connect all of this to the flood of Noah:

*They even offered their sons and daughters as sacrifices to the demons. The promised land was **corrupted** by the innocent blood they offered to the idols of Canaan, The blood of their very own sons and daughters. They became impure because of their unfaithful works; by their actions, they prostituted themselves to other gods. (Psalm 106:37-39; The VOICE)*

Note the word for “polluted” is understood as “corrupted” in this translation. This, of course, is the same word that the KJV uses to describe the earth during Noah’s time in Genesis 6:12. Violence, contamination and corruption began taking effect upon the earth, making the earth a hazardous place to live. This is what the sin of violence is doing around our world today and it is why we experience so much destructive weather.

In Joel 3:19 we read, “*Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.*” Another translation says:

*Egypt will be destroyed and Edom will become a desert waste, because of the bad things done to the sons of Judah. They have killed people in the land of Judah who were not guilty of wrong-doing. (New Life Version)*

Here is clear Biblical evidence that sin effects the environment. Sin is destructive in multiple ways, and the

environment is just one of them. Joel 3:19 is not a threat of any action that God intends to take but a prediction of what will happen as the automatic consequences of their sin takes place.

### **The Land Becomes an Enemy**

The Bible also says that the land itself responds adversely to our transgressions. Not only that, but we are also informed that the nation reacts catastrophically to the transgressions of violence and homosexuality:

*And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants .... (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. (Leviticus 18:25, 27-28)*

The land vomits out the inhabitants of the land that commit abominable acts. Verses 25 and 28 in the Septuagint reads:

*.... and the land hath been polluted, and for its sake I have retributed to them their iniquity, and **the land is become a mortal enemy to them who dwell therein** .... **that the land may not become a mortal enemy to you when you pollute it; as it hath been to those nations which were before you.** (Lev. 18:25, 28; Charles Thomson Translation)*

Why do natural disasters occur here? It's because our self-centered, materialistic appetites have contaminated the ecosystem. This affects the land, and it responds by fighting back. We turn the environment against ourselves.

God repeats this warning two chapters later when He says, "*Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out*" (Lev. 20:22), or, as the Charles Thomson translation renders it, "*You shall keep all my statutes and my judgments and do them, that the land to which I am leading you to dwell therein, **may not become your mortal enemy***" (Charles Thomson).

This is what happened to the antediluvians. They continued to sin in horrible ways and the earth responded by vomiting them out. Our sins are making the earth sick and it is reacting to our careless behavior:

*The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.* (Isa. 24:4)

Note that it is the earth itself that mourns. Richard Young, in his book, describes the "mourning of nature" as God *permitting* the natural consequences of sin to take place as a means of chastisement:

"The Old Testament clearly teaches that nature is one of the channels through which God blesses or judges His people. God has the power and prerogative to sustain the created order, enabling it to produce an abundance of produce, or to withhold His hand, allowing nature to languish. When we obey God, nature rejoices (Isa. 44:22-23), and when we disobey God, nature mourns (Isa. 24:1-5; Hos. 4:1-3). This mourning of nature is due to God's chastening us by controlling the forces of nature or

indirectly by letting the consequences of our ways affect natural processes, such as sickness and disease resulting from toxic pollution.”<sup>4</sup>

Young believes that one of God’s ways of chastening rebels is by allowing the consequences of their sins to take effect. Verses 5 and 6 of Isaiah 24 attest that it is the inhabitants that defile the land, and it is this act on their part that brings about the curse which devours the earth:

*The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. (Isa. 24:5-6)*

Note that the “therefore” in verse 6 explains the consequences of the land being defiled. Other translations and paraphrases of Isa. 24:6 helps us to understand that those who are sinning upon the land are responsible for its bad condition. God’s only part in this is the loss of His divine protection:

*For this cause **the earth is given up to the curse**, and those in it are judged as sinners: for this cause those living on the earth are burned up, and the rest are small in number. (Bible in Basic English)*

***Earth is polluted by its very own people, who have broken its laws, Disrupted its***



*order, violated the sacred and eternal covenant. Therefore a curse, like a cancer, ravages the earth. Its people pay the price of their sacrilege.* (The Message)

Again, we can see that man, and not God, is fully responsible for the negative reaction of the earth brought about by our sinning. God's only part is to *allow* this to occur. He will *no longer restrain* these consequences from taking place.

### **How Does God Exercise His fury?**

This truth is also confirmed as we read and understand how God is said to exercise His fury upon those who do violence on the earth. Ezekiel records God saying, "***Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it***" (Ezekiel 36:18).

This text states the following two facts: First, God's wrath was released in response to idolatry and violent sin. The second is that the soil became contaminated due to idolatry and acts of violence. Both God and man have taken action in this situation. We need a deeper understanding of the language surrounding God and His fury in order to completely comprehend how the contamination of the earth by humans is the real cause of things like flooding and other calamities.

Contrary to the thinking of some critics of God and the Bible (and sadly, even some of God's most ardent "defenders"), God's "fury" is not an out-of-control emotional reaction by which God loses His temper and uses His omnipotent power to callously destroy. In an earlier chapter of Ezekiel, we are taught exactly *how* the *fury* of God operates:

*And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare (Eze. 16:38-39)*

God exercises His fury through the forfeiture of His protection, thus *allowing* the enemies of the rebels to have their way. The Easy-to-Read Version renders verse 39a, “*I will let those lovers have you. They will destroy your mounds. They will burn your places for worship.*” Hence, God’s fury is merely *allowing* the consequences of sin to have its way. Other passages offer us a similar understanding of how God exercises His fury:

*For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter (Isa. 34:2).*

*They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city (Jer. 33:5)*

Again, we see that God exercises His fury by *delivering* Israel over to their enemies or rather *allowing* Israel’s enemies to have their way. He will also *hide His face*. Adam Clarke says, that God “*hiding His face*”

means, “I will surely hide my approbation and my protection. This is the general meaning of the word in Scripture.”<sup>5</sup>

The New Living Translation translates the latter part of Jer. 33:5 as, “*I have abandoned them because of all their wickedness.*” Concerning the flood, God says in Genesis 6:3, “*My spirit shall not always strive with man*”. At some point God threatened to abandon the antediluvians, allowing them to suffer the consequences of their rebellion and the damage being done to the earth. This is not something God desired but since men persisted in evil, God could not continue to protect them from the consequences of it.

## Chapter Nine

### Pushing God Away

*Your persistent wrongdoing has come between you and your God; since you constantly reject and **push God away**, He had to turn aside and ignore your cries. (Isaiah 59:3; The VOICE)*

In previous chapters, we discovered how man's sin had a detrimental impact on the environment and how it was actually the root cause of the flood. We also learned that God's primary job is as a guardian. He endeavored to persuade men to repentance so that He would not have to withdraw His protection and let them experience the consequences of their rebellion.

In these final lessons, we want to examine further the Biblical destructive language used in relation to God. Particularly, we will delve further into the truth that God's *presence* with the antediluvians is the only thing that prevented destruction. It is when God is left with no choice but to forsake men and *permit* destruction to come upon them is when He is said to actually destroy.

#### **Destructive Language Used by God**

In Genesis 6 God threatened to destroy at least three times: “*And the LORD said, **I will destroy** man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gen. 6:7); “.... the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, **I will destroy** them with the earth. (Gen. 6:13); “*And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, **to destroy** all flesh” (Gen. 6:17).**

We also learned that God is unwilling to destroy. God is a God of love and His purpose is to save them

from destruction (1 John 4:8, 16; John 3:16). However, due to the lack of repentance on the part of men, He is forced to do so for important reasons (2 Pet. 3:9).

Nonetheless, we discovered that when the Bible is properly understood, it is man, not God, who is completely responsible for the destruction that comes upon the earth. There are built-in consequences in nature for sin. Men violated the laws of God through their violence and bloodshed, thus causing the flood to come.

The flood came because God's protection was forfeited by an unrepentant people. God's method of destroying is not direct. His mechanism of destruction is to allow the results of men's choices to take their inevitable course. Yet, people have been taught for centuries that God directly, through divine power, brought the flood that destroyed the antediluvians.

Scripture distinctly says that God brought the destruction. Therefore, it is important that we delve further into the Scriptures in order to better understand how men are completely responsible for any destruction alleged to have been brought by God. By this understanding we will be able to reconcile the truth about God's loving character and the destructive language used about Him in Scripture.

### **God's Protective Presence**

It is always the desire of God to be present with men and protect them from danger (Psalm 17:8; 57:1, 61:4; 91:4-7; Deut. 32:11; Ruth 2:12). Sadly, the majority of men prefer to live in sin and rebellion against God, thus driving Him out of their lives. When men abandon God and push Him out of their lives, God, in His love, will often strive and plead with men to repent and return to Him. Nonetheless, their constant refusal leaves Him with no choice but to eventually honor their request. The language used in Scripture is that God forsakes or

abandons them (Deut. 31:16-18; 1 Chron. 28:9; 2 Chron. 12:5; 15:2; 24:20; Matt. 23:37-38).

Take note that it is man that initiates the forsaking and abandonment and not God. God warned Asa, “.... *if ye forsake him, he will forsake you*” (2 Chron. 15:2b). When Judah and Jerusalem left God and fell into idolatry, Zechariah told them, “.... *because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you*” (2 Chron. 24:20). He stays as long as He can, hoping to convince men to change their minds (2 Chron. 24:18-19). But, at some point, He must allow men their desire and the destructive consequences of such desires (2 Chron. 24:24-25). To abandon God is to push Him away. What other choice does He have except to honor our wishes and leave?

God’s leaving or forsaking, which culminates in the loss of His protection, is equated with His destroying. In Deut. 4:31 God promises the faithful Israelites that “.... *he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee.*” Here we see that being forsaken is by God is the same as being destroyed. In contrast, the psalmist wrote, “.... *they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee*” (Psalm 73:27). Again, destruction is equated with the lack of God’s presence. This is exactly how God is said to destroy by a flood. Note the context of Genesis 6:

*And the LORD said, **My spirit shall not always strive with man**, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.... And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, **I will destroy***

*man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Gen. 6:3, 5-7)*

Now take note of two things found within the passage. In Gen. 6:3 we read, “*And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man.*” In verse 7 we read “*And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth*” God’s Spirit no longer striving with man meant the loss of His restraining power over the forces of destruction. When God is no longer on the scene then neither is His protection from disastrous events. God’s departure and giving of the unrepentant to the forces already bent on destruction is the method by which He destroys.

### **Giving The Antediluvians Time to Repent**

Verse 3 in Brenton English Septuagint Translation reads, “*My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men for ever.*” Here we see that at a certain point God would remove His presence. Yet, God does not forsake mankind immediately. He says that His Spirit will not *always strive* with man. God is a loving God and tries to bring men to repentance for as long as possible. He does all that He is able to do to prevent mankind’s demise without violating their freedom to choose.

Because God does not want men to be destroyed, in His abundant grace and mercy He would give them 120 years to repent. Some Bible paraphrases bring out clearly the idea that God was giving the antediluvians this amount of time to turn from wickedness:

Then Jehovah said, “My Spirit must not forever be disgraced in man, wholly evil as he is. I will give

him 120 years to mend his ways.” (The Living Bible)

God saw this and said, “More and more of my people are turning against me. The human body has become their God. My Holy Spirit will not work with them endlessly. I will give them one hundred and twenty years to change their ways.” (The Clear Word by Jack Blanco)

Some teach that Gen. 6:3 is in reference to man’s lifespan. However, that does not make sense in light of the context. W. H. Griffith Thomas, in his classic commentary on Genesis, writes:

“The interpretation of this verse is difficult. Probably the Hebrew word rendered ‘strive’ would be better expressed by ‘dwell.’ In either case it is a warning of the limitation of mercy, and it is generally thought that the term of 120 years refers to the time yet to be given to mankind before the flood should come upon the earth. Thus God in mercy warns while declaring His certain judgment upon evil.”<sup>1</sup>

While the passage may be difficult to interpret, it would appear that the most rational understanding of it is that in which God is giving man a significant period of time to repent in order to prevent the flood from destroying them.

Furthermore, Peter says, “*Which sometime were disobedient, when once **the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing***” (1 Pet. 3:20). The waiting was the 120 years that God’s Spirit would strive or dwell with man until that period was complete. This was the demonstration of God’s longsuffering. He truly wanted man to repent and not be destroyed. He also waited until Noah had completed the building of the ship so that at least he and his family could



escape the destruction to come in the likelihood that man would not repent.

### **Men Push God Away**

After this 120-year period men continued to resist the strivings of God's Spirit. 120 years is a very long time to have an opportunity to repent. However, if men continue to resist God, then He will eventually withdraw His presence. As William Pitt M'farquhar, in his understanding of Gen. 6:3, writes:

.... whenever he denounces final and unmitigated vengeance on those who will not turn from their sins (and this he does invariably by the preaching of the gospel), he must necessarily be understood as using the very language of our text, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." In other words, "If rebellious sinners shall continue to resist my Spirit in his endeavours to reclaim them, he shall be finally withdrawn, he shall cease to contend with them; and they shall be hopelessly left to the ruin which threatens them."<sup>2</sup>

God willingly strove with the antediluvians for a very significant period but none repented. Therefore, when God's Spirit finally departs it is not an arbitrary act on His part. He is often pushed away. Because He respects our free-will He will leave when He is not wanted. This is exactly what happened with the people who drowned in the flood:

*Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was **overflown with a flood**: Which said unto God, **Depart from us**: and what can the Almighty do for them? (Job 22:16-17)*

In Hosea 9:12 God says, “*woe also to them when I depart from them!*” Note that the flood is connected to the people’s request to depart from them. S. D. Gordon notes that Job 22 can properly classified as a “prayer request”:

Man’s defiance and blaspheming and ignoring are likewise a most intense pleading, a pleading to be left alone; so great is man’s wilful, foolish ignorance. His very attitude is a shutting of God out, so far as he can. Man’s shutting of God out so far as possible always goes before God’s withdrawal. There’s a bit of light incidentally on prayer here. Prayer is a coming over voluntarily, and more fully, into the atmosphere of God’s presence. Every faculty works better in that presence, for it is our native air. Now judgment, when it comes, is merely God’s granting of man’s prayer by withdrawal.<sup>3</sup>

This request for God’s departure brought destruction upon them:

***Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger. (Job 21:14-17)***

Note that these people asked God to depart from them. They told God that they had no desire for the knowledge of His ways. God well said that His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:12). Solomon

wrote that it is the *rejection* of the knowledge that God so persistently tries to give that brings destruction:

*When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD.* (Prov. 1:27-29)

God offers knowledge but is rejected. He pours out His Spirit but people refuse Him. What other choice does God have but to fulfill their request to depart from them? In his essay titled, “The Misery of a Deserted People,” Edward Reynolds writes:

“It opens an inlet for all other miseries and troubles, lets loose the sluices; and, as in Noah’s flood, breaks up the fountains of the great deep .... That the Lord doth not in this manner forsake a nation or church, until, They forsake him: our mercies are from God, our miseries from ourselves. (Hos. xiii. 9. 2 Chron. xv. 2)”<sup>4</sup>

The law of reciprocation is that when we forsake God, He is left with no other choice but to forsake us (2 Chron. 15:2; 24:20). Basically, when God is pushed away, He reluctantly respects our will and complies with our wishes. But woe unto us when he does.

## Chapter Ten

### The Loss of God's Protective Presence

*You have been a safe place for poor people in trouble. **You are like a shelter from floods** and shade from the heat when powerful men attack. They are like rain streaming down the walls that protect us from the storm. (Isaiah 25:4; Easy-to-Read Version)*

At least ten times the Scripture refers to God as a refuge (Psalm 9:9; 14:6; 46:7, 11; 91:2, 9; 94:22; 142:5; Prov. 14:26; Jer. 16:19). God's nature is not that of a destroyer but of a protector. The psalmist wrote, "*For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy*" (Psalm 61:3).

Moreover, whenever the Bible refers to a flood in any context, it is often used metaphorically in the sense of an enemy force that God rescues and protects men from. For godly people who pray, God promises, "*.... surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him*" (Psalm 32:6b). God also promised, "*When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him*" (Isa. 54:19b).

In this final chapter we will examine how the loss of God's protective presence is the catalyst for allowing a flood, (whether metaphorically or, as in the case of Noah, physically) to bring about its destructive force.

#### End Times Comparison

Jesus said that the last days would be just like the days of Noah: "*And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of*

*man be*” (Matt. 24:39; see also Luke 17:26-27). Since the flood of Noah is an illustration of end times events, then God’s activities in the end times as relayed to us by the Biblical writers provides us with more evidence regarding how the flood was brought.

S. D. Gordon believed that one of the signs of the end of days that is similar to the days of Noah is the withdrawing of God’s protective presence:

Through the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Church, and through the Church, a most powerful restraint has been put on that rampant power of evil. And, the logical natural self-executive judgment on sin has been held in abeyance. There’s a stay in racial settlement proceedings. Man’s day of opportunity has been graciously lengthened out. These are the four tremendous racial things. Then there’s a sequel to this. Some day, we are told, the Holy Spirit will withdraw from the Church, as from the race at the time of the Flood. The restraint upon evil, by the Holy Spirit, through the Church, will be withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>

Scripture supports this fact. In the last days God is said to “send” a strong delusion, not directly, but by the withdrawing of His Spirit. When the hindering power of the Holy Spirit has been removed Satan will be able to have unrestrained access to deceive people on the earth (Rev. 12:9-12). God is said to personally “send” this deception by withdrawing His Spirit:

*And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and*

*shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (2 Thess. 2:6-11)*

God is a God of truth and he never lies (Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:17-19). Deception has its foundation in lying (Lev. 6:2; Ps. 101:7; Prov. 14:25; Isa. 44:20; Jer. 9:5; 14:14; 23:26; Hos. 11:12; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 3:13). Therefore, the only way that God is said to *send* deception is by no longer protecting people from it. Another translation renders verse 11 in a more permissive sense: *“For this reason, God will allow them to follow false teaching so they will believe a lie”* (2 Thess. 2:11; New Life Version). As one author well stated:

“The Spirit of God was then pleading with men. His work as the hindering one is indicated in Gen\_6:3.... God in His longsuffering waited yet 120 years, during which His Spirit preached through the preacher of righteousness, calling to repentance. The withdrawing of the Spirit of God is clearly taught in 2Th\_2:7. This age will end in the same manner as the age before the flood, ‘the Spirit not always pleading with man.’”<sup>2</sup>

Paul is speaking about the end times here. Jesus said that Noah’s flood is representative of the end times. Again, in Genesis 6:3 God said, *“And the LORD said, **My spirit shall not always strive with man.**”* The manner in which God is said to “send deception” is the exact same

as that by which God is said to “destroy” the people with a flood, which is by the removal of His restraining Spirit.

### **God “Destroys” by Withdrawing Himself**

The clear message in Genesis 6 is that God will “destroy,” not using the human methods whereby men exert their personal strength and power to exact vengeance upon those who offended them. God will “destroy” by no longer abiding with men, thus removing His protection, and *allowing* the inevitable destruction to take place. When we interpret Scripture with Scripture, we learn that God’s normal method of “destroying” men is to forsake (abandon) them:

*They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; **he hath withdrawn himself from them.** They have dealt treacherously against the Lord: for they have begotten strange children: **now shall a month devour them with their portions.** (Hosea 5:6-7)*

Here is a clear indicator that when God has withdrawn Himself it equates to the removal of His divine protection. When His protection is removed then the people are open to destruction. Another translation reads:

*They take their sheep and cattle to offer as sacrifices to the Lord, but it does them no good. They cannot find him, **for he has left them.** They have been unfaithful to the Lord; their children do not belong to him. **So now they and their lands will soon be destroyed.** (Hosea 5:6-7; Good News Translation)*

Therefore, God does not destroy by exerting divine power. His method of destroying is to *abandon* a person to destruction. God, speaking through Moses, said, “(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) **he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them**” (Deut. 4:31). God’s “forsaking” is equated with His “destroying”. Another translation reads:

*Because the Lord your God is a God of mercy, **he will not take away his help from you or let destruction overtake you, or be false to the agreement which he made by an oath with your fathers.** (Bible in Basic English)*

Note that God’s lack of help is what leads to destruction. The Lord told Israel, “*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help*” (Hos. 13:9). It is our sin that brings destruction. It is by turning away from the only One who is able to help us that we meet our demise. God reiterates this method of destroying people in another part of Deuteronomy:

*Then my anger shall be kindled 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, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?** (Deut. 31:17)*



Again, we see that God “destroys” by abandoning a person to destruction or by no longer helping them as another translation renders it:

*At that time, I will become very angry at them, and I will leave them. I will refuse to help them, and they will be destroyed. Terrible things will happen to them, and they will have many troubles. Then they will say, ‘These bad things happened to us because our God is not with us.’* (Easy to Read Version)

Edward Reynolds’ essay gives us some insight as he connects Deut. 31:17 to the flood of Noah:

“It opens an inlet for all other miseries and troubles, lets loose the sluices; and, as in Noah’s flood, breaks up the fountains of the great deep. Many evils and troubles shall befall them, saith the Lord, and they shall say, ‘Are not these evils come upon us, because God is not amongst us?’ (Deut. xxxi. 17) When God is with a people, none can be against them to hurt them. He sweetens all their sorrows, makes their very enemies at peace; but when the glory and the wall of fire is departed, there is a free approach for all calamities; a people are then ripe for destruction.”<sup>3</sup>

Evils happen to people, not because God directly inflicts them, but because He “hides His face” which means He ceases to help against disastrous forces that are already present to destroy.

### **The Hidden Face of God**

God tells Moses, “....and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured.” His “hiddenness” means forsaking the recipients of His protection. When

God makes reference to how He has punished Israel by “hiding” and “forsaking” them He uses the flood of Noah as an illustration of his actions:

*For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. **For this is as the waters of Noah unto me:** for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee (Isa. 54:7-9)*

God compares His having forsaken Israel to the flood event. Another translation of Isa. 54:9 reads, “*Just as I swore in the time of Noah that **I would never again let a flood cover the earth**, so now I swear that I will never again be angry and punish you*” (New Living Translation). Hence, due to the connection of Noah’s flood to the hiding and forsaking of God, God’s part in this flood can be seen more as “permission” rather than “causation.”

Basically, God is said to do that which He permits to be done when His presence has been rejected and pushed away. Isaiah again tells us that the hiding of God’s face is the loss of His presence and protection:

*And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. (Isa. 64:7)*

The New Century Version reads, “*No one worships you or even asks you to help us. That is because you have turned away from us and **have let our sins destroy us.***” Again, we can see from this that God only destroys in the sense that He permits the inevitable consequences of our sins to destroy us by “hiding His face” which means He no longer helps us. Our “destruction” is connected to being removed from God’s presence:

*But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and **would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence** as yet. (2 Kings 13:22-23)*

Two other translations help us to see that 2 Kings 13:23 is in reference to God’s help and protection:

*But the Eternal One was gracious and compassionate toward them. He was good and turned his face to them because of the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Eternal, true to His promise, **had protected them and remained near them** until now. (The VOICE)*

*But the Lord was kind to the Israelites and showed them mercy because of his solemn agreement with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, **he has never turned his back on them or let them be***

*completely destroyed.* (Contemporary English Version)

Scripture defines for us *how* God destroys. We certainly cannot deny that He destroys because Scripture is clear that He does. But learning God’s method will help us to see His love for us. It will help us to see why He is reluctant to destroy as we learned in previous lessons. God only destroys by the removal of His presence.

### **Not a New Revelation**

With this Biblical foundation it should no longer be a farfetched notion to the reader that when God says before the flood, “*My spirit shall not always strive with man,*” that he was referring to destruction that is the result of the loss of His protective presence. Nor is this *a new understanding of the passage*. In 1833 Johnson Grant also wrote that such is the basic meaning of Genesis 6:

As a last dissuasive from perseverance in sin through the hope that grace may yet abound, allow me to urge shortly the withdrawing of the Divine protection. Grace, far from abounding, may fail. That there is a period in the progress of contumacy when Celestial succour ceases to act effectually, either through weariness of appealing to the transgressor, or through the total loss of his susceptibility to its impulses, we have reason to believe and to dread, from the declaration of God respecting the antediluvian world,—“*My Spirit shall not always strive with man,*”— from that remarkable scriptural expression, “*the being given over to a reprobate mind,*”— and from the fears of David lest he should be cast from the Divine presence, and lest the Holy Spirit should be taken away from him.<sup>4</sup>

In 1808, another minister, John I. Wells, wrote: “It is plain and evident, from sacred and profane history, that

with nations and individuals, a conscious departure from truth and rectitude, and consequently from the love of God, is self-evidence of the forfeiture of divine protection.”<sup>5</sup> Wells quotes Genesis 6:3 to back this premise:

.... obedience to divine requirements does insure divine protection. There are but few pages in scripture, which do not furnish evidence calculated to establish confidence in the preserving power of the Almighty. By it, the obedient have been protected in all ages. A blessing has ever accompanied obedience, and a curse has always followed disobedience.... The antediluvians were borne long with, while the spirit of God strove with them. He at length said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man.” All flesh had corrupted its way. While obedient Noah and his family were saved, the rest were destroyed with a total overthrow.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that Scripture supports an understanding of the flood as the withdrawal of His presence rather than an exertion of His divine power. Thankfully, other men in history attest to this truth.

God is not a despotic tyrant who uses His omnipotent power to destroy those who hate Him. On the contrary He continually pleads with the disobedient to turn back to Him so that He can protect them from destruction. However, there comes a point in time in which He must allow men to have what they want and the consequences that accrue from it. It is unreasonable to think that God must continue to protect men when they adamantly insist that He depart from them (Ps. 81:10-16).

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## Chapter Five

1. Dr. Beth Snodderly expounds on this point concerning the rebellion of Satan and the state we find the earth in Genesis 1:2: "Tohu wabohu (Gen. 1:2) describes the disastrous result, at some point following God's original good creation, when a created being used the gift of free will to rebel against God's will. Intelligent evil was (and still is) at work, distorting God's original good purposes. The author of Genesis shows in the rest of the first chapter how God goes about restoring his intentions for the earth, which are the exact opposite of the chaotic conditions. The author does this by emphasizing a definite pattern in the creation story, showing that God has evil under control and patiently counter-acts and replaces it with acts of creativity, including the creation of humans to join God in fighting back against forces that oppose God."

Snodderly, Beth **Chaos Is Not God's Will: The Origin of International Development**, p. 95

2. Merrill F. Unger is one of several who held this view. He writes, "God did not create the earth in the state of a chaos of wasteness, emptiness, and darkness (Isa. 45:18). It was reduced to this condition because it was the theater where sin began in God's originally sinless universe in connection with the revolt of Lucifer (Satan) and his angels (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:13, 15-17; Rev. 12:4). The chaos was the result of God's judgment upon the originally sinless earth." Merrill F. Unger *"Rethinking the Genesis Account of Creation,"* Bibliotheca Sacra 115 (January-March 1958): 28. As cited in



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10. Ibid, p. 64. While Dillow may not agree with the truth concerning the gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 he is correct in stating that God permits a catastrophe in Noah's time that is similar to the conditions found in Gen. 1:2: "'... The waters above and below the firmament are, in token, merged again, as if to reverse the very work of creation and bring back the featureless waste of chaos.' Indeed, when the rainfall had subsided, the entire earth had reverted to a situation similar to that described in Genesis 1:2. Water again covered the entire surface of the planet. Chaos reigned once more, but only under Yahweh's permission as a tool to judge man."

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## Invitation and prayer for salvation

To become a TRUE Christian One must be born again

-1. John 3:1-7

We must be born of the water and the Spirit. This water is not speaking of water baptism but of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 5:25-27).

There is only ONE avenue into heaven and that is to be born again. Water baptism, church membership, religious duties, giving to the poor, living a moral life, taking the Lord's supper, being a member of a denomination, or an INTELLECTUAL reception (vs. a heart reception) of Jesus Christ cannot save you. You must be born again.

Are you born again? If you are not you will not spend eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ but instead you will enter into eternal damnation. I urge you to consider accepting Jesus Christ as your savior.

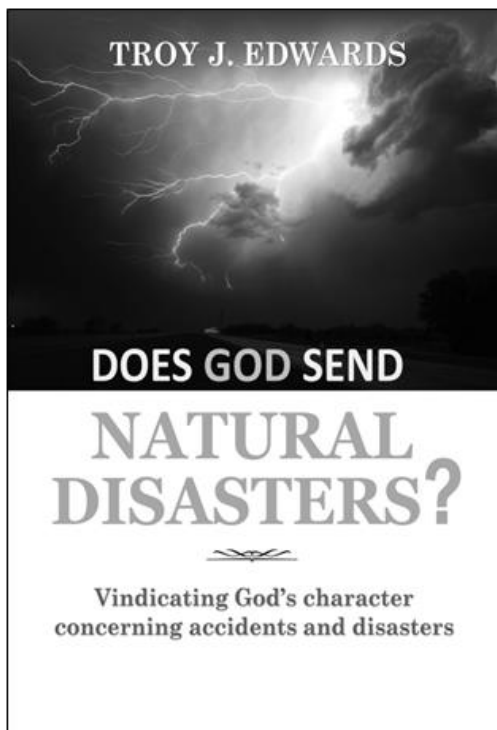
To be born again is very simple. You need only accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Why not give your heart to Him today. All you need to do is ask Him to come into your life. Here is a simple prayer to pray:

Lord Jesus

*I ask you to come into my heart right now. You said in your word that if I confess you with my mouth and believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead then I will be saved (Rom. 10:9). I recognize that I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness and a change in my nature. I repent of all my sin. I know that all that come to you, you will not reject (John 6:37). Thank you for your dying for me so that I can be born again. Thank you Father for Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit for coming in to my life. AMEN.*

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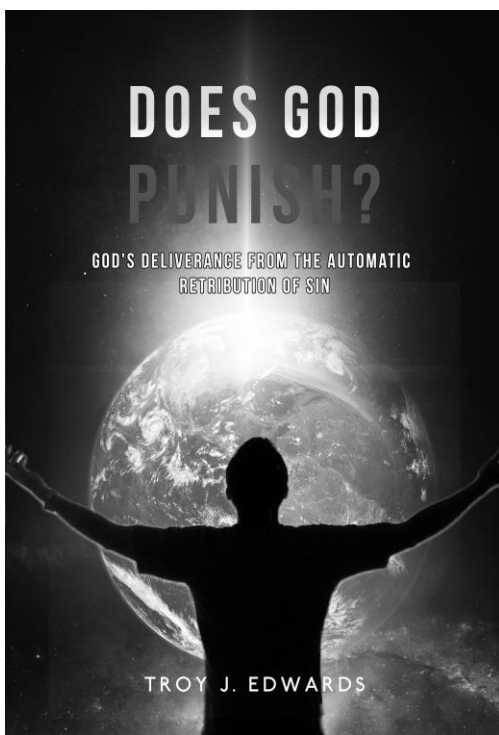
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Some question God's goodness and benevolence due to the flood that came during Noah's time. In these lessons, we will learn the following:

- God did everything to save mankind during the flood but they rejected Him.
- God actually protected men from the flooding waters until man asked God to depart from them.
- The flood did not come as a result of God's omnipotent power. It was His omnipotent power that kept the flood from coming.
- The flood was the result of sin and men actually brought destruction upon themselves.
- In Scripture, God is often said to do the thing He only permitted. We will learn how this truth applies to the flood.