

Is The Hedge of Protection Being Lifted?

Sermon or Group discussion Format

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A lot Has Happened Since Then

Is Judgment Coming?

Many modern day preachers warn that God is about to "Judge America," they say that He is about to, or has already begun to lift His proverbial "Hedge of Protection" from America, and therefore we are soon going to experience "God's Wrath." At first glance, it seems that these statements are saying the same thing, but is that true, is "God's Judgment or Wrath" the same as God lifting His "Hedge of Protection?" The concept of God's "Hedge of Protection" comes primarily from the Book of Job, from the following verses in particular:

Job 1:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Without getting into all of the details of what ultimately transpired following the conversation between God and Satan, let us suffice to say that Satan challenged God as to the reasons for Job's faithfulness. Satan argued that the main reason Job was faithful was that God had continually blessed him, and protected him. After all, Satan reasoned, it is easy to proclaim "faith" when everything is going well, and Job was in fact, "A Blessed Man" according to any standard! Satan likened it to Job having a hedge of protection provided by God; therefore, it was easy for him to exhibit faith in God. A hedge was a common practice in "biblical times" to keep animals away from vineyards or crops, and to keep predators away from livestock. However, this protective hedge provided by God was not, and is not, unique to Job, as it is also common for people who seek after, and are faithful to the Lord to enjoy His protection and blessings as well. See the following passage:

Proverbs 2:1-8 (NIV)

¹ My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, ⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Knowing the purity and strength of Job's faith, God, "*in my opinion*," took Satan up on his arrogant challenge, perhaps to show all of us that Satan has no power over true faith, and that keeping faith in God always brings victory and increased blessings in the end.

For Thought or Discussion:

1. Do you feel that there is "something happening" in our country concerning our relationship with God?
2. Some of you may have heard the phrase, "If God doesn't Judge America, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology." How do you feel about that statement?
3. How do your circumstances in general affect your relationship or fellowship with God?
4. Do you feel there is a similarity between our society and what it was like in Sodom and Gomorrah?

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Who are the "Faithfull," and who are the "Faithless?"

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul tells us that **All People**, are endowed with an inherent knowledge of God; they also have an inherent knowledge of Right and Wrong, as stated in the following passage.

Romans 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ ***For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...***

What this passage tells us is that *it takes effort to deny the existence of God*; this evidenced by the complexity of the universe and life itself! It is obvious that such complexity simply could not happen by chance; nevertheless, evolutionists presume this to be the case, claiming the universe, and life itself came about by chance / random events! Their theory however is hindered by the fact that it cannot be scientifically proven, creating a huge problem for advocates of the theory! Additionally, there is no evidence of the evolutionary process continuing today. Creationists, on the other hand, say that the complexity of life and the complexity of the cosmos is *absolute proof of "Intelligent Design."* The fact that the universe and life *is* so complex and orderly, this has caused many "scientists," some of whom for years claiming to be Atheists, to find themselves up against a wall when honestly analyzing the scientific data comparing, the evolutionist **theory** with creationist's claims of intelligent design. For example, the renowned physicist Stephen Hawking, shortly before he passed away, made a statement that shocked many of his followers, read this excerpt from the article below:

"The well-known and award-winning English theoretical physicist and cosmologist, Stephen Hawking, considered by many to be the "Einstein" of his generation, surprised the scientific community during a lecture at the University of Cambridge on August 16, 2017, when he announced that he believed that "some form of intelligence" was actually behind the creation of the Universe."

Here is the Link: [Holy WOW!! Stephen Hawking Did A Complete 180 and SHOCKED Everyone! - Dagger \(daggernews.com\)](https://daggernews.com/holy-wow-Stephen-Hawking-Did-A-Complete-180-and-SHOCKED-Everyone-1-10-2017)

I encourage you to read this article for yourself. It is very interesting as to how he came to this new view of the cosmos and the origin of man. He still claimed he that he remained an Atheist, however, I think he was just trying to save face because admitting there is an "intelligent designer" pointing of course to God, went against his entire life's work trying to prove that God did not exist! There are other links included at the end of that article if you would like to explore it further.

For Thought or Discussion:

1. Were you aware of the statement made by Stephen Hawking before his death? If not – why not?
2. Did you know there are many other scientists that have changed their thinking about evolution vs. intelligent design? If not – why not?
3. What are your main sources of information and news? Are they trustworthy... if so – why?
4. Do you ever compare what you see and hear to what the Bible has to say?

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Why is all this Important?

So far, I have presented evidence through scripture that God does indeed exist. He also protects His “Children,” or those who seek after Him. I have also presented evidence that scientists and evolutionists have not and cannot disprove the validity of the story of creation in the Bible. However, the question remains... “Does God *punish or judge* His children when they revert to their sinful ways?” Some would ask, “Does God even have a right to!” Most Christians, in fact, most Pastors would answer “Yes” to these questions! Let us continue assuming there is in fact an intelligent creator of the universe... many call Him God. Let us also assume that God, as the creator of the universe, is thereby ultimately sovereign over the entire universe and everything in it! I remember as a child, my Grandmother, a devout Catholic, would always say to both me, and my cousins, “God is going to punish you,” every time we would misbehave or get overly rambunctious. I have to admit, that proclamation struck terror in my heart as a child! However, later in life, I heard a new proclamation; I was now hearing, “Jesus died for my sins and for the sin of the entire world!” For what did Jesus die? He died for the forgiveness of *my* sins and yours too! Not only are we forgiven for the sins of our past, but even sins we have not even committed yet! **All sin** was placed upon Jesus... He paid the penalty for all of it, even the most heinous criminal you can think of such as Hitler, or Stalin! This was hard for me to understand for a long time because of all those years living under the threat of punishment from God according to my Grandmother! I knew her to be a devout and godly woman, and she had me convinced the God was out to punish me every time I messed up! I know that she meant well, but I also know now that my Grand Mother was woefully misinformed. This is exactly what causes many people to think that God is out to ruin their day and maybe their life if they screw up in keeping His commandments. Many people have a mental image of God as an angry *ogre* with a handful of lightning bolts, just waiting for an excuse to get them while crossing the parking lot because they weren’t “good enough” on a particular day! *Is that what God is really like? Is that how you envision God?* If you look into the Old Testament, you *will* come across the word “punish,” however, you will also find that God’s punishment is most often, directed at those who mistreat His children, not those who have put their faith in Him.

Here is something to ponder:

Does God punish His children, or are we in fact simply reaping what we have sown?

Wrath vs. Judgment or Punishment

If we backtrack two verses from the previous one pointed out in Romans verse 20, we see something interesting. I purposely reversed the order in this study to illustrate the way the term “Wrath” is often misinterpreted, or taken out of context to make people believe that if they disobey God, He is going to make them suffer, or punish them even after they accept Jesus as their Savior. As you read verses 18 and 19, ask yourself, “Are they referring to God’s children, or people who those who are willfully ignoring Him or purposely going against His will?”

Romans 1:18-21 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

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Verse 21 is obviously addressing those who have not given themselves over to God. His wrath will be directed toward them, not those covered by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus!

God isn't Mad at His Children

The word "Wrath" has multiple meanings, but not all involve punishment. For example, "*Wrath*" can mean, *fierce anger, vehement indignation, rage* (According to the Century Dictionary) Therefore, the question is, "Can we incur the Wrath of God without being directly chastised by God?" In order to answer that question we have to explore the definition of the word "Chastise." One definition according to (*The American Heritage Dictionary*) is, "To Punish," but it can also mean, to criticize severely, to reprimand or rebuke! Criticism or rebuke is not the same as punishment. For example, in my younger days, I was a Professional Wedding Photographer. When I first started out in photography, I was given an opportunity to apprentice at one of the best and busiest wedding photography studios in Northern New Jersey. My boss took me under his wing and I went out with him on weddings every weekend for months. I was to take the backup shots as he set up the various poses. After I proved my technical ability, it was my turn to be the primary photographer. I set up the poses, took the initial photos, and my boss took the backups. This was long before digital photography so we had "Proofs" (sample photos) printed so that the couple could choose their album photos. Before the bride and groom saw the proofs, my boss would sit down with me and "critique" my work. Believe me... I learned what the words criticism, rebuke, and wrath meant during those sessions. The more experience I gained, the harsher those sessions were! In those days, we photographers were issued ten rolls of film to shoot a wedding with twelve shots per roll. Therefore, we were expected to be able to show 120 saleable proofs to the bride and groom. When I produced a less than professional photograph, believe me, I experienced wrath and reprimand, but never punishment. Instead, what I experienced was some of the other definitions of "Chastisement," which are, *to discipline, instruct, and the correct the errors or faults of...* (*The Century Dictionary*) Because I accepted and heeded this correction, within six more months, I was considered to be, the "Chief Wedding Photographer," second only to the owner, surpassing other photographers with years more experience than I had at that point. Through this training and discipline, it was hard to tell my photographs and poses from those of my boss.

How does this all fit in with God and the Bible in our times? The concept of God punishing us every time we mess up is completely contrary to the character of God, especially under "The New Covenant of Grace!" The truth is that God is the embodiment of patience and mercy... He always has been! Think of how long God has put up with our disobedience; soon after He created us, we messed up royally, and even then, He did not punish us! Some would argue, "Well he kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden, isn't that punishment?" Actually even that was an act of mercy, but that is another study for another time. See if you can figure that one out for yourself in the mean time. I will give you a hint... There were two trees in the Garden! For now, let us go back to the Book of Romans, picking up where we left off. Verse 20 established that God gave humankind all the evidence they could possibly need to prove His divine existence and handiwork, but man chose to reject the evidence in favor of submitting to Satan's cunning deception. The more man listened to Satan the more they fell into their futile thinking, turning their hearts and minds further, and further from God. This continues to this day, which explains in part the decay of morality we see in our world today. We choose – God honors our choice!

Romans 1:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools...

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The bottom line is that God does not force anyone to obey Him

God gave us, "Freedom of Choice," therefore; it is up to us to sort through the information and evidence when making our own decisions. As man's rebellion continued, rather than sending judgment on man, once again God let man have his way to do as they pleased. Man was on his own guided more often than not by their own lusts, thereby left to suffer the consequences of their own actions. They indeed made foolish choices, hence the latter part of the passage, (verse 20) *"Professing to be wise, they became fools..."* So let us again ask the question; this time concerning modern man, "Did God lift His hedge of protection from around His children as a result of anger or did we through constant disobedience tear it down opening up ourselves to the consequences of our own actions?" We have indeed once again drifted far from God as evidenced by what we see and hear daily from the news and social media. Man is condoning the very things that God abhors according to His Word! We think we are so smart, but many cannot even figure out what gender they are when all they have to do is look at the plumbing they were born with! We claim to "Follow the Science," and in the next breath deny science completely! We claim to be "tolerant" yet we silence anyone who disagrees with us, sometimes even attacking them physically! ***The "Wrath of God" in the form of punishment is in fact coming soon***, but at this point, we are still only experiencing the results and consequences of our own actions. So what will the wrath of God be like? These are the words of Jesus Himself when He spoke of the "End Times," to His disciples:

Matthew 24:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Those words sound pretty "Ominous" to say the least... The bottom line is that right now, ***"He (God) holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones..."*** unless of course you tear down the hedge as so many people have done, and are continuing to do. Do that and you are on your own... and you ***will*** indeed reap what you have sown! ***Eventually, judgment will come to all... some will reap eternal reward, others eternal punishment!*** It all comes down to a matter of choice; what will yours be... or, have you already made your choice? If you claim that you are a "Christian," is there evidence in your life of that claim? If not - beware, Jesus is returning soon. The choice between Eternal Reward and Eternal Punishment must be now, (while you still have breath.) Should you die, or should the Lord come to take His bride (The Church) up to be with Him and you have rejected God's provision for salvation, you have made your choice! Today is the day of Salvation! You have no idea what the true Wrath of God will be like, and Jesus made it clear that unless those days (of His Wrath) are shortened, no one will survive. God makes it so simple... He gives us the answer as to what is the best choice. See if you can figure it out. ***Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV)*** ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, ***that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live...***

For Thought or Discussion:

1. Is God more like a tyrannical ogre or a loving father... how so?
2. Are we experiencing God's wrath now or are we simply experiencing the consequences of our own actions?
3. Why is it important to choose to follow God now... today?
4. Why is it important to spread the message of salvation now more than ever?