

Pestilences, droughts, wars, disasters

A punishment from God or an attack of the enemy?

Introduction

There are at least 4000 prophetic Scriptures about the end times. It is plain that God wants us to have hope, because faith is built upon hope, and faith is vital for a victorious Christian life. The question of who is behind the pestilences, droughts, wars and disasters that we experience in the world is therefore very important.

If Satan is behind it, then we must surely resist him with all that we can. If God is behind it, then how dare we resist it? Can we resist God? If it is just some haphazard occurrence that no-one has any control over, then the question would be, "Where is God in all of this?" Can we pray for an end to the disasters?

If it is something prophesied that must happen, then must we run away? Is there opportunity for deliverance from the disaster? If we are to stand against it in faith, then on what do we base that faith? Faith must surely be based on promises from God's Word. However, if the disaster has been prophesied, on what promise do we stand?

Yes, these are important and somewhat complex questions.

Let us systematically work through the Scriptures and see if we can find some meaningful answers. We start with a passage which describes two random disasters, much discussed in Jesus' day. It is obvious from the passage that the Jews at the time had the same questions which we have today.

Pilate's cruelty and the tower of Siloam

Luke 13:1 "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

13:2 "And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?

13:3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

13:4 "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?

13:5 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

I note with interest that Jesus refers to their need of repentance *"lest they all likewise perish"*. That is therefore a direct reference to the general sinfulness of man being the cause of the disaster, and that the response to the disaster should therefore be national repentance – *"you ALL ..."*. However, before we draw too much conclusion from this, let us take this subject step by step.

We will do some research relating to each possible *culprit* behind these disasters – pure chance; the devil; the sinfulness of humankind; or God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Pure chance

Is the disaster (Corona virus, drought, war, tornados etc.) pure chance? I have been listening to various spiritual leaders trying to give their opinion on these questions, and for most, their answer to this was, "*Things happen.*" In other words, this is pure chance, and no one is to blame. We must just accept it and fight our way through it, taking whatever precaution we can to protect ourselves from it.

Do things really just happen *by chance*? The Scripture says,

*Amos 3:2 "You only (Israel) have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore **I will punish you** for all your iniquities.*

3:3 "Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?

3:4 "Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?

*3:5 "**Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?***

3:6 "If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people tremble? **If a calamity occurs in a city has not YHWH done it?**

3:7 "Surely the Lord YHWH does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.

3:8 "A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord YHWH has spoken! Who can but prophesy?"

Three game players

The above passage indicates that there is nothing that just happens by chance. A bird is not caught in a trap unless there is bait in the trap. In other words, everything has a reason. However, there are obviously three players in this passage.

1. There is the trapper who sets the bait. In Psalm 91:3 the passage speaks of the "*snare of the trapper*" and refers to the enemy, *the devil*. God delivers us from him when we look to Him and trust Him.
2. There is obviously *man* who falls for the bait through his own sin and disobedience.
3. And there is *God* who knows all things, informing His prophets beforehand what is going to happen. That knowledge is called God's "*secret counsel*". In other words, His plans. He has therefore full knowledge of the devil's subtle plans to destroy His people, and He is not caught off guard. In His providence, He uses the schemes of the devil, turning the situation around to His own purposes and to His own glory.

Rom 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

So, in one passage we have *all three game players*. The disaster certainly did not just happen by chance.

Job

There is a lovely passage in the book of Job which gives us an insight into a significant discussion happening in the spiritual realm which caused a disaster upon the earth:

Job 1:6 "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before YHWH, and Satan also came among them.

1:7 "YHWH said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' Then Satan answered YHWH and said, 'From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.'

1:8 "YHWH said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.'

1:9 "Then Satan answered YHWH, 'Does Job fear God for nothing?

*1:10 **"Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.***

1:11 *"But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."*

1:12 *"Then YHWH said to Satan, 'Behold, **all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.**' So Satan departed from the presence of YHWH."*

A hedge of protection

You notice here that Satan complained that YHWH had put a hedge of protection around Job, and therefore he, Satan, was not able to touch him (Job). YHWH then withdrew a portion of the hedge, allowing Satan to take all Job's possessions. However, Satan was not permitted to touch Job personally.

This is so very encouraging. This passage teaches us that Satan is not in charge. God is in charge. The hedge of protection is YHWH's grace and mercy, and Satan cannot get past that – not at all!!

The story continues with Satan destroying all of Job's possessions and his children – all in one day. What an awful tragedy. Yet Job refused to curse or blame God. He continued to trust Him and worship Him. What a beautiful testimony and example to us.

*Job 1:20 "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he **fell to the ground and worshiped.***

1:21 *"He said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. **YHWH gave***

and YHWH has taken away. Blessed be the name of YHWH.'

1:22 "Through all this Job did not sin *nor did he blame God.*"

We notice that Job said that YHWH had both given and taken away, in other words *YHWH was in charge*. Yet Job did *not blame God*. In other words, God was not the *author of death* and destruction. Satan is the author of that.

The story continues:

Job 2:1 "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before YHWH, and Satan also came among them to present himself before YHWH.

2:2 "YHWH said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Then Satan answered YHWH and said, 'From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.'

*2:3 "YHWH said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he **still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.**'*

2:4 "Satan answered YHWH and said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

2:5 "However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.'

2:6 "So YHWH said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.'

2:7 "Then Satan went out from the presence of YHWH and (Satan) **smote Job with sore boils** from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."

Again, we see how Satan is absolutely limited in his power. He smote Job with sore boils only when God allowed him to do so, but again, YHWH set the limit as to how far Satan could go: "*Only spare his life.*"

We also note that YHWH said that Job was allowed to be afflicted "*without cause*" (Job 2:3). That would seem to indicate that there could be times when there is a *reason for an affliction*. In Job's case there was no reason for that. YHWH allowed Job *to be tested* to the limit in order to show the depth of Job's faith. Job had not sinned, and so the affliction did not come because of sin.

Having concluded that disasters cannot just be chance happenings, let us now consider each of the other possible game players – the devil; the sinfulness of man; God.

Or could it possibly be a combination of all three?

The character of the devil

In several places, we find that Scripture gives us a description of the character of the devil. It does this so that we can have an understanding of his subtle plans, so as not to fall for his temptations. Paul writes:

2Cor 2:10 "But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

2:11 "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes."

We know what the devil's character is like, therefore there is no excuse for us to fall prey to the traps of the *fowler*.

Jesus describes the character of the devil as follows:

John 10:10a "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy ..."

The *"thief"* is the devil, and Jesus describes the devil's objective perfectly. It is to steal, kill and destroy. In addition, Jesus also describes him as a liar. Speaking to the Pharisees, He says:

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Furthermore, Paul makes the following statement regarding fear:

2Tim 1:7 "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power and love and discipline."

If fear does not come from God, then where does it come from? It must come from the devil.

We find another characteristic in the following Scriptures:

*Mat 4:3 "And **the tempter** came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"*

*1Thes 3:5 "For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that **the tempter** might have tempted you, and our labour would be in vain."*

So here the devil is called the "*tempter*".

Jas 1:13 "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

*1:14 "But each one is tempted when he is **carried away** and **enticed** by his own lust.*

*1:15 "Then when lust has **conceived**, it gives birth to sin; and **when sin is accomplished**, it **brings forth death**.*

*1:16 "**Do not be deceived**, my beloved brethren."*

God does not tempt anyone and cannot be tempted by evil. *It is the devil who tempts*, and he does that through *enticement and deception*. He has wicked schemes with which he endeavours to entice God's children away from their faith.

Mat 4:1 "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted by the devil.**"

Luke 8:12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the **devil comes and takes away the word from their heart**, so that they will not believe and be saved."

John 13:2 "During supper, the **devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot**, the son of Simon, to betray Him ..."

Eph 6:11 "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the **schemes of the devil.**"

1Tim 3:7 "And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the **snare of the devil.**"

Rev 12:9 "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called **the devil and Satan**, who **deceives the whole world**; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

Extra references: 2Timothy 2:26; 2John 1:7; Revelation 20:10.

The devil is an evil and cruel oppressor

Acts 10:38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were **oppressed by the devil**, for God was with Him."

Rev 2:10 "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the **devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested**, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

The devil is full of unrighteousness

1John 3:10 "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who **does not practice righteousness is not of God**, nor the one who does not love his brother."

The devil accuses and condemns us

1Tim 3:6 "... and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the **condemnation incurred by the devil.**"

Rev 12:10 "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the **accuser of our brethren** has been thrown down, he who **accuses them before our God day and night.**'"

The devil is a proud boaster

Isa 14:13 "But you (Lucifer) **said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God**, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.

14:14 "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will make myself like the Most High.**"

Resist the devil and do not give in to his evil schemes

The Bible clearly teaches that we have a responsibility to resist the devil, and not to give in to his temptations and cunning traps.

Eph 4:27 "and do not give the devil an opportunity."

1Pet 5:8 "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

*5:9 "But **resist him**, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."*

The devil's purpose

This then gives an accurate description of the character and actions of the devil. He lies and deceives and through any means possible sets a snare for us to fall into. He does this in order to tempt us to do wrong. Once we fall for his temptation, he turns around and condemns us, accusing us before God. The devil oppresses people cruelly and incites them to fear and hatred and bitterness. His purpose through all of this is to steal, kill and destroy. Any murder or war or act of violence or sickness or terrifying event is entirely in keeping with the devil's character.

The character of man

Man is made in the image of God and is therefore an object of His great love.

Gen 1:26 "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'

*Gen 1:27 "**God created man in His own image**, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

God has given man a free will. This is because He loves man whom He has made, and He wants man to freely chose to love Him too.

Deut 6:5 "You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Deut 10:12 "Now, Israel, what does YHWH your God require from you, but to fear YHWH your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Man is the target of the devil

Because man is the object of God's love, he is therefore the target of the devil. All the devil's energy is exerted in trying to destroy mankind, together with the beautiful world which God created for mankind to live in. The devil does this out of spite because he hates God, and as man is made in the image of God, he targets man in an effort to hurt and spite God.

As mentioned before, Jesus describes the character of the devil as follows:

John 10:10a "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy ..."

However, the devil does not have free access to do to man whatever he might like to do. All he is able to do, is to tempt man as he also tempted Jesus. While man resists temptation, and keeps himself pure, the devil is absolutely bound in his abilities to destroy – as we saw with the story of Job.

Consequences

God gave man a free will – to obey His commands or to disobey. Obedience would mean life and complete protection.

Gen 2:15 "Then YHWH God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

2:16 "YHWH God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

*2:17 ""but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.**"*

Disobedience to God's commands would give the devil free access to destroy and bring death. The choice (free will) was in the hands of man to obey or disobey.

Deut 30:15 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;

30:16 "in that I command you today to love YHWH your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His

*commandments and His statutes and His judgments, **that you may live** and multiply, and that YHWH your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.*

*30:17 "But **if your heart turns away** and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,*

*30:18 "I declare to you today that **you shall surely perish**. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.*

*30:19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that **I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse**. So **choose life in order that you may live**, you and your descendants,*

*30:20 "by loving YHWH your God, by **obeying His voice**, and by holding fast to Him; for **this is your life** and the length of your days, **that you may live** in the land which YHWH swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."*

The sum of what is spoken of here, is that our **choices have consequences**. Choosing to obey God's commands will result in life. Disobeying God's commands would result in death. As the devil is the author of death, this would mean that the devil tempts us to disobey God's commands, and in our disobedience would then place us in the hands of the devil to do with as he pleases – bringing about death and destruction for us.

The character of God

I look here at the Godhead as One. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, though described as three definitive Beings, are the same in character. Jesus said to Philip when he asked to see the Father, *"Have you not seen Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father."* Then again, the Holy Spirit's purpose is to reveal Jesus to the world. These three then, being three separate Beings, are exactly equal in character, and can therefore also be seen as One. What does the character of God look like then? We will look at the description of God's character both from the Old and the New Testaments. Amazingly we find that both Testaments describe God in exactly the same way. People often see God (especially the Father) as having changed in character from a harsh disciplinarian in the Old Testament, to a soft and gentle God of love, grace and mercy in the New. This is not true. God's character does not change. This is important to note.

The God of love

Old Testament - Love

We find that the Old Testament presents God as a God who loves and teaches His people to love one and other, and to love the stranger too. The following are just a small selection out of several hundred Old Testament verses which refer to the love, goodness, grace and lovingkindness of YHWH.

Deut 7:7 "YHWH did not **set His love on you** nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples ..."

Deut 10:15 "Yet on your fathers did **YHWH set His affection to love them**, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day."

Song 2:4 "He has brought me to his banquet hall, and **His banner over me is love.**"

Jer 31:3 "YHWH appeared to him from afar, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.'"

Hos 14:4 "I will heal their apostasy, **I will love them freely**, for My anger has turned away from them."

Mic 7:18 "Who is a God like You, who **pardons iniquity** and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because **He delights in unchanging love.**"

Zeph 3:17 "YHWH your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. **He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love**, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy."

Extra references: Deuteronomy 7:13, 10:18,19; Hosea 11:4; Micah 7:20

Old Testament – Compassion, goodness, grace and lovingkindness

*Exo 33:19 "And He said, 'I Myself will make all **My goodness** pass before you, and will proclaim the name of YHWH before you; and **I will be gracious** to whom I will be gracious, and will **show compassion** on whom I will show compassion.'"*

*Exo 34:6 "Then YHWH passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'YHWH, YHWH Elohim, **compassionate and gracious**, slow to anger, and **abounding in lovingkindness** and truth.'"*

*Psa 86:15 "But You, O Lord, are a God **merciful and gracious**, slow to anger and **abundant in lovingkindness** and truth."*

Psa 103:8 "YHWH is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness."

Extra references: Exodus 22:26,27; Numbers 14:19; Psalm 89:5; Psalm 86:14; Psalm 100:5.

New Testament - Love

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament also presents the Father as a God of love and compassion. Jesus was a living testimony to that as He went about doing good and showing compassion. Often God's character as a God of love is directly quoted from the Old Testament, indicating that who God was in the Old Testament, He still is in the New. He has not changed, and the New Testament is merely the completion of the

building for which the Old Testament laid the foundation. As in the Old Testament, He teaches us also to love.

Mark 10:21 "Looking at him, **Jesus felt a love for him ...**"

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as **I have loved you**, that you also love one another."

John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will **be loved by My Father**, and **I will love him** and will disclose Myself to him."

John 15:9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love."

Rom 5:5 "... and hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God has been poured out within our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Rom 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Rom 8:39 "... nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us **from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Rom 15:30 "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the **love of the Spirit**, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

2Cor 5:14 "For **the love of Christ controls us**, having concluded this, that one died for all ..."

2Cor 13:11 "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the **God of love** and peace will be with you."

Gal 5:22 "But the **fruit of the Spirit is love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness ..."

Eph 2:4 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us ..."

Eph 3:19 "... and to know the **love of Christ** which surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled up to all the fullness of God.**"

Eph 5:2 "... and **walk in love**, just as **Christ also loved you** and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

Tit 3:4 "But when the **kindness of God** our Saviour and **His love for mankind** appeared ..."

1John 3:1 "**See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us**, that we would be called children of God; and such we are ..."

1John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

4:8 "The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**

4:11 "Beloved, if **God so loved us**, we also ought to love one another.

1John 4:16 "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

Extra references: Matthew 5:44, Matthew 19:19, John 14:23, John 15:10, John 17:26, Romans 13:10, 2Corinthians 13:14, Galatians 5:14, Ephesians 3:17, 2Thessalonians 3:5, 1John 2:5, 1John 4:9,10,12; Jude 1:21.

The God of righteousness and judgement

Whilst God is a God of love, He is also a holy God of righteousness, who wants things to be done correctly – righteously. Therefore, He is a God of justice, ensuring that justice is done. The enforcing of justice is judgement. Vengeance is the punishment for wrong done – in other words, leaving us to reap what we have sowed. All these words are entwined into the character of God.

Old Testament – Righteousness (combined with kindness)

*Deut 32:4 "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of **faithfulness** and without injustice, **righteous** and upright is He."*

*Ezra 9:15 "O YHWH God of Israel, You are **righteous**, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this."*

Psa 9:8 "And He will **judge the world in righteousness**; He will **execute judgment** for the peoples with equity."

Psa 11:7 "For YHWH is **righteous**, He **loves righteousness**; the upright will behold His face."

Psa 28:4 "Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices; requite them according to the deeds of their hands; repay them their recompense."

Psa 33:5 "He **loves righteousness and justice**; the earth is full of the **lovingkindness** of YHWH."

Psa 62:12 "And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work."

Psa 89:14 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You."

Psa 91:8 "You will only look on with your eyes and see the **recompense of the wicked**."

Psa 116:5 "**Gracious** is YHWH, and **righteous**; yes, our God is **compassionate**."

Psa 119:137 "**Righteous** are You, O YHWH, and **upright** are Your **judgments**."

Psa 145:17 "YHWH is **righteous** in all His ways and **kind** in all His deeds."

Isa 35:4 "Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your **God will come with**

vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He will save you."

Isa 59:18 "According to their deeds, so He will repay, wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the coastlands He will make recompense."

Jer 51:6 "Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in **her punishment**, for **this is YHWH'S time of vengeance**; He is going to **render recompense** to her."

Jer 51:56 "For the destroyer is coming against her, against Babylon, and her mighty men will be captured, their bows are shattered; for **YHWH is a God of recompense, He will fully repay.**"

Lam 3:64 "You will recompense them, O YHWH, according to the work of their hands."

Hos 2:19 "I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in **righteousness** and in **justice**, in **lovingkindness** and in **compassion.**"

Extra references: Psalm 7:9,11; Psalm 19:9; Psalm 103:6,17; Psalm 129:4; Psalm 145:7; Proverbs 3:33; Isaiah 32:17; Daniel 9:14; Malachi 4:2.

New Testament – Righteousness

John 16:8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning **sin and righteousness and judgment.**"

Acts 17:31 "... because He has fixed a day in which He will **judge the world in righteousness** through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Rom 14:17 "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and **peace** and **joy** in the Holy Spirit."

2Cor 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that **we might become the righteousness of God** in Him."

Rev 19:11 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called **Faithful and True**, and **in righteousness He judges and wages war.**"

Extra references: Matthew 3:15.

Old Testament justice and vengeance

Lev 26:25 "I will also bring upon you a sword which will **execute vengeance** for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, **I will send pestilence among you**, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands."

Deut 32:35 "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them."

Deut 32:43 "Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for **He will avenge** the blood of His servants, and will

render vengeance on His adversaries, and will **atone for His land and His people.**"

Psa 94:1 "O YHWH, **God of vengeance, God of vengeance**, shine forth!"

Jer 11:20 "But, O YHWH of hosts, who **judges righteously**, Who **tries the feelings and the heart**, let me see **Your vengeance** on them, for to You have I committed my cause."

Jer 46:10 "For **that day** belongs to the Lord YHWH of hosts, a **day of vengeance**, so as to **avenge Himself on His foes**; and the sword will devour and be satiated and **drink its fill of their blood**; for there will be **a slaughter for the Lord YHWH** of hosts, in the land of the north by the river Euphrates."

Jer 50:15 "Raise your battle cry against her on every side! She has given herself up, her pillars have fallen, her walls have been torn down. For this is the **vengeance of YHWH: take vengeance on her; as she has done to others, so do to her.**"

Ezek 25:14 "I will lay **My vengeance on Edom** by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom **according to My anger and according to My wrath**; thus **they will know My vengeance**," declares the Lord YHWH."

Nah 1:2 "A jealous and avenging God is YHWH; YHWH is avenging and wrathful. YHWH takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies."

Extra references: Deuteronomy 32:41; 2Samuel 22:48; Psalm 18:47; Psalm 54:5; Psalm 58:10; Psalm 79:10; Psalm 94:2; Psalm 137:8; Psalm 149:7; Isaiah 34:8; Isaiah 40:10; Isaiah 61:8; Isaiah 62:11; Isaiah 66:6; Jeremiah 25:14; Jeremiah 51:11; Jeremiah 51:36.

The Messiah to come

The Prophetic words in the following five verses of Isaiah are all **about the Messiah** who was to come. It speaks prophetically about the ministry of Jesus. Note that a part of His ministry was to execute vengeance:

*Isa 59:17 "He put on **righteousness** like a breastplate, and a helmet of **salvation** on His head; and He put on **garments of vengeance** for clothing and wrapped Himself with **zeal** as a mantle."*

*Isa 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord YHWH is upon me, because YHWH has anointed me to bring **good news to the afflicted**; He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim **liberty to captives** and **freedom to prisoners**;*

*61:2 "To proclaim the favourable year of YHWH and **the day of vengeance of our God**; to **comfort all who mourn**,*

*61:3 "To grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a **garland instead of ashes**, the **oil of gladness** instead of mourning, the **mantle of praise** instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks*

of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, that He may be glorified."

Isa 63:4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come."

As we read through the above Old Testament Scriptures, it becomes clear that this speaks of judgement and vengeance, and God is the One who not only loves, but also judges in righteousness. However, does this only apply to the Old Testament as many seem to believe? Let us consider some New Testament Scriptures on judgement and vengeance.

The words of Jesus:

*Luke 18:7 "... now, will not God bring about **justice** for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?"*

*18:8 "I tell you that He will bring about **justice** for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"*

The word *justice* in the Greek is ἐκδίκησις (ekdikēsis), and means vindication, or retribution. It is the same word which, in all the following Scriptures I quote in the New Testament, is translated "vengeance".

If, as we have seen from the prophetic Scriptures about the Messiah, a major part of Jesus' ministry was to execute vengeance of the disobedient, how could that take place?

We must firstly understand a Scriptural principle as laid out from the first few chapters of Genesis:

Gen 2:17 "But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.**"

Disobedience would bring about death. Ezekiel states it plainly:

Ezek 18:20 "The person who sins will die."

Sin brings about death. All sin will be punished by death, including the process leading to death (i.e. sickness, etc.). There is no way around it. Sin can never just be excused. Vengeance is executed upon a sinner, and the punishment is always death.

So then how is it that Jesus would see to it that vengeance against the disobedient is executed? Does the Word not say that He would bring life?

John 1:4 "**In Him was life**, and the life was the Light of men."

John 10:10 "... **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**"

If He comes to execute vengeance upon unbelief and all that is evil, how can He possibly fulfil the above prophetic verses? The next verse explains:

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd **lays down His life for the sheep.**"

Jesus takes the full weight justice and vengeance by receiving God's wrath *upon Himself* on the cross of Calvary. He dies in our place. Sin is paid for. Vengeance is achieved. That is grace. We deserved to die, but He died in our place.

What amazing grace!

Paul describes this transaction as follows:

Phil 3:9 "and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

Rom 3:22 "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe ..."

*Rom 5:17 "For if by the transgression of the one, **death reigned** through the one, **much more those who receive** the abundance of **grace** and of **the gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."*

*Rom 5:21 "so that, as **sin reigned in death**, even so **grace would reign through righteousness** to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

*1Cor 1:30 "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who **became to us** wisdom from God, and **righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.**"*

What Paul is saying here is that a great transaction took place. He took our place upon the cross. We should have

died. God's wrath and vengeance should have fallen upon us because of our sin. But when Jesus executed that vengeance in an amazing act of grace and mercy, by taking the full weight of it upon Himself, an exchange took place. He took our sin and gave us His righteousness freely.

One condition

HOWEVER, there is just one condition. This grace must be *believed and received* for it to have an effect in saving us from the vengeance. We see this condition mentioned many times, even in the Scriptures which I have just quoted.

Phil 3:9 "... that which is through faith ... righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

*Rom 3:22 "... righteousness of God **through faith** in Jesus Christ **for all those who believe ...**"*

*Rom 5:17 "... much more **those who receive** the ... **grace** and of the gift of righteousness ..."*

Here are two awesome passages of Scripture which must be taken seriously:

Peter

*2Pet 2:20 "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, **the last state has become worse for them than the first.**"*

2:21 "For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

2:22 "It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'"

Hebrews

Heb 10:26 "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,**

10:27 "but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

10:28 "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

10:29 "**How much severer punishment** do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has **insulted the Spirit of grace?**

10:30 "For we know Him who said, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' And again, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.'

10:31 "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The words of Paul

What does Paul have to say about vengeance? Twice Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32:35, applying this Old Testament Law to the New Testament:

Rom 12:19 "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, '**Vengeance** is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

Heb 10:30 "For we know Him who said, '**Vengeance** is Mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will **judge** His people.'"

2Thes 1:6 "For after all it is **only just** for God to **repay with affliction** those who afflict you,

1:7 "and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

1:8 "dealing out **retribution** (Gr vengeance) to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

1:9 "These will **pay the penalty** of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"

Sowing and reaping

Paul teaches that there is a retribution, a time of reckoning which will come, and those who live by the flesh will certainly reap corruption and death. Again, this is a **New Testament concept**.

*Gal 6:7 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.***

*6:8 "For **the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption**, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."*

*Rom 6:23 "For the **wages of sin is death**, but the **free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Paul speaks of the suffering of the whole of creation as it is subjected to slavery because of the sin which weighs heavily upon it. Creation is awaiting the day in which it will be set free – that day when Jesus returns. Until that day, **creation is suffering the penalty of corruption**, due to the sin of man.

*Rom 8:19 "For the **anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.***

*8:20 "For the creation was **subjected to futility**, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope*

8:21 *"that the creation itself also will be **set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

8:22 *"For we know that the whole creation **groans and suffers** the pains of childbirth together until now."*

Old and New Testament judgement

We conclude then that according to both Old and New Testaments, God, as much as He loves us (as demonstrated when He gave His beloved Son to be crucified as a sacrifice for our sins), also does indeed judge the sinner. Judgement is not just an Old Testament matter. The final judgement, spoken of in both Old and New Testaments, will be an eternity in Hell.

Please also note particularly the use of the term "*vengeance*" in these end times Scriptures quoted by Jesus Himself, (**New Testament**) and the description of what "*vengeance*" looks like, and the fear it will evoke. We look particularly at what the **New Testament** has to say about plagues.

Plagues

End times Scriptures

In view of the Corona virus pandemic, note particularly the mention of "*plagues*" in the following two verses. The next ten verses (Luke 21:12-21) speak of persecution and the destruction of Jerusalem, and then the verse

immediately following (vs 22), collectively calls these the "*days of vengeance*", as prophesied. In other words, "*plagues*" fall into the collective category of "*days of vengeance*".

Luke 21:10 "Then He (*Jesus*) continued by saying to them, 'Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom,

21:11 "and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places **plagues** and famines; and **there will be terrors** and great signs from heaven.'"

21:22 "... because these are **days of vengeance**, so that **all things which are written will be fulfilled.**" (In other words, Old Testament prophecies concerning judgement will be fulfilled)

21:25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth **dismay among nations, in perplexity** at the roaring of the sea and the waves,

21:26 "men **fainting from fear** and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

21:27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

21:28 "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

The book of Revelation

The fulfilment of the prophecies of the book of Revelation span over a period of some 2000 years, from the writing of the book to the second coming of our Lord. However, I include them here to show that plagues and pestilences were a part of the judgement pronounced over unbelievers - disobedience. In other words, **judgement is a part of New Testament writings**, and **plagues** are a part of this judgement.

*Rev 2:23 "And I will kill her children with **pestilence**, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will **give to each one of you according to your deeds.**"*

*Rev 9:20 "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these **plagues**, **did not repent of the works of their hands**, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;"*

*Rev 11:6 "These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to **strike the earth with every plague**, as often as they desire."*

*Rev 15:1 "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had **seven plagues**, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished."*

Rev 16:9 "Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power

over these **plagues**, and they **did not repent** so as to give Him glory.”

Rev 16:21 “And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, *came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the **plague** of the hail, because its **plague** *was extremely **severe**.”

Rev 18:4 “I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ‘**Come out of her, my people**, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her **plagues**;’”

Rev 18:8 “For this reason in one day her **plagues** will come, **pestilence and mourning** and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for **the Lord God who judges her is strong**.”

Rev 21:9 “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the **seven last plagues** came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’”

Rev 22:18 “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, **God will add to him the plagues** which are written in this book.”

Extra references: Revelation 6:8; Revelation 9:18; Revelation 15:6-8.

The God of discipline

Considering all these factors – the devil’s hatred of us, man’s tendency towards disobedience, God’s love, as

well as His righteous judgment of wrong - how do we put all these things together in trying to understand the problem of plagues and disaster? Jesus describes Himself as a life-giver.

John 10:10b "... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Here we have an interesting Scripture in the Psalms which connects love to judgement.

Psa 119:75 "I know, O YHWH, that Your **judgments are righteous**, and that in **faithfulness** You have **afflicted me.**"

The Psalmist clearly refers to his **affliction** as coming from YHWH, as an act of His **faithful love**. People struggle to understand that affliction (discipline) can actually be an act of love.

Discipline is an act of love

Love is the essence of the abundant life which Jesus came to give. But love has a strange aspect to it. That is discipline. (The capital letters in the following verses are direct quotes from the Old Testament.)

Heb 12:5 "... and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

12:6 "FOR **THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES**, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.'

12:7 "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"

12:8 "But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

12:9 "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, **and live?**

12:10 "For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.**

12:11 "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to **those who have been trained by it**, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

12:12 "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

12:13 "and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed."

Discipline vs vengeance

There is a difference between discipline and vengeance. Discipline is an act of love. Vengeance is a meting out of justice for a wrong done. However, both comes from God. Note that **the purpose of discipline is to bring**

healing and restoration. Discipline is painful and certainly not pleasant. However, **the end result is designed for the child's good.**

Vengeance, on the other hand, is to ensure that justice is done. The end result is not good for the one being so judged, unless he turns back to God in repentance.

What about the mercy of God?

Does God make people sick? No, absolutely not. It is the devil who causes sickness leading to death. If the devil were able to have his free will, he would destroy all of mankind along with God's beautiful creation. His desires are absolutely cruel and evil.

Then what stops him from doing so? – God's mercy and compassion holds him back.

The Bible certainly speaks of God as a merciful God (Old and New Testaments). God's grace and mercy abounds. Quoting Scriptures of His grace and mercy will fill many pages. This is a truth which is already revealed in the Old Testament and makes its way through history to the New Testament.

But how do we reconcile the two – judgement / vengeance and mercy? Here are two interesting Old Testament passages of Scripture which combine both, explaining how it works. The first passage is at the giving of the ten commandments:

Exo 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

*20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, YHWH your God, am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,*

*20:6 "but **showing lovingkindness** to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."*

The second passage we find at the time where Moses said that he wanted to see the glory of YHWH, and YHWH hid Moses in the cleft of the rock (Jesus), and held His hand over him so that he was not able to see YHWH's face. When He had passed by, He removed His hand, and Moses only saw His back:

Exo 34:5 "YHWH descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of YHWH.

*34:6 "Then YHWH passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'YHWH, YHWH Elohim, **compassionate and gracious**, slow to anger, and **abounding in lovingkindness** and truth;*

*34:7 "who keeps **lovingkindness** for thousands, who **forgives** iniquity, transgression and sin; **yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished**, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.'*

34:8 "Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship."

In both these passages we see YHWH's lovingkindness as well as His justice.

*Eph 2:4 "But God, being **rich in mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us ..."*

*Rom 2:4 "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the **kindness of God leads you to repentance?**"*

This "*kindness*" of God, which "*leads us to repentance*" is His mercy. Just like the story of Job which we considered, God creates a hedge of protection around us. He sends His messengers to preach the truth of the wonderful good news of the gospel. Then, by His great mercy He grants time for people to repent.

He desires that we repent. His great love is continually extended toward us. His confident hope for us is that we will one day be with Him in the kingdom. Therefore, He extends His hand of mercy towards us, limiting the devil in his desires to destroy us.

*2Pet 3:9 "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is **patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**"*

What about the devil? Where does he fit in?

God will discipline us – allowing us to reap the fruit of our wrong-doing as a means of discipline so as to warn us. However, He holds the reins. He lets it go a little so that the devil is able to hurt us to an extent – like a plague or drought or some limited form of disaster. But He holds the reins, giving us a chance to repent. That is His love and mercy acting in a measured discipline to draw us back to a relationship with Him.

Sin (falling for the devil's temptations) is always the cause of an affliction. Sin gives the devil an opportunity for accusation and afflicting. Let us consider another heavenly scene, this time in the book of Revelation.

*Rev 12:10 "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the **accuser of our brethren** has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.'"*

Here we see Satan being cast out of heaven. We learn from this passage that Satan accuses the "*brethren*" day and night. There must be a *cause* for the accusations. Sin can be the only cause. One wonders why God does not respond to these accusations by immediately punishing us.

The reason is His awesome grace and mercy!

That is why Jesus encouraged the crowd to repent! When they were discussing the tower of Siloam which, when it fell, killed 18 people, Jesus specifically said that those particular people who had died, were not necessarily greater sinners than all the others. However, the message of the falling tower was – *REPENT!*

The people who are affected by the Corona virus, and die from it, are not necessarily greater sinners than those who have not died. However, the pandemic is here as a direct result of the general sinfulness of the people throughout the world, and Jesus' call to repentance applies to us all at this time.

Repent!

This word "*repent*" is a call which we read throughout Scripture.

Jonah warned the people of Nineveh to repent, warning of disaster to come. It was God's love and mercy which urged these wicked people to repent. But the warning was there that if they did not repent, that great city would be destroyed.

Jon 3:4 "Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.'

*3:5 "Then the people of Nineveh **believed in God**; and they **called a fast** and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them."*

The citizens of Nineveh, encouraged by the proclamation of their own king, **repented**; and that great city was spared from the disaster. The devil's desire to destroy that city was thwarted. Sin gave the devil a good reason for accusation and destruction, but **his evil plans were thwarted by an act of repentance.**

Jeremiah warned the people of Jerusalem to repent, warning that if they did not repent, Jerusalem would fall and the citizens would be taken captive into Babylon! They refused to repent, and consequently the city fell into the hands of the cruel Babylonians who completely destroyed the city, including the beautiful temple which Solomon had built. In the book of Lamentations, we read of how the prophet Jeremiah wept over the destruction of the beautiful city of Jerusalem. Five long chapters of weeping – just because the people did not heed the warning. That was God's tears weeping through the prophet.

Lam 2:1 "How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He has cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel, and has not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger.

2:2 "The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared all the habitations of Jacob. In His wrath He has thrown down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes.

*2:3 "In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel; He has **drawn back His right hand** from before the enemy. And He has burned in Jacob like a **flaming fire consuming** round about.*

2:4 "He has bent His bow like an enemy; He has set His right hand like an adversary and slain all that were pleasant to the eye; in the tent of the daughter of Zion He has **poured out His wrath** like fire."

Jesus warned the Jews most earnestly to repent. He tells them that if they do not repent, Jerusalem would be absolutely destroyed. He calls that destruction the "days of vengeance".

Luke 19:41 "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it,

19:42 "saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

19:43 "For the **days will come upon you** when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side,

19:44 "and **they will level you to the ground** and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you **did not recognize the time of your visitation.**"

Luke 21:5 "And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

21:6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will **not be left one stone upon another** which will not be torn down."

21:20 *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that **her desolation is near.***

21:21 *"Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;*

21:22 *"because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.*

21:23 *"Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and **wrath to this people;***

21:24 *"and they will **fall by the edge of the sword,** and will be **led captive** into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."*

As Jesus walks to Golgotha to be crucified, the women are weeping for Him. He turns around and says to them,

*Luke 23:28 "But Jesus turning to them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but **weep for yourselves and for your children.***

23:29 *"For behold, the **days are coming** when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed."*

23:30 *"Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, "FALL ON US," AND TO THE HILLS, "COVER US."*

23:31 "For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

The citizens, especially the leadership of the Jewish nation, did not repent. Thirty-five years later the city was besieged by the Roman Emperor Titus. He broke into the city and killed some three million Jews in the cruellest of ways. The Romans tore down the walls of the entire city, including the temple, to such an extent that not one stone remained upon another, exactly as Jesus had said. That was also called "**days of vengeance**". The Jews had to **reap the arrogance which they had sown**.

The Corona Virus

In a similar way the general message which this fear pandemic is sending out to the whole world is one word –*REPENT!!*

Let us not take the message lightly!!

Revival

While millions are praying and crying out to God for the ending of this pandemic, I believe that the prayers should rather be directed toward international revival as the prophet Malachi advises:

*Mal 4:5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet **before the coming of the great and terrible day of YHWH.***

*4:6 "He will **restore** the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their*

fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

You will remember that Elijah's ministry was initially directed towards a national revival of the nation Israel.

*1Kings 18:37 "Answer me, O YHWH, answer me, that this people may know that You, O YHWH, are God, and that **You have turned their heart back again.**'*

18:38 "Then the fire of YHWH fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

18:39 "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'YHWH, He is God; YHWH, He is God.'"

There are a multitude of prophetic utterances predicting an international revival **before** the second coming of Jesus, and **in preparation thereof**. I quote just two more passages:

*Isa 40:3 "A voice is calling, '**Clear the way for YHWH** in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.*

*40:4 "Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley;' (up to here, predicting John the Baptist's ministry bringing about a **great revival** among the Jews **in preparation** for the **first coming** of Jesus)*

*40:5 "Then the glory of YHWH will be revealed, and **all flesh will see it together** (International*

revival **in preparation** for the **second coming** of Jesus); For the mouth of YHWH has spoken.”

Rev 19:7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**"

This is the time for the Bride to prepare herself for the second coming of her great King.