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Will God's Vengeance Squash Us Like Bugs?

Zephaniah 3:8: (NASB) *Therefore wait for Me, declares the LORD, for the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal.*



Vengeance, indignation, burning anger and jealousy. These are some of the words that the Bible uses to describe God's reactions to this present evil world. To put it mildly, God is not happy. Can you blame Him? Look at us - look at what this world does, what it stands for and how we treat one another. God will not allow such sin and corruption to continue. He will act, and when He does there will be no mistaking His response. The Bible emphatically describes what looks like world-ending events - these events are called "The Day of Vengeance," "Armageddon," "The Time of Trouble," "The Day of Wrath." Wait, aren't we always talking about God being a God of love? How could this vengeance of God possibly be interpreted as an act of love? Is God so vengeful and angry that He is going to squash us like bugs, or is there another way to understand what His vengeance is, how it works and what it accomplishes?

First of all, what did Jesus say about the dramatic Old Testament prophecies of destruction? **Matthew 24:21-24:** *Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved - since the days will be cut short, we know life will be saved.* This is a ray of hope. This is a strong warning, but not something Jesus talked about a lot. For such a dramatic, life-altering event, one would think Jesus would have brought it up more often.

Luke 4:16-21: Here Jesus emphatically read specific texts from the book of Isaiah and then sat down. This is so typical of our understanding of Jesus - he shows us the power of God for the healing and freedom of mankind that he came to fulfill. Jesus came at his first advent in part to spread the good news of the Gospel - to proclaim a release of captives (from sin and death), give sight to the people blinded by sin and provide real freedom. He literally fulfilled this prophecy when he physically healed people and cast out demons, foreshadowing a worldwide healing to come later.

But notice that Jesus stopped quoting the Isaiah prophecy right before it said this:

Isaiah 61:2: (NASB) *To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn...* Why did Jesus not finish quoting the part about the Day of Vengeance? This gives us an important lesson in putting prophecy in its correct time context. All prophecy does not apply to all time periods. To understand prophetic events, they must be viewed in their proper time context. Jesus did not read about the Day of Vengeance because it was not relevant to the timing of his first advent - it was a prophecy related to his second advent. He omitted the part of the prophecy which would have its application at some future time. He came to pay the ransom price and set in motion the plan of reconciliation between God and man. Because of his ransom, the rest of the details would fall into place. **For more on the doctrine of the ransom, please see the Bonus Material in the Full Edition Rewind.** The Day of Vengeance would be just a small step in a big plan. It was not yet time to proclaim vengeance as it was not yet relevant in that time period.

GOD'S VENGEANCE LESSON: God's vengeance is designed to fulfill the eternal purpose of reconciliation.

To understand God's vengeance, we have to understand the context of where and why it applies and how it works. Much of Christianity thinks God's anger is uncontrolled like our own often is.

Genesis 4:15: Notice the clear calculation God proclaims here: *vengeance is designed to thwart wrongdoing.* Cain had to live with his sin of murdering his brother for the rest of his life - regret, loneliness and guilt. This was a greater punishment than immediate death and would be an example for those around him. God instructed the rest of the population to not take vengeance into their own hands. This type of vengeance was not full of emotion or rage; it was a warning put in place so that no one would harm Cain until his natural life ended.

Here is another way the root word is used: Judges 16:28: The story of Samson is that he gave in to temptation and lost his great strength. In the text above, Samson prayed to avenge his enemies, and the Lord gave him the strength to do so, resulting in the death of both his enemies and his own death.



Here the word is used again - God is instructing man how to behave: Leviticus 19:17-18: We are not supposed to hate those around us, even if they do something wrong against us. If this is God's standard, we can reasonably assume He applies this standard to His own character. We are to rise above emotional reactions, but where is the justice?

Here is where the justice is: Romans 12:19: (KJV) *Vengeance is mine, I will repay sayeth the Lord.* God warns against two things in the Leviticus texts: 1. Do not take vengeance. 2. Do not hold a grudge. These are two separate things. Vengeance is more cold and calculating and implies a justified or just action. Bearing a grudge is more an emotional action.

God is able to give retribution, retaliation and punishment without His clarity being crowded out by emotion. God is not flailing about in an out of control manner with His vengeance. He is calculating and emotionless in His execution of justice.

Vindicating puts someone or something back to their original standing. In God's case, it means He will cause the world to be brought back in harmony with Him through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. Vindication does not require great emotion.

GOD'S VENGEANCE LESSON: God's vengeance by definition is purposeful and not reactionary.

The Day of Vengeance is one step in the process of reconciliation, and God's vengeance is therefore purposeful. Nahum 1:2-4: How does this fit into what we already discussed? This sounds angry, but God's anger is directed at *sin* and He will *always* (eventually) avenge anything that dwells in sin. The character of God has to be clearly understood as based in justice.

Sin is anything that misses the mark. That means God's vengeance will be towards human governments, false religions and even false teachings within Christianity. This covers the full spectrum of humanity. Again, God will always (eventually) avenge anything that dwells in sin.

Psalm 89:14: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne.

As we continue, remember the highly symbolic nature of prophecy: Storm and clouds = generally represent great trouble in society. Whirlwind = a concentrated storm that uproots and destroys - a revolution - the most intense kind of societal trouble

(Source: Biblical commentary from Jamieson, Fausset and Brown) As Bashan was famed for its pastures, Carmel for its corn fields and vineyards, so Lebanon for its forests (Isaiah 33:9). There is nothing in the world so blooming that God cannot change it when He is wroth.

This prophecy in Nahum, as with all "Day of Vengeance" prophecies, can easily cause deep fear as it might sound like God's anger is out of control. We need to remember that God's vengeance is *always* in context with God's plan. God's plan is *entirely* built around the ransom of Jesus - he came to release the captives from sin and death and provide the opportunity for everlasting life.

Nahum 1:5-9: (NASB) *⁵Mountains quake because of Him and the hills dissolve; indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, the world and all the inhabitants in it.* Symbolic meanings: *Mountains* - governments, *Hills* - organizations of men; the earth itself does not dissolve, *Earth* - the present organization of society itself, *World* - the entire order of earthly influence, perhaps including angelic influence as well. What happens to all these things? Quaking, dissolving and upheaval.

The anger of God against sin and rebellion will be displayed in a way that will never be forgotten. These texts sound like a volcanic eruption whose objective is to destroy any and all influences that stand against His justice and righteousness. Remember the picture language. The idea of anger that overthrows all opposition is appropriate when we remember who it is who is angry, why He is angry and what His anger is being dispatched to accomplish. The time for sin and suffering will come to an end. From fire that destroys evil to a flood of water (symbolizing truth), to habitation of darkness (symbolizing ignorance) will come to a thorough end. Once ended, these influences will not rise up again.

WHY NOW? Because God said certain things needed fulfillment: Genesis 1:27-28: God gave man dominion over the earth and the ability to fill it. That was His command. Once the now sinful and satanic dominion proves its futility and the earth has been filled, it will be time to



intervene. **This illustrates the principle about waiting for evil to be fulfilled:** Genesis 15:16: The Amorites were against God and were cursed. It would take four generations for their sin to come to its conclusion - to get to an ending point. This is how God works - He allows both good and bad to come to fruition. God is not pushing evil along, He is allowing it to happen to a limited point for everlasting lessons of what happens when man tries to rule himself.

God will not allow the man-made, sin-driven destruction of humanity to happen:

Matthew 24:22: God’s timing is perfect. Example: Think about raising children. Sometimes a parent can see the outcome of their child’s actions and can either intervene or wait. Waiting can allow certain lessons to shine through. When the wrongdoing comes to its fruition, the parent says, “That is enough.”

GOD’S VENGEANCE LESSON: God’s vengeance will actually be a preserving action for humanity.

God’s vengeance *is* real but comes for a distinct purpose and for a distinct period of time.

Light at the end of the “vengeance tunnel” is laid out for us in two parts:

First, we (those who are believers and who are walking in the footsteps of Jesus) are shown light THROUGH the tunnel: Psalms 46:1-11: Our refuge and strength carries us through the fall of mountains (governments) slipping into the heart of the sea (the restless masses of humanity) who, in their swelling, clamor and fight for their perceived rights. In the midst of society crumbling, we have a refuge and strength. Do you see the contrast? *Though its waters roar and foam - restless, fearful humanity as society is in turmoil, as opposed to the calm river (of truth) whose streams make glad the city of God.*

We have a spiritually-safe dwelling place within the knowledge and faith in God’s plan: Psalms 91:1 **But now look and see what the anger of God accomplishes!** Psalms 46:9: How does he *make wars to cease to the ends of the earth*? How is He *exalted among the nations and exalted in the earth* if the earth just melted? This must be the symbolic language of prophecy. One of Satan’s greatest tools of control is fear. If taken literally, we would be scared, paralyzed and would lose faith.

Our light through the tunnel is NOW. We have to be courageous, and we need to give hope to others. Our protection may even be in death, for it is only through death that eternal life can be gained. The Gospel is full of HOPE through fearful times.

Second, there is light at the END of the “vengeance tunnel” for unbelievers as well:

Zephaniah 3:8-9: Again, the necessary destruction caused by the Day of Vengeance is evident - but it is not the end of the story. For the unbeliever, this would be a cause for great fear, and from their perspective they would see God through this fear as a monster. We must put context in place. When there is an individual who does not have faith, who cannot see the light through the tunnel, we have to show them the context.

Show them what God’s anger accomplishes - here is the very next verse after the earth is “devoured by fire”: *“For then I will give to the people’s purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. The earth could not have been literally devoured by literal fire and burned to a crisp. Then I will give to the people’s purified lips - these cannot be the true followers of Christ, because they would have had purified lips beforehand. After God shows His anger and vengeance upon sin and unrighteousness, then He gives the people purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord. They will be brought back to God! God’s vengeance and anger eventually bring purified life and harmony! Serving shoulder to shoulder - they got the lesson of sin vs. righteousness and are now praising God. A transformation will take place.*

Psalms 76:8-10: *The wrath of man shall praise You* - the Day of Vengeance will bring all of this to a crashing halt. All of the anger and frustration will end up bringing praise to God, because He will show His sovereignty in the end.

GOD’S VENGEANCE LESSON: The end of the world as we know it will in fact mark the beginning of the world as we dreamed it!

God’s anger and Day of Vengeance are just results upon a world that has shunned its Creator and His righteousness and followed after the sinful ways of godlessness and idolatry. This is



the response to a world gone bad. God’s vengeance is put in place as a stopper for the sinfulness of man.

This helps us understand the attitude mankind has now towards God: Proverbs 1:24-32: The “wisdom” of men is appropriately a mockery of justice and mercy before God. When you see your child going down a road they should not go, sometimes you just let it go so the child can learn the lesson and never want to do it again. This is the part where God makes humanity sweat. People so often look to God in their deepest desperation in tragedy or sickness, even if they are not religious. They expect Him to pay attention to them. Why? Because they are now suddenly paying attention to Him! What about all of the righteousness they rejected before that point? The world as a whole is going down the road of an incredibly rebellious teenager, and God is saying, “You are going to get to a point where you will turn to Me, but I am not going to answer because you need to learn that by ignoring Me all this time through all of these generations, you will pay the consequences.” Their desperation was a direct result of their replacing God with the idolatry of self and greed. That is the world we live in. Look at our educational system and social system and you will find they are God-LESS. There will come a time when people will start to look up, and He is not going to answer...not until the right time.

Let’s translate this into the world today: The world today chooses to not respect the old ways of integrity and righteousness, of right and wrong. We now have a hard time saying something is wrong - “Well, if it feels good and is right for you, then it is okay.” That is what this is saying. *Satiated with their own devices/the waywardness of the naive will kill them* - It is naïve to believe there is not solid right and solid wrong. It is naïve to believe just because you want it you should have it. It is naïve to believe the world should be built around ME. This all sounds so hopeless, yet God in His mercy provided Jesus as the pivot point for His human creation. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, the prophecies of destruction are connected with prophecies of the greatest hope that humanity can ever imagine.

A lot of Christians miss the great hope attached to these prophecies: Isaiah 35:1-4: (NASB) This is a promise that the desert will produce a glorious abundance. Here is the introduction of how the earth is changing to be a place of wonderful fruitage - take heart - get strength from this - but then *Behold, your God will come with vengeance*. You cannot separate the vengeance of God from the glory of what the vengeance brings. God’s vengeance permanently stops the destructiveness of this present evil world.

GOD’S VENGEANCE LESSON: We NEED God’s vengeance - let it come - though it will be fierce, it brings life and joy never before experienced by humanity!

God does not break society apart. He lets it come to the full amount of its evil and greed and directs its downfall.

Isaiah 35:5-10: *Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped* - Jesus showed us healing at his first advent. This is what the sacrifice of his life would bring us. The message of hope was put in place. *But the redeemed will walk there* - we get a sense of the beauty of humanity in harmony because God brought them through the Day of Vengeance. Evil is destroyed and resurrected humanity gets an opportunity for life. *With everlasting joy upon their heads* - sorrow and sighing will flee away - this comes after vengeance. This is the result of God’s vengeance. **God will again have a relationship with humanity:** Revelation 21:3

GOD’S VENGEANCE LESSON: Once God’s vengeance accomplishes its specific mission, it becomes obvious that His vengeance is proof of His pure and righteous love for His human creation.

God’s vengeance is powerful in its end result. *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. That is what God’s vengeance brings us. We hope you have seen this subject in a different way than you have before.

*So, will God’s vengeance squash us like a bug?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*