

A dramatic scene of a white dove flying over a stormy sea with a large wooden ark in the background. The sky is dark and cloudy, with rain falling. The ark is a large, multi-story wooden structure with a gabled roof and a small window. The sea is turbulent with white-capped waves.

# Who Caused the Flood?

*An in-depth look at Ellen White's statement  
"God drowned the vast world" in the light  
of God's character*

**By Kevin J. Mullins**

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## Introduction

Today there is a religious Movement taking place called *The Character of God Movement*. It spans multiple denominations including Seventh-day Adventists. The movement teaches that the God of the Bible is a non-violent Father who does not kill. Although I will explain this concept deeper as we continue, it should be noted that this teaching is not new within the SDA church. For example, George Fifield, an SDA pastor and promoter of the 1888 message, said this in 1897:

"It is not that God, sitting up on some high throne, said to mankind, 'You do thus and so, and I will let you live; but you do otherwise, and I will kill you.' **God does not kill.** He is the fountain of life." (*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 19, 1897, page 90.1)

It seems that, over the decades since, this knowledge was to a considerable degree lost and is only quite recently again becoming more prominent. At the same time, opponents of the message are speaking out and claiming both the Bible and Ellen White are against the message. One such quote, which will be the focus of our study here, is found below:

**"God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner.** Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' Psalm 50:21. They measure God by themselves. They reason as to how they would act under the circumstances and decide God would do as they imagine they would do. **God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements ... The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire, while He had the power to relieve them.** But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man. Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but **God drowned the vast world.** Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in **strict justice**." (*Letters and Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, *Manuscript 5*, paras. 11&14, 1876)

In order to fully understand what she is saying, we need to look at certain words used such as: 1. Destroy. 2. Justice. 3. Punish. We will even do this in the order presented and then we will be prepared to understand the destruction of the antediluvians by the Flood and those destroyed by fire as it relates to the character of God.

## 1. "God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner."

First of all, it should be noted that those in the character of God Movement believe sinners will be destroyed. What Ellen White is referring to here is the belief of *universalism*, which teaches that not one person who has ever lived or will live will be destroyed. The "destruction" they come to is spiritualized away by saying, yes, all sinners will be destroyed in the sense that God will purge them of their sinfulness as a doctor removes a deadly tumor without physically killing the person.

Admittedly, this type of *spiritual* "killing" or "destruction" of the sinner is found in Scripture. One example being Deuteronomy 32:39 which says, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: **I kill**, and I make alive; **I wound**, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." Please note that in this verse God is *not* killing some people over here, while healing and restoring some other people over there. Instead, the Bible is revealing a two-step process performed on the *same individual*. Firstly, there is a diagnosis of the extent of the problem and a revelation of how painful it is. Secondly, there is provided the remedy and restoration. Here's how the book of Job explains the same process which is happening to one individual:

"Behold, happy is the **man** [singular] whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: **For He maketh sore, and bindeth up: He woundeth, and His hands make whole.**" (Job 5:17-18)

Here's another example referring to God's corporate people:

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: **for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind [bandage] us up.**" (Hosea 6:1)

Paul also talks about this when he says, "... for the letter kills, and the Spirit makes alive" (2 Cor. 3:6). Then in a greater degree in Romans chapter 6:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be **dead with Christ**, we believe that we shall also **live with Him**: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. **Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be DEAD indeed unto sin, but ALIVE unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (Romans 6:6-11)

However, while that type of spiritual killing can definitely be applied biblically in some cases, the fact that some people will willfully reject salvation and be subject to the second death— total physical and spiritual (body and soul) extinction —is also biblical (Matt. 10:28).<sup>1</sup>

What we need to focus on in our statement in question is the implication that it is God who's directly causing the physical destruction of the sinner. As with any Bible doctrine, we must adhere to the biblical method of interpretation. Mrs. White counsels us to consider the 14 points of Bible interpretation as taught by William Miller. Here is rule number 4:

“To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in an error (Isaiah 28:7-29; 35:8; Proverbs 19:27; Luke 24:27, 44, 45; James 5:19; 2 Peter 1:19, 20).” (*Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology Selected From Manuscripts of William Miller*, 1841, ed. Joshua V. Himes. pp. 20-24)

In other words, we cannot simply look at one verse or statement and make a doctrine of it. At this point, we are discussing the subject of God destroying, therefore, let's “bring all the Scriptures together on the subject [we] wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence.” After this, we will see how Ellen White is in total harmony with Scripture and shed light on her mindset as she wrote the entire statement in question.

## **A. The Scriptures on How God Destroys:**

The word “destroy” occurs in 243 verses in the KJV. Obviously, we are not going to look at every one of these in this study, so I am here providing a summary of the conclusions that I, and many others, have come to. When one puts in an honest effort to understand destruction seemingly coming directly from God, we must first consider a very well-known and biblical principle which reveals that many times in Scripture God is said to “do” something that He reluctantly “permits.” The *SDA Bible Commentary* agrees with this. For example, referring to Ezekiel 20:25, the *SDA Bible Commentary* says:

“In Bible figure, many acts are attributed to God, not with the idea that He actually performs them, but from the point of view that in His omnipotence and

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<sup>1</sup> The key to understanding this process is a correct understanding of the two covenants as given to us in the 1888 message. For an in-depth look at Matt. 10:28, see my article: [Doesn't Jesus Tell Us to Fear God Who Can Kill Both Body and Soul in Hell?](#) (Bible only).

omniscience He does not prevent them. An understanding of this principle helps to explain many apparently contradictory statements ..." (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 647; on Ezekiel 20:25)

Here's another example from Ezekiel 38:4:

"The power is here represented as that of the Lord, since frequently in the Scriptures, God is said to do that which He permits Satan to do." (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol, 4, p. 707; on Ezekiel 38:4)

This principle is described repeatedly throughout the *SDA Bible Commentary*. One very good example from Scripture, which relates directly to God "destroying" a sinner, is found in the story concerning the death of King Saul. In 1 Chronicles 10, we plainly read:

"So **Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD**, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; And inquired not of the LORD: **therefore he [God] slew him**, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." (1 Chron. 10:13-14)

Right here we read in no uncertain terms that God "slew" (killed/destroyed) Saul. If all we had was this statement concerning the death of Saul it would be a done deal, case closed. However, we must "bring all the Scriptures together on the subject [we] wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence." Is there any other portion of Scripture that speaks of Saul's death? Yes, and it's right in the same chapter:

"And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. **So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.** And when his armourbearer saw that **Saul was dead**, he fell likewise on the sword, and died. So **Saul died**, and his three sons, and all his house died together." (1 Chron. 10:3-6)

Here we read that Saul actually committed suicide. But remember the *SDA Bible Commentary*: "An understanding of this principle [of God said to "do" that which He reluctantly "permits"] helps to explain many apparently contradictory statements." When put together, we now have the biblical view that God slew (killed/destroyed) Saul by reluctantly permitting him to commit suicide.

When we understand this simple principle, we can apply it to the many places in Scripture that “seem to contradict flatly the Bible teaching that God’s character is pure and holy.” God’s love isn’t displayed by Him directly killing the sinner to protect His people whom He loves, His love is displayed to both the sinner and the saint by always submitting to the free-will of His created beings. Let’s look at another example which also surrounds the death of Saul:

“I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.” (Hos. 13:11)

Here again we read the plain statement that God took away (killed/destroyed) King Saul in His wrath. However, we already know that Saul committed suicide, so we must apply the principle that God is sometimes said to “do” that which He reluctantly “permits.” This verse also sheds light on God’s “anger” and “wrath” which are both defined here as God reluctantly giving people what they selfishly desire, even if it hurts them. They wanted a king like all the other nations, so in “anger” God gives them a king. The king then willfully and defiantly rejects God’s grace and His counsels therefore in “wrath” God takes away His protective presence and Saul commits suicide. Over and over again throughout Scripture this is what’s happening when we read of God’s anger and wrath. It is NEVER about Him using force and power to kill and destroy, but about His letting go, giving them over to their own selfish desires. Here’s how the apostle Paul describes God’s wrath:

“For **the wrath of God is revealed** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ... Wherefore God also **gave them up** to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves ... For this cause God **gave them up** unto vile affections ... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God **gave them over** to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” (Rom. 1:18, 24, 26, 28)<sup>2</sup>

## **B. Ellen G. White on How God Destroys:**

First, let’s consider the fact that Ellen White also taught the same principle of permission. Referring to 2 Samuel 12:11-12, which says God would raise up evil against David, she says, “Not that God prompted these acts of wickedness, but because of David’s sin He did not exercise His power to prevent them” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 739).

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<sup>2</sup> Although we will discuss more about God’s wrath and anger, for a deeper study, see my article, [What is God's Wrath?](#) (Bible only).



Another example of this can be found where Ellen White comments on Numbers 21:6 which says, "And the LORD **sent** fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."

"When the children of Israel were journeying through the wilderness, the Lord protected them from venomous serpents; but the time came when, because of Israel's transgression, impenitence, and stubbornness, **the Lord removed His restraining power from these reptiles**, and many of the people were bitten and died. Then it was that the brazen serpent was uplifted, that all who repented and looked to it in faith might live." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 50)

In its plain reading, the verse in Numbers seems to suggest that, in His anger, God deliberately (spitefully) rounded up a nest of serpents (maybe even created them on the spot) to attack the transgressors who questioned His ways. However, under inspiration, Ellen White chooses to interpret the word "sent" based on the *Pi`el* form of the Hebrew word, שָׁלַח (*shalach*), which *Brown-Driver-Briggs* defines as, "to let loose"; "let go"; "set free"; "give over."<sup>3</sup> One example given is found in Psalm 50:19, which says:

"You **let** your mouth **loose** [*shalach*] in evil, And your tongue harnesses deceit."  
(*American Standard Version*)

"You **unleash** [*shalach*] your mouth for evil and harness your tongue for deceit."  
(*Christian Standard Version*)

In fact, she also believed that it was "the enemy of our souls" doing the actual killing:

"The same Hand that kept the fiery serpents of the wilderness from entering the camp of the Israelites until God's chosen people provoked Him with their constant murmurs and complaints, is today guarding the honest in heart. **Were this restraining Hand withdrawn, the enemy of our souls would at once begin the work of destruction that he has so long desired to accomplish.** And because God's long-continued forbearance is not now recognized, **the forces of evil are already, to a limited degree, permitted to destroy.** How soon human agencies will see blotted out of existence their magnificent buildings, which are their pride!" (*Manuscript Releases* 19, p. 281)

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<sup>3</sup> "For pray, take notice, God is said in scripture to send what He can but doth not hinder from being sent." (Edward Bird, *Fate and Destiny, Inconsistent with Christianity: or, The Horrid Decree of Absolute and Unconditional Election and Reprobation Fully Detected*, 1726).

Referring to such verses as Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13, which suggests that God directly hardened Pharaoh's heart, Ellen White explains this principle again:

"God never compels a man to offend and be lost. We read that he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that Pharaoh refused to let Israel go. **Did God strengthen and confirm the king in his obstinacy?—No, he simply allowed the seeds of unbelief to produce their fruit; and the seed sown when the first miracle was rejected, produced a harvest of infidelity. God left the king to the inclinations of his own heart.**" (*Review & Herald*, July 27, 1897, par. 5)

With that in mind, here's what else Ellen White says concerning God destroying:

**"God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself.** Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy. God did not compel him to disbelieve. The seed of unbelief which he sowed produced a harvest of its kind. Thus his resistance continued, until he looked upon his devastated land, upon the cold, dead form of his first-born, and the first-born of all in his house and of all the families in his kingdom, until the waters of the sea closed over his horses and his chariots and his men of war. His history is a fearful illustration of the truth of the words that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Galatians 6:7. Did men but realize this, they would be careful what seed they sow." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 84, 1900)

"Pharaoh had his sowing time, and he also had his reaping time. He sowed resistance and obstinacy. He sowed the seed in the soil. **No new power was put into operation by God.** The seed was left to spring up; the man was **permitted** to act out his true character. **When the Lord sees unbelief in the heart against light and evidence, all he has to do is to let the human agent alone;** for the seed put into the soil will bring forth seed after its kind ... When Pharaoh refused to heed the messages and admonitions of God, and was not admonished by the first miracle that God worked to convince him, he was in a condition more easily to say, 'I will,' and 'I will not.' His independent resistance produced a harvest after its kind, and all the evidences that God gave to set his steps in the right path, only served to fasten him in unbelief and rebellion. He went on from one degree of resistance and wilful disobedience of God to another degree, just as the ungodly of all ages have done, and will do to the close of time, until he finally looked upon the dead face of his first-born. The character revealed by Pharaoh is similar to that of all the impenitent. **God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves.**" (*Youth's Instructor*, Nov. 30, 1893)

Let's compare the statements:

1. "God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner."
2. "God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself."
3. "God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves."

Are these contradictory? No. She is simply reiterating the biblical principle of permission. God will destroy the sinner by not preventing them to destroy themselves. The truth to remember here is that the destruction is *not* coming directly from God— "No new power was put into operation by God." She clearly wrote, "The soul's destruction cannot be laid to the charge of God" (*Youth's Instructor*, par. 2, Dec. 7, 1893)

Mrs. White tells us exactly who the destroyer is:

"Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. **Satan is the destroyer**; God is the restorer." (*Counsels on Health*, p. 168)

"**Satan himself is the enemy who tempts man to sin, and then destroys him if he can**; and when he has made sure of his victim, then he exults in the ruin he has wrought. **If permitted, he would sweep the entire race into his net**. Were it not for the interposition of divine power, not one son or daughter of Adam would escape." (*Great Controversy*, p. 534)

Take note that Satan is "the" destroyer, not simply "a" destroyer! Remember, she says, "When the Lord sees unbelief in the heart against light and evidence, all he has to do is to let the human agent alone." There's no need for God to kill the persistent sinner who is running towards the edge of a cliff.

"My people are **destroyed** for lack of knowledge" says the Lord (Hos. 4:6). What specific knowledge are they lacking? "Knowledge of God" (vs. 1). With the wrong knowledge of God, how does one act? "You make vows and break them; you kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere— one murder after another" (vs. 2, *New Living Translation*)— all attributes contrary to God's character! How does the destruction come? "Ephraim is joined to idols: **let him alone**" (vs. 17). When God submits to the persistent sinner's free choice, they are left alone; they are unplugged from the Source of life and thus their destruction is an inevitable consequence of their own actions. This is exactly how God's justice is executed.

## ***2. "Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice ... God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man ... but God would do it in strict justice."***

To understand God's justice, we must remember these words spoken by God:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55:8-9)

Once we permit the mind of Christ to dwell within, our minds will be adjusted (justified) in union (at-one) with God's. Our thoughts and ways will be replaced with His. Let's see how Scripture defines God's justice.

### **B. The Scriptures on How God Executes Justice:**

"**Justice** and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: **mercy** and truth shall go before thy face." (Ps. 89:14)

This verse uses *Hebraic parallelism* where two words or phrases explain each other. In this case, biblical "justice" is parallel with "mercy", while "judgment" is parallel with "truth." Thus, God's justice is to always show mercy (ἔλεος; *chece*), which literally means "lovingkindness in condescending to the needs of His creatures." This includes those who are evil. Jesus taught us that God is always "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Lk. 6:35). Can you see how kindness and evil oppose each other? Just before saying this, Jesus explained one major difference between doing good and doing evil:

"Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" (Lk. 6:9)

Notice again the parallelism:

- Do good = save life
- Do evil = destroy life<sup>4</sup>

Does God ever do anything evil? No! Therefore, "Evil [not God] shall slay the wicked ..." (Ps. 34:21). Contrary to popular belief, biblical justice does not equate to killing the offender.

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<sup>4</sup> The Greek word for "destroy" here is ἀπόλλυμι (*apollumi*) which carries the meaning of "To kill ... to declare that one must be put to death" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). "... is it lawful on the Sabbaths to do good, or to do evil? To save life or to kill?" (*Literal Standard Version*).

This next example shows us God's justice in action:

"Defend the poor and fatherless; **do justice** to the afflicted and needy." (Ps. 82:3)

Can you see how God's justice is not about seeking retribution, but doing what is right—defending the poor, fatherless, and afflicted? In Psalm 146, God "executes justice for the oppressed" which is defined by Him "keeping His promises forever"; "giving food to the hungry"; "freeing prisoners" (those held captive in sin); "opening the eyes of the blind" (both physically and spiritually); "lifting up those who are weighed down"; "protecting the foreigners" among His people; and "caring for the orphans and widows."

But what about justice towards the one who is doing the violation (i.e. the wicked)?

"The LORD is known by the justice He brings; the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands." (Psalm 9:16; *Berean Standard Bible*)

Here we see that God's justice isn't executed by violence on anyone but is defined by giving the persistent sinner over to their own destructive choices. Referring to our example earlier concerning King Saul, God "destroyed" King Saul in accordance with His "strict justice" by giving Saul over to the destructive choices he had made. In every decision he made, he was unplugging himself from the Source of life, and because God will never interfere with one's free choice, He permitted Saul to reap what he had sown. Since God is always "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil", God will not retaliate with evil (Prov. 20:22; 1 Pet. 3:9), therefore "God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves."

We see this concept again in Psalm chapter 7 where we read, "I will thank the LORD for his justice; I will sing praises to the sovereign LORD!" (vs. 17, *New English Translation*). How is God's justice executed here? Let's read it again along with the context of verses 14-16:

"See the one who is pregnant with wickedness, who conceives destructive plans, and gives birth to harmful lies – he digs a pit and then **falls into the hole he has made. He becomes the victim of his own destructive plans and the violence he intended for others falls on his own head.** I will thank the Lord for his **justice**; I will sing praises to the sovereign Lord!" (Psalm 7:14-17, *New English Translation*)

Before we move on to Ellen White, let's read how E.J. Waggoner describes God's justice:

“God’s mercies endure forever, even though there are some who will have none of it. In His mercy He bears long with them, but God could not tolerate rebellion forever in His dominions and be just to His loyal subjects. **So in justice no less than mercy to those who willingly yield to His control, He must let the wicked suffer the punishment which they have worked for. Indeed, it would be doing the wicked an injustice not to give them that for which they have so long and diligently laboured.** They have ‘taken counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.’ [Psalm 2:3]. **All their desire has been to be left to themselves and now God gives them their desire.** But as there is no place in the universe where God is not, the only thing for them is extinction. So we read, ‘For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. Ps. 37:9, 10.” (*Present Truth UK, Justice and Mercy*, p. 55, Feb. 23, 1893)

A few pages earlier in his article, Waggoner uses the exact words as Ellen White— “strict justice”:

“The highest possible enjoyment is found in the most perfect freedom; and this God has given to man, in giving him the utmost liberty to choose whatever he will. In this choice there is absolutely no restriction put upon man by the Lord. **His STRICT JUSTICE is shown in His not interfering with man’s personal right of choice as to what he will have.** God knows that only in Him can man find his highest good, and therefore He places Himself before man in the most attractive light, and pleads with him to accept Him; but **He will not intrude His presence where it is not wanted.** He will not coerce the will of man. He has in making man guaranteed to him perfect liberty, and He Himself respects the rights which He has bestowed on man. **To attempt to compel men to accept His ways, perfect though they be, would be to deprive him of that liberty which is inseparable from God; and so it would be to defeat His own purpose.**” (*Present Truth UK, Justice and Mercy*, p. 53, Feb. 23, 1893)

This is exactly what Ellen White said: “When the Lord sees unbelief in the heart against light and evidence, all he has to do is to let the human agent alone.” In fact, this is exactly how she defines God’s justice.

### **A. Ellen G. White on How God Executes Infinite/Strict Justice:**

“But [from] those who have no sense of the goodness and mercy of God, who refuse His merciful warnings, who reject His counsels to reach the highest standard of Bible requirements, who do despite to the Spirit of grace, the Lord would remove His protecting power. I was shown that Satan would entangle and then destroy if he could, the souls he had tempted. God will bear long, but there

is a bound to His mercy, a line which marks His mercy and His justice. **I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but [rather] in this way: they place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then, if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course independent of the Spirit of God after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them.** It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land bringing calamity and distress, sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey. Storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short, and if he is not restrained we shall see more terrible manifestations of his power than we have ever dreamed of." (*Letters and Manuscripts*, Vol. 4, Letter 14, 1883)

Every time you read about God's justice and judgments by Ellen White, you must always connect it with this passage above. These statements are conclusive. Even *if* she once believed differently or may not have fully understood God's justice (and I'm not saying she did or didn't), she was given this divine understanding by God in saying, "**I was shown** that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them ..."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when she says that God "destroys" the sinner in "strict justice", we must understand it in this light shown to her (i.e. in the permissive sense) and that she is writing in "Scripture language":

"More and more I shall present the message to the people in Scripture language. Then if exception be taken by anyone, his contention must be with the Bible." (*Letter 244*, 1906)

In referring to "the retributive justice of God", she says:

"The cup of iniquity is nearly filled, and **the retributive justice of God** is about to descend upon the guilty. The wickedness of the inhabitants of the world has almost filled up the measure of their iniquity. **This earth has almost reached the place where God will PERMIT the destroyer to work his will upon it.**" (*Last Day Events*, p. 41)

Who is doing the destroying? "The destroyer." Who's the destroyer? "Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer." One of the reasons why Satan destroys is because he rejects God's idea of justice. God permits Satan's justice to be exercised in order for the universe to see how destructive his idea of justice is.

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<sup>5</sup> Even the prophet Daniel reported that he didn't fully understand what he was told to write until years later when the angel Gabriel came to give him more understanding (Dan. 8:27; 9:21-22).

**“Satan will be judged by his own idea of justice.** It was his plea that every sin should meet its punishment. If God remitted the punishment, he said, He was not a God of truth or justice. **Satan will meet the judgment which he said God should exercise.**” (*Manuscript Release*, vol. 12, p. 413)

Again, we see the judgments of God do not directly come out from the Lord even upon Satan. Instead, Satan is given over to “his own idea of justice.” This is how God’s justice is executed upon all the wicked. They have incorporated a false idea of justice, influenced by Satan; therefore, they will be given over to their idea of justice and “will meet the judgment [they] said God should exercise.” Just as the unbelieving Jews **judged themselves** unworthy of everlasting life (Acts 13:46), in the end “everyone passes judgment on himself.”

“Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshipers of self belonged to Satan’s kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus **everyone passes judgment on himself.**” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 57)

So, what is Satan’s idea of justice? Well, it must be opposite of God’s justice, which is to do the right thing by showing mercy (loving-kindness). Satan’s justice therefore is inconsistent with mercy.

“In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, **that justice was inconsistent with mercy**, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.** When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God’s favor. **God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner ...** God’s love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. **It had been Satan’s purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice.** He sought to prove that the righteousness of God’s law is an enemy to peace. **But Christ shows that in God’s plan they are indissolubly joined together;** the one cannot exist without the other. ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Psalm 85:10. By His life and His death, Christ proved that God’s justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan’s charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.” (*Desire of Ages*, pp. 761-762)



We know that on the cross "Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race" (*Desire of Ages*, Page 753). However, Scripture says that God's mercy endures forever (Read Psalm 118). God is merciful in His justice, and just in His mercy; they are inseparable. God NEVER withholds His mercy, but He will permit the sinner to reject it. This is what Christ was feeling upon the cross. He was feeling the sinner's disbelief in God's everlasting mercy. This disbelief brings to the sinner the anguish of self-condemnation. In the *General Conference Bulletin* of October 1, 1899, Ellen White explains what happened:

"Justice and Mercy stood apart, in opposition to each other, separated by a wide gulf ..."

Let's stop there for a second. Whose idea of justice is it where justice and mercy are stood apart, separated by a wide gulf? Satan's! Therefore, she is speaking of a *false* justice system here. Now let's continue:

"Justice and Mercy stood apart, in opposition to each other, separated by a wide gulf. The Lord our Redeemer clothed his divinity with humanity, and wrought out in behalf of man a character that was without spot or blemish. He planted his cross midway between heaven and earth, and made it the object of attraction which reached both ways, drawing both Justice and Mercy across the gulf. Justice moved from its exalted throne, and with all the armies of heaven approached the cross. There it saw One equal with God bearing the penalty for all injustice and sin. With perfect satisfaction Justice bowed in reverence at the cross, saying, It is enough."

Can you see what is happening? The night He was taken captive by the mob, Jesus said, "This is *your* hour and *the power of darkness*" (Lk. 22:53). He was about to suffer the justice of fallen man who believed "that it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (Jn. 18:14). Throughout His life, Christ "spoke of God, not as an avenging judge, but as a tender father" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 204). Upon the cross however, "He [God] Himself *assumes toward* the Sin Bearer [Jesus] the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father" (*Letter 21*, 1895).

Because of the weight of sin upon Christ, causing the experience of unbelief, Christ was tempted to see God as a condemning judge instead of an endearing Father. Because He was permitted to become sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), sin hid (veiled) His Father's face (true character) from Him (Is. 59:2). This is the experience all unbelieving sinners sense. Although tempted to believe this was God's justice being carried out, Christ was in fact experiencing Satan's idea of justice (that justice and mercy are separate) being carried out by man.

However, Christ overcame this satanic "assumption" and, even though "The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb" and "Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 753), He held on by faith to His Father's loving-kindness and cried out, "Into thine hands I commend My spirit" (Lk. 23:46).

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. **God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son.** Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And **in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence.** He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 753)

"Amid the awful darkness, **apparently forsaken of God**, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. **By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey.** And as in submission He committed Himself to God, **the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor.**" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 756)

As a result of Christ overcoming the fear and doubt, He saw no corruption in the grave (Acts 2:31-32) and therefore did *not* experience the second death but rose from the grave a conqueror as our example:

**"To him that overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, **even as I also overcame**, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**" (Rev. 2:11)

The resurrection thus proved that, He who "was acquainted with the character of His Father", rightly revealed that God is not "an avenging judge" but "a tender father" (Jn. 5:22; 8:15). The Author and Finisher of faith had overcome the world (Heb. 12:2; 1 Jn. 5:4). This is why it is imperative that we receive "the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

"He [Satan] represented God in a false light, clothing him with his own attributes. Christ came to represent the Father in his true character. He showed that he was not an arbitrary judge, ready to bring judgments upon men, and delighting in condemning and punishing them for their evil deeds." (*Signs of the Times*, par. 6, Nov. 18, 1889)

### ***3. "God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements."***

Knowing that the judgments of God do not come out directly from God but by giving the sinner over to the natural consequences of their own free choice, we are ready to understand how God punishes those who refuse to be obedient to His requirements. So far, we have seen that God's destroying, anger (wrath) and justice are meted out, not by Him displaying His power and lashing out towards the sinner, but by Him removing His sustaining power at the sinner's request. Would His punishing be any different? No.

It is a mistake to believe that God's law operates like human law, which enforces rules through imposed punishments. All throughout history the majority of fallen humanity has believed this deception. Just a glimpse into the history of the church during the Dark Ages will prove this. The fact that the Church of Rome enforced Sunday observance instead of the Sabbath reveals man's warped mindset that God's law is arbitrary and can be changed by legislation.

However, God's laws are the divine protocols upon which life operates. Any deviation from these life-principles naturally results in sickness and death. The punishments of transgressing God's law therefore do not come directly out from the Lawgiver, but from the natural consequences of severing the lifeline between God and us. When God says, "Thou shalt surely die", He's expressing a loving warning, not a forceful threat! For He is an endearing Father, not a spiteful extortionist!

#### **A. The Scriptures on How God Executes Punishment:**

In Jeremiah chapter 44, we read:

"For **I will punish them** that dwell in the land of Egypt, as **I have punished** Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape." (Jer. 44:13-14)

Remember, we have already seen from Ellen White that "Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer" (*Counsels on Health*, p. 168). Therefore, we know that the punishment of famine and pestilence was not directly from God. Instead, God gave them

over to their enemy (i.e., an antagonistic power/Satan) whom they chose to serve (as their disobedience to God revealed). Notice verses 29-30:

“And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that **I will punish you** in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: Thus saith the LORD; Behold, **I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.**” (Jer. 44:29-30)

Now what about the punishment by sword? Again, this is executed by God giving them over to their enemies:

“And **I will bring a sword against you** that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and **you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.**” (Lev. 26:25)

Referring to the making of idols, God says:

“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” (Ex. 20:5)

The Hebrew word for “visiting” here is  $\text{פָּקַד}$  (*paqad*), which is the same Hebrew word for “punish” in the above Scripture found in Jeremiah. In fact, take a look at Exodus 20:5 in the *Good News Translation*:

“Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring **punishment** on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation.” (Ex. 20:5, *Good News Translation*)<sup>6</sup>

How does God visit [or punish] the descendants of the people to the third and fourth generation? Clearly, it would not be fair to directly punish someone else for another’s iniquity as God says in Ezekiel 18:20. So how does the “punishment” or “visitation” reach that far? Simply by God reluctantly permitting the natural consequences of such a sin to affect each generation after. Ellen White refers to it as “a train of circumstances.”

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<sup>6</sup> Although I used this version to bring out the word “punishment”, it seemingly distorts the use of the word “jealous”—“I tolerate no rivals”— and implies the worship of anything or anyone else makes Him jealous of that competition for worship. However, “God is not jealous of the idol in the sense that He feels the loss of something the idol is receiving instead of Him getting it. His jealousy, His concern is for the one bowing and looking to another source for what he needs when only God can provide it” ([Character of God.org/A Jealous God](http://CharacterofGod.org/A%20Jealous%20God)).

## B. Ellen G. White on How God Executes Punishment:

“David had neglected the duty of **punishing** the crime of Amnon, and because of the unfaithfulness of the king and father and the impenitence of the son, **the Lord permitted events to take their natural course**, and did not restrain Absalom. When parents or rulers neglect the duty of **punishing iniquity, God Himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.**” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 728)

How does God “punish iniquity” and “take the case in hand”? “His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil.” What is the sure result or consequence of this? “A train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.” In other words, the punishment naturally built into the sin of the first generation will fester (i.e., have a snowball effect) unto the third and fourth generation.

“God bears with divine patience with the perversity of the wicked; but He declares that **He will visit their transgressions** with a rod. **He will at last PERMIT the destructive agencies of Satan to bear sway to destroy.**” (*Manuscript 17*, par. 24, 1906)

We must always keep this biblical principle in mind. The “punishment” does not come directly out from the Lord; He instead permits the events to take their natural course until sin punishes sin. James says, “sin [not God], when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:15). The Psalmist says, “Evil shall slay the wicked”(Ps. 34:21). Paul says, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Not that God pays you with death as an imposed punishment, but as the *Weymouth New Testament* says, “the wages paid by Sin are death.” Yet, because Satan has warped our understanding of God’s character and law, we sadly believe that disease and death proceed from God as a punishment inflicted because of sin.

“It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. **Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin.** Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who ‘hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows’ was looked upon by the Jews as ‘stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;’ and they hid their

faces from Him. Isaiah 53:4, 3. God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. **The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan**, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 471)<sup>7</sup>

A few key points to consider here:

- Disease and death do NOT proceed from God.
- Disease and death DO proceed from Satan as well as the natural course of sin.
- On the cross, Christ was NOT stricken and smitten of God.
- On the cross, Christ WAS stricken and smitten by sinful humanity influenced by Satan.

Remember, "Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race" (*Desire of Ages*, Page 753). Although it was/ is assumed to be, this anguish did not come from God striking and smiting His Son in our behalf therefore it is not God who strikes and smites the guilty race in the end. At the cross, God and His Son revealed the deadly consequences of sin being meted out by hateful humanity (Rom. 8:3) while at the same time revealing Their unconditional love towards us by bearing our sin (hatred) and not retaliating or threatening us in any way (1 Pet. 2:23); and then forgiving us for not knowing what we were doing (Lk. 23:34).<sup>8</sup>

This same warped mindset of believing the judgments and punishments come directly from God upon the disobedient is also seen in regards to the destruction of Jerusalem:

"The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, **they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown**. Says the prophet: 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;' 'for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.' Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the**

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<sup>7</sup> "It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law, and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God, so that they regard him with fear and hate, rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion, and expressed in modes of worship. Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 568, 1888).

<sup>8</sup> For more info on this topic, see my book, [Did God Kill Jesus Instead of Killing Us?](#) (Bible only).

**direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work.** By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, **the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will.** The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are **a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.** We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. **It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan.** The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. **But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.** Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty." (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 35-36)

#### ***4. "Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world."***

We are now prepared to understand Ellen White's above statement that "God drowned the vast world." Could this be yet another inspired example of the principle of permission where God is said to "do" that which He reluctantly "permits"? Let's briefly look at what Scripture says.

#### **A. The Scriptures on Who or What Caused the Flood:**

"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, 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)

Well, there it is, case closed right? Not so fast. We have previously seen that Scripture plainly says God killed King Saul, but in reality, He was reluctantly permitting Saul to commit suicide. When we apply this same principle to the tragic story of the Flood, multiple statements begin to jump out of the pages of Scripture and seen in a whole new light. For example, consider the fact that the earth itself became corrupt or defiled due to man's sin.

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground for thy sake**; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field." (Gen. 3:17-18)

The Hebrew sense of the phrase "cursed is the ground for thy sake" is better understood as "Cursed is the ground because of you" (see most every other translation). Man's sin directly affects the earth to the point that the earth mirrors the violence we exercise.

"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 ... **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. 6:5, 11-13)

"The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. **The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof**; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." (Is. 24:4-5)

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Rom. 8:22)

The statement in Genesis 6:13, "I will destroy them with the earth", uses a Hebrew verb form called *Hiphil*. This verb form can be read in the *permissive* rather than *active* as William Loath states: "the Form called Hiphil in Hebrew often denotes only Permission, and is rendered elsewhere to that Sense by our translators" (William Lowth, *A Commentary Upon the Prophet Isaiah*, p. 501, 1714).

Confirmation of this is found in Isaiah 54:9, which presents the Flood in the permissive:



“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.” (Is. 54:9, *New Living Translation*)

“Just as in the time of Noah I swore that **I would never again PERMIT the waters of a flood to cover the earth and destroy** its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out My **anger** on you.” (Isaiah 54:9, *The Living Bible*)

Pay careful attention that this verse is again defining how God expressed His *anger* (wrath) and *punishment* during the Flood. As war, bloodshed and violence became the norm, the earth under its inhabitants became violent. In other words, the Flood was actually a natural disaster that came as the result of the consequence of man’s sins. Therefore, when Scripture quotes God as saying, “I will destroy the earth”, it is using the principle of permission, where God is NOT threatening sinners, but lovingly warning them of what’s coming.

“In the language of scripture, natural consequences are sometimes spoken of as though they were pre-ordained and irrevocable decrees. **What happens solely through the permission of the Almighty**, in the ordinary course of his Providence, **is described as though it had taken place through some special and irresistible intervention of his hand**. This is a mode of writing peculiar to the Hebrew idiom; an idiom which prevails everywhere throughout the New Testament, as well as the Old. Thus ... their meaning generally is that **he does not powerfully interfere to prevent those evils which are the natural fruits of our own folly, perverseness, and impenitence**.” (John Goodge Foyster, *Sermons*, p. 90, 1826)

Would it make any sense for God Himself to violently destroy people using the reason that they are violent? Would this not be considered hypocritical? Just as God “slew” King Saul by not preventing him from committing suicide, God “drowned the vast world” by not interfering with their free choice to reject Him and cut themselves off from the only Source of life. Take note at what is said concerning the Flood in the book of Job:

“Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? 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 22:15-17)

By rejecting and scoffing the preaching of Noah, the people were rejecting and scoffing God. As Waggoner pointed out earlier, the Psalmist said, “The kings of the earth form a united front; the rulers collaborate against the Lord and his anointed king. They say, ‘Let’s tear off the shackles they’ve put on us! Let’s free

ourselves from their ropes!” (Ps. 2:3-4, *New English Translation*). They had cut off their own life-support therefore God did not interfere and reluctantly permitted the Flood to take place.

God had warned, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man ...” (Gen. 6:3), and so when man made their final decision and cried out “Depart from us!” God reluctantly withdrew His Spirit, and they reaped the natural consequences of their own choice. This same principle is found in the book of Leviticus:

“And **the land is defiled**: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and **the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants**. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (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.**” (Lev. 18:25-28)

God warned Cain after he killed his brother that the curse would come to him from the earth. This is verified by the book *Wisdom of Solomon*:

“She preserved the first formed father of the world, that was created alone, and brought him out of his fall, And gave him power to rule all things. **But when the unrighteous went away from her in his anger, he perished also in the fury wherewith he murdered his brother. For whose cause the earth being drowned with the flood, wisdom again preserved it**, and directed the course of the righteous in a piece of wood of small value.” (Wisdom 10:1-4)<sup>9</sup>

## **B. Ellen G. White on Who or What Caused the Flood:**

Referring back to the above Scripture in Leviticus, we see that the land spewing out its inhabitants was due to God visiting the iniquity upon the land that was defiled by man. Do you remember what it means for God to “visit the iniquity”? It means that God will permit “events to take their natural course” as “His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 728).

On page 82 in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White echoes the book of *Wisdom* quoted above:

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<sup>9</sup> In the year 1850, Ellen White spoke in favor of the Apocrypha: “I saw that the Apocrypha was the hidden book, and that the wise of these last days should understand it. I saw that the Bible was the standard book, that will judge us at the last day” (*Manuscript 4*, par. 13, Jan. 28, 1850).

“Filled with the keenest remorse for his own sin, and doubly bereaved in the death of Abel and the rejection of Cain, Adam was bowed down with anguish. **He witnessed the wide-spreading corruption that was finally to cause the destruction of the world by a flood.**”

The Flood was the reaction of the earth to their sinfulness, just like thorns and thistles were a reaction to Adam’s sinfulness.

**“Under the curse of sin all nature was to witness to man of the character and results of rebellion against God.** When God made man He made him rule over the earth and all living creatures.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59)

“The spirit of rebellion, to which he [Adam] himself had given entrance, extended throughout the animal creation. Thus not only the life of man, but **the nature of the beasts, the trees of the forest, the grass of the field, the very air he breathed, all told the sad lesson of the knowledge of evil.**” (*Education*, p. 26)<sup>10</sup>

The Flood that drowned the vast world was not caused by God lashing out to punish lawbreakers; it came as a natural result of God *withdrawing* His restraining power at the Antediluvian’s request— “Depart from us!”

“It is a fearful thing to treat lightly the truth which has convinced our understanding and touched our hearts. We cannot with impunity reject the warnings which God in mercy sends us. A message was sent from heaven to the world **in Noah’s day**, and the salvation of men depended upon the manner in which they treated that message. **Because they rejected the warning, the Spirit of God was withdrawn from the sinful race, and they perished in the waters of the flood** ... As they reject the teachings of His Word, **God withdraws His Spirit**, and leaves them to the deceptions which they love.” (*Early Writings*, p. 45)

Notice yet again we see that God “drowning the vast world” was not by any new power that was put into operation by God, but by the *removal* of His sustaining power. God’s wrath, anger, judgments etc. are meted out when “God withdraws His Spirit, and leaves them to the deceptions which they love.” Again, “God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves” (*Youth’s Instructor*, Nov. 30, 1893). At any time, God could have stood up and rebuked the wind and the waves and cried out “Peace! Be still!” as Christ demonstrated while He and His disciples were out on the stormy sea (Mk. 4:39).

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<sup>10</sup> For more info on this topic, see the book, [Dominion of the Earth](#), by Adrian Ebens. (Bible and EGW).

Referring to the time of the Flood, Ellen White says "God's Spirit was striving with them to lead them to faith and obedience, but their own wicked hearts turned aside the counsel of God and resisted the pleadings of infinite love" (*Manuscript 5*, par. 2, 1876). She continues saying that "While Noah was warning the inhabitants of the world of the coming destruction, it was their day of opportunity and privilege to become wise unto salvation. But Satan had control of the minds of men" (*ibid*, par. 4). Just as the Israelites did not recognize the Hand that stayed the fiery serpents, "Fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks [and the] people did not recognize the Hand that had stayed the waters, saying, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.' [Job 38:10-11]" (*ibid*, par. 5).

Satan had led the human race into rebellion against its Creator. This is what caused the withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the earth and led to the Flood. Listen carefully to the following quote. Follow the logic sequence carefully:

**"Satan is the destroyer.** God cannot bless those who refuse to be faithful stewards. All He can do is to permit Satan to accomplish his destroying work. We see calamities of every kind and in every degree coming upon the earth, and why? **The Lord's restraining power is not exercised. The world has disregarded the word of God. They live as though there were no God. Like the inhabitants of the Noachic world, they refuse to have any thought of God.** Wickedness prevails to an alarming extent, and the earth is ripe for the harvest." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 388-389)

- **Who is the destroyer?**

"Satan is the destroyer."

- **How is the destroyer permitted to work?**

"God cannot bless those who refuse to be faithful stewards. All He can do is to permit Satan to accomplish his destroying work."

- **Why do calamities of every kind and degree come?**

"The Lord's restraining power is not exercised. The world has disregarded the word of God. They live as though there were no God."

- **What example is given of how this process works? The story of Noah's flood!**

"Like the inhabitants of the Noachic world, they refuse to have any thought of God. Wickedness prevails to an alarming extent, and the earth is ripe for the harvest."

Because of his hatred of God and His Son, it is Satan's plan to destroy the whole human race:

"No longer free to stir up rebellion in heaven, **Satan's enmity against God found a new field in plotting the ruin of the human race.**" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 52)

As a mad scientist losing control of the elements of his experiment, so out of control were the warring elements during the Flood that even Satan, the author of sin and death, feared for his life:

**"Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows.** When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. **It is God that shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer.** But the Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah; and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would—**He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care** from those who are rebelling against His law and teaching and forcing others to do the same. **Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them."** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 589)

"Above the roar of the tempest was heard the wailing of a people that had despised the authority of God. **Satan himself, who was compelled to remain in the midst of the warring elements, feared for his own existence.**" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 99)

It is because God's thoughts and ways are not our thoughts and ways (Is. 55:8-9) why Ellen White said, "Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him." If Moses would have drowned one of the scoffers, he would be exercising human justice of force and coercion which is contrary to God's government:

**"The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.**" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 22)

Only God knows the inner thoughts and intents of the heart. The great Physician knows the full diagnosis of man's condition, whether he is responding to the

Remedy found in Christ or terminally ill. As E.J. Waggoner said, "The Judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to every man and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession ... If anyone has not this blessing, it is because he has not recognized the gift, or has deliberately thrown it away" (*Glad Tidings*, pp. 13-14, 66).

Man does not have the capacity to say, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos. 4:17). Our judgment concerning whether a man lives or dies is arbitrary while God's is a judgment (i.e., a diagnosis/confirmation) of the soul's condition. As Waggoner alluded to above, God doesn't decide who's a sheep or a goat because God already knows their condition and destiny. Every man will decide that themselves; and because He is a God of love and freedom and not force, God will accept man's own decision (i.e., self-judgment). "And thus everyone passes judgment on himself" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 57); therefore, "God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 84).

**"We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others.** Finite men can judge only from outward appearance. To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul. 'Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.' Romans 2:1. Thus those who condemn or criticize others, proclaim themselves guilty, for they do the same things. **In condemning others, they are passing sentence upon themselves, and God declares that this sentence is just. He accepts their own verdict against themselves."** (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 123-124)

- **Why is it that "Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him"?**

"We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others."

- **Why was it just for God to "drown the vast world"?**

"To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul."

- **How does God do this?**

"... He accepts their own verdict against themselves."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Please see the book, [As You Judge](#), by Adrian Ebens for more details. (Bible only but discusses Adventist history).

**5. "The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire, while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor."**

We have already discussed God's way of "punishing" the transgressor, so let's apply what we have learned as it's here connected to "the punishment of God by fire."

**A. The Scriptures on the Punishment of God by Fire:**

"... And he shall be **tormented with fire** and brimstone before the holy angels and before the Lamb. The smoke of their **torment** goes up forever and ever ..." (Rev. 14:10-11, see also Rev. 20:10)

The Greek word for "tormented" here is βασανίζω (*bansanizo*) meaning, "To test the purity of metals such as gold and silver by rubbing them upon a touchstone." Like Jesus upon the cross, the "torment" that the lost will experience is not so much physical pain, but *intense mental anguish* caused by the sense of eternal separation from God.<sup>12</sup> Let's review some other examples which help us understand the use of the word "tormented."

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets **tormented** [*bansanizo*] them that dwelt on the earth." (Rev. 11:10)

Knowing that these two prophets represent the truth of Scripture, we can be assured that they are not tormenting the people with physical torture, but instead with torment of the *conscience* because of truth presented. "**Is not my word like as a fire?** saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). Paul teaches us that the truth in Scripture affects people differently:

"Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But **this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing**. To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this?" (2 Cor. 2:15-16, *New Living Translation*)

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<sup>12</sup> See *Desire of Ages*, p. 753. (We'll discuss this a little later).

Here is another example of the use of the word, *bansanizo*:

“For that righteous man [Lot], dwelling among them, **tormented** [*bansanizo*] his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds.” (2 Pet. 2:8)

Here we read Lot was tormented by all the unlawful deeds done by the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was not tormented physically, but mentally.

Hosea also speaks of this mental anguish caused by the conviction of sin that arouses anger (fury).

“For they have made ready their **heart like an oven**, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it [their heart/conscience] **burneth as a flaming fire.**” (Hos. 7:6)

The Greek word translated as “brimstone” is θεῖον (*theion*) which is from the word Θεόν (*theos*) and means “divinity.” It should be translated as “divine incense” or “holy fire” because it is the fire of God’s purifying presence. Scripture speaks of God Himself being a “consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). This should always be in context with the truth that “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8). It’s God’s love that is a consuming fire.

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for **love is strong as death**; [its] jealousy is cruel as the grave: **the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.**” (*Song of Songs* 8:6)

Notice it is love that produces coals of fire. Paul repeats this concept in Romans chapter 12:

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing **thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.** Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom. 12:20, 21)<sup>13</sup>

The meaning of heaping coals of fire upon someone's head is not condemning them to physically burn in fire, but that by overcoming evil with good, you will *convict* the person of their sin, in hope of leading them to repentance. The unbelieving sinner will be in the presence of divine holiness. All their works will come to the forefront, and they will be mentally tormented. Unlike Christ who

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<sup>13</sup> Paul says this process of overcoming evil (to kill/declare that one must be put to death) with good (preserving life as much as possible) is how God’s vengeance is executed (vs. 19). Rescuing someone from sin and death, transforming them from foe to friend, is God’s vengeance (Is. 61:1-3).



overcame the temptation to believe God was smiting and striking Him, they will not overcome because they believe the lie that it is God afflicting them. Notice how Isaiah describes the scene:

“Therefore shall all hands be **faint**, and **every man's heart shall melt**: And they shall be **afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them**; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; **their faces shall be as flames.**” (Is. 13:7-8)

Not believing in God's everlasting mercy, they will judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Thus, they pass sentence upon themselves, and “God declares that this sentence is just. He accepts their own verdict against themselves.” For “when the Lord sees unbelief in the heart against light and evidence, all he has to do is to let the human agent alone”; and since “God destroys no man”, “the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves.”

While the prophet Isaiah contrasts the fate of the willful sinner with those who walk righteously, he asks:

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Is. 33:14)

The most common answer is that *sinners* will dwell in the devouring fire and everlasting burnings. However, Isaiah answers his own question in verse 15 by surprisingly saying:

“He that walketh **righteously**, and speaketh **uprightly**; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.” (Is. 33:15)

Satan has deceived the world into thinking that the place you do not want to go is the place of “consuming fire” and “everlasting burnings” which is God's very presence. Although both the saved and the lost will experience the *same* devouring fire, their experiences in the fire will be vastly different. While unified in Christ, the saved will be clothed with His fireproof “robe of righteousness” (Is. 61:10); for “He [Christ] shall baptize [immerse] you with the Holy Spirit *and with fire*” (Lk. 3:16). All sin that binds you will consume away and, like the three Hebrews who were cast into a fiery furnace, not a hair on your head will be singed (see Dan. chapter 3); “For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried” (Ps. 66:10).

“But then we are told that the fire that burns the wicked shall not be quenched. Very true; and the reason why it shall not be quenched is that it is unquenchable. ‘He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’ Matthew 3:12. Unquenchable indeed it must be, because **it is the fire of the glory of the Lord**. When the Lord comes the wicked will be consumed with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming. See 2 Thessalonians 2:8. That fire must exist as long as God exists; but **while it is death to the enemies of the Lord, it is light and life to those that love Him**. It is as in the case of ancient Israel; that which was light to the Israelites, was confusion and destruction to the Egyptians.” (E.J. Waggoner, *Present Truth UK*, p. 55, Feb. 23, 1893)

The consuming fire that both the saved and the lost experience is *not* the fire of combustion as can be seen in the instance of Nadab and Abihu who were consumed with fire and yet were carried out of the sanctuary tent still in their clothes (Lev. 10:1-5). It was the fire of God’s holy presence from which Nadab and Abihu reacted in fear, not trusting in God’s everlasting mercy and saving grace. This fear aroused their mental anguish of guilt and shame they were holding onto, and it consumed them.

As we read from Isaiah earlier: “The sinners in Zion are *afraid; fearfulness* hath surprised the hypocrites” (Is. 33:14), thus they cannot stand in the presence of that devouring fire of perfect holiness and love because fear results in mental torment, believing the lie that God’s government operates on penal infliction (1 Jn. 4:18).<sup>14</sup>

It all depends on *how* you perceive God— is He a punishing dictator whose motto is “Obey Me or I will kill you!” because His laws operate like human laws with imposed legal punishments? Or is He an endearing Father whose laws are the laws of love and freedom, designed for our good because they are creation principles upon which life operates, and any deviation from those principles naturally results in negative consequences? It is as you judge, “for the hour of *HIS* [God’s] judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7; see also, Rom. 3:4).

Being carried out still in their coats reveals that God did not burn them to ashes out of vengeful wrath for breaking His law. God’s wrath was simply giving them over to their own way; for God has said: “I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath: [how?] their own way have I brought upon their heads” (Ez. 22:31).

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<sup>14</sup> The word for “torment” in 1 Jn. 4:18 is κόλασις (*kolasis*), which *Strong’s Concordance* defines as “From *kolazo*; penal infliction — punishment, torment.

## B. Ellen G. White on the Punishment of God by Fire:

Referring to the end of the wicked, Ellen White says:

“Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Malachi 4:1),—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, ‘Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; ... I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.’ Then ‘the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;’ ‘they shall be as though they had not been.’ Ezekiel 28:6-19; Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 763)

Clearly, Satan and the wicked will be “destroyed”; “they shall be as though they had not been.” She even quotes God as saying, “I will destroy thee.” But what have we learned regarding *how* God does this? Can we apply the principle of permission here as well? Yes! In fact, Ellen White herself does this as she explains in the very next paragraph:

**“This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown.** God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus **cuts himself off from life.** He is ‘alienated from the life of God.’ Christ says, ‘All they that hate Me love death.’ Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, **they receive the results of their own choice.** By a life of rebellion, **Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.”** (*Desire of Ages*, p. 764)

Is this not the exact same truth we just learned from the Scriptures? Like Nadab and Abihu, “Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire.” This will not be the fire of combustion, but “the glory [character/presence] of Him who is love.” As we saw earlier, this fiery presence draws all unrepented sin and self-guilt/condemnation to the surface that causes intense mental torment. Ellen White describes the scene again in *The Great Controversy* when Satan and his followers attack the City:

“By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. Now **Christ again appears to the view of His enemies.** Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of

God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. **The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance** ... In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the Son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government and **executes justice** upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people. Says the prophet of God: 'I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Revelation 20:11, 12. As soon as the books of record are opened, and **the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed.** They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—**all appear as if written in letters of fire.**" (*Great Controversy*, 664, 666)

Friends, "the brightness of His presence [that] fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance" is what John describes in Revelation chapter 20:

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: **and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.**" (Rev. 20:9)

In the next few paragraphs of *The Great Controversy* (pp. 666.3-668.2), Ellen White describes how Christ has suffered the Cross daily from the inception of sin. Isaiah tells us, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Is. 63:9). This is a profound truth! In every sin, in every violent event, we see the results of Christ and Him crucified. Ellen White describes how inanimate nature responds in sympathy with its crucified Author:

"With amazement angels witnessed the Saviour's despairing agony. The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight. **Inanimate nature expressed sympathy with its insulted and dying Author.** The sun refused to look upon the awful scene. Its full, bright rays were illuminating the earth at midday, when

suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. Complete darkness, like a funeral pall, enveloped the cross. 'There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.' There was no eclipse or other natural cause for this darkness, which was as deep as midnight without moon or stars. It was a miraculous testimony given by God that the faith of after generations might be confirmed." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 753)

Referring to Revelation 1:7, which says, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him", Ellen White writes:

"'And they also which pierced Him.' **These words apply not only to the men who pierced Christ when He hung on the cross of Calvary, but to those who by evil-speaking and wrong-doing are piercing Him today. Daily He suffers the agonies of the crucifixion. Daily men and women are piercing Him by dishonoring Him, by refusing to do His will.**" (*Signs of the Times*, January 28, 1903 par. 8)

E.J. Waggoner wrote, "The arms of the cross that was erected on Calvary, reach from Paradise lost to Paradise restored, and cover the entire world" (*Present Truth UK*, February 10, 1898, p. 99). And again:

"The cross of Christ is a present thing. The expression, 'Come to the cross,' is not an empty form of words, but an invitation that can be literally complied with. Christ is crucified before us, and each blade of grass, each leaf in the forest, reveals the fact. Yea, we have the testimony in our own bodies, in that, although sinful and corruptible, we yet live. Not until one has seen Christ crucified before his eyes, and can see the cross of Christ at every turn, does one know the reality of the Gospel." (*Glad Tidings*, p. 100)<sup>15</sup>

In realizing the self-sacrificing love of Jesus, Ellen White says:

"The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. 'All this,' cries the lost soul, 'I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor for wretchedness, infamy, and despair.' **All see that their exclusion from heaven is just.** By their lives they have declared: '**We will not have this Man [Jesus] to reign over us.**'" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 668)

Remember the words of the Antediluvians to their Savior, "Depart from Us!" (Job 22:15-17). They had crucified Christ afresh, cutting off their own life-support.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For a detailed study on how events throughout history reveal the ever-present cross, see my book, [Jesus Christ and Him Crucified](#). (Bible only).

<sup>16</sup> John says that, not only was Jesus crucified in Jerusalem ("the great city"), but that He was also spiritually crucified during the destruction of Sodom and the plagues of Egypt (Rev. 11:8).

In verse 20 of Job 22, we then read, “the remnant of them the fire consumeth.” The remnant of those who continue daily to crucify Christ will, in the end, be consumed by fire. This is exactly what the apostle Peter alludes to. Just as Jesus said the events that surround His second coming will be like “the days of Noah”, Peter said:

“They [scoffers] willfully ignore this: Long ago the heavens and the earth were brought about from water and through water **by the word of God**. Through these waters **the world of that time perished when it was flooded.**” (2 Pet. 3:5-6, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*)

Who is “the Word of God”? Jesus (Jn. 1:1-3; Rev. 19:13). The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus upholds all things by “the word of His power” (Heb. 1:1-3). It was “the Word of God” (Jesus) upholding all things until they told Him to “Depart from us!” and “the world of that time perished when it was flooded.” Likewise, Peter goes on to say that the fiery torment of mind and soul after the millennium will come as the lost realize they have crucified “the same word” (Jesus) from their midst as did the Antediluvians:

“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved **by the same word**, are reserved for **fire** until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Pet. 3:7)

In the *Great Controversy*, Ellen White continues:

“Satan seems paralyzed as he beholds the glory and majesty of Christ ... Memory recalls the home of his innocence and purity, the peace and content that were his until he indulged in murmuring against God, and envy of Christ. His accusations, his rebellion, his deceptions to gain the sympathy and support of the angels, **his stubborn persistence in making no effort for self-recovery when God would have granted him forgiveness—all come vividly before him** ... Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; **the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture**. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah **rests wholly upon himself**. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.” (*Great Controversy*, p. 669-670)

Clearly, we see here that the torment Satan and his followers will experience does not come from God, but from themselves. She says the “accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced.” The justice of God is not lashing out to torture anyone (making them pay for what they have done) but

reluctantly giving them over to their own “voluntary rebellion” which “has unfitted [them] for heaven.” Since God’s government is founded on love and freedom, not force and coercion, God permits them to stay outside because “the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to [them] supreme torture.” As Jesus said, He and His Father love Their enemies and are always “kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Lk. 6:35).

“Notwithstanding that Satan has been constrained to acknowledge God’s justice and to bow to the supremacy of Christ, his character remains unchanged. **The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, again bursts forth.** Filled with frenzy, he determines not to yield the great controversy. The time has come for a last desperate struggle against the King of heaven. He rushes into the midst of his subjects and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury and arouse them to instant battle. **But of all the countless millions whom he has allured into rebellion, there are none now to acknowledge his supremacy.** His power is at an end. The wicked are filled with the same hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they cannot prevail against Jehovah. **Their rage is kindled against Satan and those who have been his agents in deception, and with the fury of demons they turn upon them.** Saith the Lord: ‘Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; behold, therefore **I will bring strangers upon thee**, the terrible of the nations: and **they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom**, and they shall defile thy brightness. **They shall bring thee down to the pit.**’ ‘I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.... I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee ... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.’ Ezekiel 28:6-8, 16-19.” (*Great Controversy*, pp. 671-672)

Here again we see that, although God is quoted as saying, “I will destroy thee”, the principle of permission is still in play. How will God “destroy” Satan? “I will bring strangers upon thee.” The destroyers of Satan are all the wicked who have turned against him! “They shall bring thee down to the pit.” The book of Hebrews says, “that through death he [Jesus] might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14, *English Standard Version*). Jesus doesn’t destroy Satan by actively killing him. No, it is the exact opposite. He destroys Satan by permitting Satan, through humanity, to kill Him! The crucifixion of Christ, which all the world is seeing in vivid display, is what destroys Satan, unmasking him as the destroyer—the murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). In *Desire of Ages*, pages 758-761, she wrote:

**“Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds.** The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had

not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion ... **God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven **it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government.** He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe ... Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. **By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.** Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.** Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. **And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve."**

Just as "The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken", in the end, the last link of sympathy will be broken between Satan and his followers.

**"Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire."** '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.' 'Upon the wicked He shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.' Isaiah 9:5; 34:2; Psalm 11:6, margin. Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. **Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm.** The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth's surface seems one molten mass—a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men—the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.' Isaiah 34:8." (*Great Controversy*, p. 672)



Here again we see the biblical truth that the earth reflects the violence of its inhabitants. Notice in the middle of the above statement she says, “fire comes down from God out of heaven.” This again is in reference to the full display of God’s love that is rejected by the unbeliever, resulting in mental torment, causing them to perceive their physical affliction as coming directly from God. On page 673 of *The Great Controversy*, she says, “While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield.” Again, the same fire, different experiences. In fact, their own mental torment causes such an eruption of anger and violence that, like the earth in the time of the Flood, the physical elements of the earth in the end erupt in mirror-like fashion. Let’s make this point clearer as we continue.

Remember the verse in Isaiah we read that says, “in all their affliction he was afflicted”? Well, the next verse says, “But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them” (Is. 63:10). This does not mean that God got upset because they hated Him and so He turned against them to fight them. Instead, because we, as sinners, turn against God, He is *perceived* to turn against us and fight us.

The *Aramaic Bible in Plain English* says, “he was turned into an enemy to them”, which suggests that “to them”— in their eyes —He was turned into an enemy. The Psalmist says, “to the pure, you [God] show yourself pure, and to the morally corrupt, you appear to be perverse” (Ps. 18:26, *International Standard Version*). Why is this? “Because you assumed that I [God] was like you” (Ps. 50:21, *International Standard Version*). A perfect example of this is when God descended upon Mt Sinai to give the people His “fiery law” (Deut. 33:2):

“And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.” (Ex. 24:17)

Here, the unbelieving and fearful children of Israel standing at the base of the mountain represent the lost, thus God appeared “like devouring fire” in *their* eyes. However, knowing and experiencing God’s love which casts out all fear (1 Jn. 4:18), the meek and lowly Moses climbed up the mountain into the presence of God, representing the saved inside the City after the millennium.

Another great example of this is found in the book of Job where Satan wreaked havoc upon Job’s family and livestock. However, one of the messengers who informed Job of the calamities said, “**The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them**” (Job 1:16). Recall the words of Ellen White:

**“Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin ... The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson.”** (*Desire of Ages*, p. 471)

**“Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls.** He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment ... Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and **he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.**” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 589)

One more example we'll refer to is the story of Elijah:

“And he [God] said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake **a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire:** and after the fire a still small voice.” (1 Kgs. 19:11-12)

What caused the wind, earthquake and fire if it was not God? The fire was a mirror of the violence that was inside Elijah as it clashed with the gentle character of God. The closer God came to Elijah, the more his sinful character was exposed. Of this account, Albert Barnes writes: “The teaching is a condemnation of that ‘zeal’ which Elijah had gloried in, a zeal exhibiting itself in fierce and terrible vengeancees ...” (*Barnes’ Notes*, 1 Kings 19:12).

As noted earlier, because of Satan’s violent character (Ez. 28:16), God said: **“I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you”** (Ez. 28:18). Reflecting Satan’s character, Elijah had killed many with the sword, however, when God showed him his sin, he confessed and repented saying, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” (1 Kgs. 19:4). Here’s what the *SDA Bible Commentary* says:

“As Elijah stepped out of the cave a storm swept across the mountain and an earthquake shook the ground. All seemed to be in commotion, with the heavens on fire and the earth convulsed by forces that seemed about to rend it asunder. **All this was in tune with the convulsive spirit of the prophet.** What he needed to learn was that, mighty and moving though these forces be, they do not of themselves portray a true picture of the Spirit of God.” (*SDA Bible Commentary*, 1 Kings 19:12)

Ellen White herself says the violent commotion reflected Elijah's "petulance"—bad temper.

"While Elijah waited for the revelation of the Lord, a tempest rolled, the lightnings flashed, and a devouring fire swept by; but God was not in all this. Then there came a still, small voice, and **the prophet covered his head before the presence of the Lord. His petulance was silenced, his spirit softened and subdued.** He now knew that a quiet trust, a firm reliance on God, would ever find for him a present help in time of need." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 168)

This is why God told Satan, "I brought fire **out from your midst**; it consumed you" (Ez. 28:18, *English Standard Version*). Just as those in Sodom who "**burned** in their lust one toward another" (Rom. 1:27) "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire" as an example to those who live ungodly in the end (Jd. 1:7), the war that erupts between Satan and his own followers is what causes the elements to "melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). "**Wickedness burneth as the fire** ... no man shall spare his brother" (Is. 9:18-19); "Every man's sword shall be against his brother" (Ez. 38:21).<sup>17</sup>

Concerning the end of the wicked, we read:

"The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. Proverbs 11:31. They 'shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.' Malachi 4:1. Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 673)

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<sup>17</sup> It is worthy to note here that in most every other translation, the phrase, "fire came down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 20:9), is translated without the words "from God" (or "from God" in brackets). In *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* it says, "the words 'from God' are of doubtful authority." Thus, like the time of Job and Elijah, this may be another example of sinful man emphasizing the violent and destructive power he wants God to have. Are we not misinformed today by our insurance policies that state "natural disasters" are "acts of God? As to Ellen White's use of the phrase, it reveals another example of her using "Scripture language" of the text she was quoting from.

First, let's discuss the phrase, "the demands of justice have been met." Whose justice? Well, I'd say BOTH God's and Satan's! Remember, "Satan will be judged by his own idea of justice ... Satan will meet the judgment which he said God should exercise" (*Manuscript Release*, vol. 12, p. 413). Since "it had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice", then that is what he will receive. In giving Satan and his followers the justice THEY demanded, God is also executing HIS strict justice. For "it would be doing the wicked an injustice not to give them that for which they have so long and diligently laboured." Therefore, "He must let the wicked suffer the punishment which they have worked for."

Ellen White says that, upon the cross, "He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of **divine justice**, and for thy sake becomes sin itself" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 755). But here is where we cannot insert our own fallen sense of wrath and justice. Divine wrath and justice are executed by reluctantly giving sinful man over to their own selfish desires, which results in the natural consequences of reaping what you sow. How is God's divine wrath and justice revealed at the cross? By giving sinful man over to their (our) desire to execute their (our) satanic sense of wrath and justice upon His only begotten Son. It is contrary to the everlasting gospel to believe and teach that Jesus came to satisfy God's wrath and justice in the sense to appease Him, change Him, calm Him down, so that He wouldn't have to lash out at us. That's not the everlasting gospel but the teaching of domestic violence where Jesus must step between us and our angry Father. E.J. Waggoner wrote:

"'But,' someone will say, 'You have made the reconciliation all on the part of men; **I have always been taught that the death of Christ reconciled God to man; that Christ died to satisfy God's justice, and to appease Him.**' Well, we have left the matter of reconciliation just where the Scriptures have put it; and while they have much to say about the necessity for man to be reconciled to God, they never once hint of such a thing as the necessity for God to be reconciled to man. **To intimate the necessity for such a thing is to bring a grave charge against the character of God. The idea has come into the Christian Church from the Papacy, which in turn brought it from Paganism, in which the only idea of God was of a being whose wrath must be appeased by a sacrifice.**" (*Present Truth UK*, p. 386, Sep. 21, 1893)

The truth is, Jesus did not come to appease God's wrath and justice— He came to appease ours!

Now to the phrase, "Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days ... [Satan's] punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived." What does this mean? Think of it this way— when a person attends a funeral of a person they do not know well, the suffering is not that great; but when you have an intimate knowledge of a person, the suffering is immense. For someone who never knew Christ intimately, the eternal separation from Him will not be that intense. They will be left to deal with their own sufferings of overwhelming guilt, shame, and loss.

But to someone who may have had intimate knowledge of Christ but threw away their salvation and became "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4) will suffer greatly as they experience greater loss and eternal separation from their divine Friend, knowing that He loved them unconditionally and did everything in His power to save them. No one has known God and His Son more than Satan has (Ez. 28:14). This is why his emotional suffering is the greatest, and why he will suffer longer than anyone else will.

"But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. **To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love.** Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 761)

Ellen White tells us of the immense anguish Christ felt upon the cross:

"All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. **The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man.** So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt ... **He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal.** Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and **broke the heart of the Son of God.**" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 753)

Because Christ "felt the anguish which the sinner will feel", He cried out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). In saying this, Christ was *not* doubting His Father's presence but directing all who doubt to Psalm chapter 22. In this chapter, we read history in advance of what would happen to the suffering Servant (the Messiah).

- **Verse 1:** "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"
- **Verses 6-8:** "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (See also, Matt. 27:41-43).
- **Verse 16:** "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."
- **Verse 18:** "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (See also, Matt. 27:35).

In all this anguish, I believe our Savior is leading us to verse 24:

"For he [God] hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard." (Ps. 22:24)

Because He is the Son of God, begotten "in the days of eternity" (Mic. 5:2), and has been "daily His [the Father's] delight" (Prov. 8:22-30), this sense of eternal separation from His Father "pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man", yet we have seen that He hung on by faith in His Father's word. Although He could not see through the darkness, He knew His Father heard Him cry and would not forsake Him (Heb. 13:5). He was grounded in His Sonship, fully believing His Father's declaration, "This is My Son, the dearly loved, in whom is My delight" (Matt 3:17, *Weymouth New Testament*). Will you also take hold of your identity as sons and daughters of God?

"And the word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' **embraces humanity**. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. **With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless.** 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' Ephesians 1:6. The glory that rested upon Christ is a pledge of the love of God for us ... The light which fell from the open portals upon the head of our Saviour will fall upon us as we pray for help to resist temptation. **The voice which spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul, This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.**" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 113)

It wasn't God who forsook Jesus but man in whom He found no sympathy:

"**Insults have broken my heart**, and I am in despair. I waited for sympathy, but there was none; for comforters, but found no one. Instead, they gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 69:20-21, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, cf. Matt 27:34)

Christ was *not* literally set on fire, yet He was the *burnt* offering. Not because God required a blood-sacrifice in order to forgive us (Ps. 40:6), but because man required blood. It is *we* that believe “without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22). Mrs. White confirms this truth:

“As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. **He saw the unfair transactions. He saw the distress of the poor, who thought that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins.** He saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of unholy traffic. The sacred enclosure had become one vast exchange” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 157)

Instead of *God* requiring a sacrifice and *we* providing it; it is *we* who require the sacrifice and God providing it. It was all about placating and appeasing *us* who were hostile to Him. In condescending to bear the justice of man, Christ was breaking Satan’s hold, releasing us from the bondage of what *we* believed God required— death!

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**” (Heb. 2:14-15, *English Standard Version*)

What was it that took the life of the Savior? A broken heart. The “fire” that the guilty sinner will feel at the end is therefore the fire of their own mental anguish, caused by their own fear and sense of justice. And because they do not believe in God’s mercy but believe He has forsaken them and is thus afflicting them, they will die the second death from a broken heart (Is. 13:7-8; Lk. 21:26).

Finally, the phrase, “In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches.” To the Atheist, it is inconceivable why millions of Christians would worship a God who tortures people in fire for all eternity. To ease their minds, Seventh-day Adventists preach that God will only burn and torture people for a little while. So really, God is no better than the Roman Papacy who burned heretics alive at the stake.

With this mindset, it’s no wonder that the first church historian, Eusebius, recounts how the Roman Church monarchy was believed to be the express image of the monarchy in heaven when he wrote: “With the Roman Empire monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven” (S. L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius* (London: SCM Press, 1954). Thus, the church established her own standards against “heretics” and enforced arbitrary punishments, claiming these punishments were “divine justice.”

“Besides the condemnation of divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict.” (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Ch. 27, par. 6)

When James and John wanted to command fire down from heaven to consume the Samaritans “as Elijah did”, Jesus “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” (Lk. 9:54-56). By adding, “as Elijah did”, James and John thought (as many do today) they had biblical evidence for their request (2 Kgs. 1:10-14). In His rebuke, Jesus was teaching them that they misunderstood what they had read and thus developed an incorrect view concerning the character of God. Paul taught the same: “... to this day the same veil is still there when they read the Old Testament. It isn't removed, because only Christ can remove it.” (2 Cor. 3:14, *God's Word Translation*). This is why Jesus came— to take away the veil of misapprehension.

“Satan had so misrepresented the character of God to the world, that man stood remote from God; but **Christ came to display to the world the Father's attributes**, to represent the express image of his person ... **The object of Christ's mission to the world was to reveal the Father.**” (*Signs of the Times*, April 11, 1895, par. 2)

**“Christ exalted the character of God**, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of **the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God.** In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, ‘I have manifested thy name.’ ‘I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.’ **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.**” (*Signs of the Times*, Jan. 20, 1890, par. 9)

In Jesus' words, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of”, James and John learned that to burn people alive by fire is of a *satanic* spirit, not of God's Holy Spirit! So, what do we do with the statement concerning the “cleansing flames”? They simply come *after* all the wicked are dead and their corpses become “ashes under the souls of [our] feet” (Mal. 4:3).



## Conclusion

Whatever we understand the Bible to teach, we must harmonize what we know of the character of God in the light of its perfect revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. With the veil lifted, we can conclude with Ellen White that “the whole purpose of his [Christ’s] own mission on earth” was to “set men right through the revelation of God.” “Set right” = reconciliation/atonement. Thus, the atonement is *not* achieved by Christ paying a legal payment (death) to God. The atonement is only achieved when the truth of God’s character is received!

“The word ‘atonement’ means at-one-ment. Sin had brought misery, and misery had brought a misunderstanding of God’s character. Thus men had come to hate God instead of loving Him; and hating Him, the one Father, men also hated man, their brother. Thus, instead of the one family and the one Father, men were separated from God and from each other, and held apart by hatred and selfishness. There must be an atonement. **An atonement can be made only by God’s so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men’s hearts will be touched to tenderness; and they, being delivered from Satan’s delusions, may see how fully and terribly they have misunderstood the divine One, and so have done spite to the Spirit of his grace.** Thus they may be led, as returning brethren, to come back to the Father’s house in blissful unity. **The atonement is not to appease God’s wrath so that man dare come to Him but it is to reveal His love so that they WILL come to Him.** It was not Christ reconciling God unto the world, but God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. It is nowhere said that God needed to be reconciled unto us; he says, ‘I have not forsaken you, but you have forsaken me.’” (George Fifiield, *God Is Love*, 1897, p. 48)

Brothers and sisters of the flock, can you imagine how powerful the SDA message would be today if we had continued in the 1888 message? Let us put away the pagan idea of reconciliation (atonement) and return to the everlasting gospel we are called to proclaim that will “enlighten the world with His glory” (Rev. 14:6-7; 18:1-4).

Jesus continually had difficulty expressing spiritual truths to people because they continued to lock onto the physical and would not progress into its deeper meaning.<sup>18</sup> To the lawyer, Jesus asked, “What is written in the law? how readeest thou?” (Lk. 10:26). All interpretations must be founded upon Christ, and how He revealed the Father.

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<sup>18</sup> See, Jn. 2:19-21 and Jn. 6:51-66 for examples of this.

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (Jn. 14:8-9)

“All that man needs to know or can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son.” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 286)

“Herod and the wicked authorities killed the Just One, but **Christ never killed anyone**, and we may attribute the spirit of persecution—because men want liberty of conscience—to its origin—Satan. He is a deceiver, a liar, a murderer, and accuser of the brethren. He loves to see human misery. He exults in distress, and as we view the cruel persecutions of those who would obey God according to the dictates of their own consciences, we may know that this is the mystery of iniquity.” (*Manuscript 62*, par. 64, 1886)

Christ, as the true representative of God, “never killed anyone.” The word “never” means *never*— even throughout the history of mankind as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures (commonly referred to as “the Old Testament”).

Who is the God that sits upon the throne of our hearts? Is the God you serve a person who is personally responsible for the death of millions of people? Has violence become a part of the God you worship? If death currently sits upon the throne, then death will be eternal for God is eternal. If God is love, mercy, and grace, and His justice is revealed in allowing His subjects to receive the fruits of their own hands then, indeed, the last enemy to be conquered is death (1 Cor. 15:26).

God did drown the whole world in a flood according to His principles of justice, not ours. God allowed the wages of sin to do its work, and when the Antediluvians told God to depart from them, He sadly had to step back to let them have their wish. Christ suffered with every soul that drowned. It was a terrible cross for Him to endure this terrible loss of life, but God’s justice provides that every person will be granted to choose their own path, either to follow God’s ways of life or in rebellion choose Satan’s ways of death. Which path with you choose? As for me and my house, we will serve the God whose justice is to show mercy and give everyone the freedom to choose what they want.



## **Historical Quotes From Past and Present Bible Teachers Concerning the Character of God**

*"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18)*

### **St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359)**



"God created neither death, nor illnesses, nor infirmities. This death of the body was not given by God; he neither made it nor did he ordain that it should be! Nor is God the author of bodily illnesses." (St. Gregory Palamas, *Homilies XXXI*, p. 151.388BC, as quoted by Larchet, Jean-Claude in *The Theology of Illness*, p. 27)

### **Oliver Prescott Hiller (1814-1870)**



"Is it any wonder, then, when the spirit is in such a state of moral disorder, that the body, which has its life from the spirit, should be filled with impurity and disease also? and that, when a whole people or all mankind is in such a state, pestilences should break out and ravage whole countries and go through the world? Let not men, then, (as they are too apt to do) ascribe these scourges of humanity to the Hand of their Heavenly Father above, who is Love and Goodness itself, -who is a Saviour, not a destroyer, -but to their own state of corruption and sin, which is the sole cause of their suffering." (Oliver Prescott Hiller, *God Manifest: A Treatise on the Goodness, Wisdom, and Power of God, as Manifested in His Works, Word, and Personal Appearing*, p. 280)

### **Charles Cutbert Hall (1852-1908)**



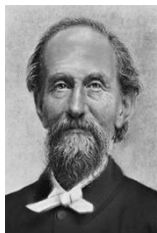
".... pain, calamity, sickness, and death are not to be attributed to God as causing them, and as sending them upon us, but that they and all other evils have entered into the world as the fruits and consequences of sin." (Charles Cutbert Hall, *Does God Send Trouble?* pp. 25, 80, 1894)

### **William Matson (1849-1917)**



"God, then, did not make this world a scene of sorrow. It was not His purpose that it should be such, but the contrary. It became what it is by the deed of Satan, in opposition to the will of God." (William Matson, *The Adversary: His Purpose, Power and Person*, p. 43, 1891)

### **Andrew Murray (1828-1917)**



"The Lord spoke to the disciples of divers sufferings which they should have to bear, but when He speaks of sickness, it is always as of an evil caused by sin and Satan, and from which we should be delivered. Very solemnly He declared that every disciple of His would have to bear his cross (Matt. 16:24), but He never taught one sick person to resign himself to be sick. Everywhere Jesus healed the sick, everywhere He dealt with healing as one of the graces belonging to the kingdom of heaven. Sin in the soul and sickness in the body both bear witness to the power of Satan, and 'the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8). Jesus came to deliver men from sin and sickness that He might make known the love of the Father." (Andrew Murray, *Divine Healing*, p. 9)

### **Henry B. Wilson (1870-1923)**



"The false theology that God is, in some mysterious way, connected with the sending of sickness and pain and death, blotted out His true character as a God of love many centuries ago, and this theology has become so imbedded in the system of the Church and her teachings that it requires a strongminded minister or priest to extricate himself from it and practice and teach the simple acts and words of Christ the great healer, who still heals." (Henry B. Wilson "Mr. Hickson's Healing Mission" in *The Nazarene: Presenting the Message of Healing in Christ*, Vol. 4-6, p. 10, 1919)

### **Joe Blair (Published 1986)**



"The context of Scripture will help us to understand how to put some Old Testament passages in perspective with God's love. The ultimate way, however, is to look to Christ. Christ is the ultimate revelation of God Himself. Christ is the Word of God (John 1:1-14). So everything said or thought about God must be examined in the light of Jesus Christ. If I have an interpretation which is contrary to the nature of God as revealed in Christ, then I must reinterpret, because God is faithful, and He does not contradict Himself." (Joe Blair, *When Bad things Happen, God Still Loves*, p. 96, 1986)

### **Fred T. Wright (1925-1997)**



"... it was never in God's purpose that Israel or anyone else should ever carry the sword. It has no place in His character and corresponding methods, and therefore is to find no acceptance in the character and behavior of His people ... The commands given by God were to a people who had already chosen the way they would go ... God's commands were designed to minimize the evil effects of what they had chosen to do. In this, He was acting out the role of a Saviour. The people insisted on taking up the sword. Now God would try to save them from its worst effects." (Fred Wright, *Behold Your God*, 510-512)

"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God  
that is enshrouding the world.

**Men are losing their knowledge of His character.  
IT HAS BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETED.**

**At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed,  
a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power.  
His character is to be made known.**

Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory,  
the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth ...

Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to  
say to the people, 'Behold your God.'

**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be  
given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.**

The children of God are to manifest His glory.  
In their own life and character they are to reveal  
what the grace of God has done for them."

*(Christ's Object Lessons, p. 415)*



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*"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it,  
it is folly and shame unto him."*

*(Prov. 18:13)*

## *Is the Character of God Movement a Lie?*

As the character of God Movement gains more traction, there have been a number of Seventh-day Adventist pastors and laymen pointing to certain Ellen G. White statements that seemingly disprove the Movement's teachings. One such statement was made in 1876, where she penned these words:

*"God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner ... Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world."  
(Manuscript 5, paras. 11&14)*

Within the context of this quote, she also mentions God's "strict justice" and then adds, "God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements."

Although there may be a few within the Movement who disregard the writings of Ellen G. White, the author and publisher of this study both agree with every word sister White has said above. The key, however, is to understand how the Bible and sister White define the manner in which God's "strict justice" and "punishments" are executed.

When we carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and Testimony with Testimony, allowing every word to have its proper influence without a contradiction, we then will have the truth and be able to harmonize other statements with the above, such as:

*"God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves."  
(Youth's Instructor, Nov. 30, 1893)*

*"I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but [rather] in this way: they place themselves beyond His protection ... if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them."  
(Letters and Manuscripts, Vol. 4, Letter 14, 1883)*