

# God's Anger Shows His Love



## SABBATH—JANUARY 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Psalm 78; Jonah 4:1–4; Matthew 21:12, 13; Ezra 5:12; Deuteronomy 32:35.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But God was merciful [filled with mercy]. He forgave their sins and did not destroy them. Many times he held back his anger. He never let it get out of control” (Psalm 78:38, ERV).

**MANY PEOPLE** like the idea that God is a God of love. But they get upset at the idea that God can get angry. If God is love, they think God should not get angry at all. But that idea is false. God's anger comes from His love.

Some people believe that the Old Testament God is a God of anger and that the New Testament God is a God of love. But there is only one God. He is shown as the same God in both the Old and the New Testaments. Our loving God does get angry at evil. Evil makes God angry **because** God is love. Jesus showed His anger against evil. The New Testament teaches many times about God's holy anger.

God's anger is His loving answer to evil and to human actions and behavior that aren't fair. God's anger comes from His perfect love because He wants the best for all living things. Evil makes God angry and causes God to help the ones who suffer because of evil. That is why God's anger is really another way that He shows His love.



**Evil makes God angry and causes God to help the ones who suffer because of evil.**

## EVIL MAKES GOD SAD (Psalm 78)

The God of the Bible loves decisions that are fair. He hates evil. Sin and evil make God angry. God shows His anger against evil when evil people hurt innocent people. God also feels upset when someone does something evil to hurt himself. God hates evil because evil always hurts the living things that He made. In the Bible stories, God gets angry again and again because of the evil that His people do against Him. Below is an outline of what happens in those Bible stories:

1. First, the people stop obeying God and do evil. Sometimes the people do terrible things to make God angry. What was one of the terrible things that the people did? They killed their children and offered their children's blood and dead bodies as gifts to false gods.
2. God respects the people's decision to stop obeying Him. He leaves them alone.
3. Foreign countries attack God's people and hurt them.
4. The people cry to God to save them from their enemies.
5. God in His mercy saves His people.
6. After the people are no longer in danger, they stop obeying God and do worse sins than they did in the past. God continues to show His people His mercy and love when they fight against Him.

**Read Psalm 78. What does this psalm tell us about how God feels when His people fight against Him again and again? What does God do when they reject Him?**

The Bible tells us that being fair and showing love go together. God's anger is the answer of His love against evil because evil always hurts someone that God loves. Every example of God's anger in the Bible shows that God's anger is always fair.

Again and again, God's people rejected Him and turned against Him. But God was patient with His people, even when they made mistakes. God gave them His mercy when they did not expect Him to help them (Nehemiah 9:7–33). God showed them His wonderful love. As Psalm 78:38 says, "God was merciful [filled with mercy]. He forgave their sins and did not destroy them. Many times he held back his anger. He never let it get out of control" (ERV).



**God's anger is the answer of His love against evil because evil always hurts someone that God loves.**

## GOD GETS ANGRY SLOWLY (Jonah 4:1–4)

Evil makes God angry because God is love. God is so filled with mercy that one special messenger in the Bible scolded God for being filled with too much mercy!

**Let's think about the story of that special messenger, Jonah. How did Jonah feel, and what did he say, when God forgave the Ninevites? Read Jonah 4:1–4 for the answer. (Read also Matthew 10:8.)**

Jonah's words and feelings tell us a lot. First, we see that Jonah's heart is very hard and cold. Jonah hated the Assyrians so much. The Assyrians destroyed Israel. So, Jonah didn't want God to show them any mercy.

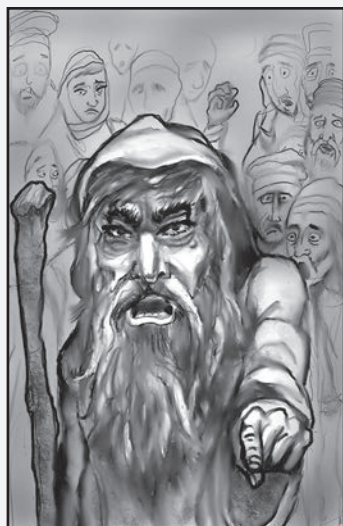
Jonah's story is a powerful lesson for us! We must be careful not to feel the same way about people who hurt us. Remember, God gave us His mercy when we weren't good enough. So, we must be willing to show mercy to the people who hurt us.

Also, Jonah's thoughts and feelings show us how important God's love, mercy, and forgiveness are to our understanding of who He is. Jonah knew very well that God was loving and filled with mercy. Jonah also knew that God didn't get angry fast (Jonah 4:2). Jonah knew that the Lord would not punish Nineveh if the people who lived there stopped doing evil. God is fair with all people everywhere.

Let's look in the book of Jonah at the Hebrew words written as "slow to get angry" (Jonah 4:2, NIV) or "don't become angry quickly" (Jonah 4:2, ICB). In the Hebrew language, these words really mean someone with a "long nose." In Bible times, a person who had a long nose was a word picture for someone who was very patient. A long nose was a sign that it took the person a long time to get angry.

The Bible says that God has a long nose because He doesn't get angry fast. Also, He is very patient. Humans get angry really fast, right? Not God. Because God is patient, He gives us His mercy before we know Him. But God's mercy doesn't excuse sin. God accepted the punishment for our sins on the cross so that He can be fair and save the ones who believe in Him (Romans 3:25, 26).

**How can remembering what God did for you help you to show mercy to other people? Is showing mercy to the ones who hurt you the same as excusing their sin? Explain.**



**Jonah knew that the Lord would not punish Nineveh if the people who lived there stopped doing evil.**

**GOD'S ANGER IS HOLY (Matthew 21:12, 13)**

Many angry feelings are evil and filled with sin. But the Bible also teaches us that there is holy anger.

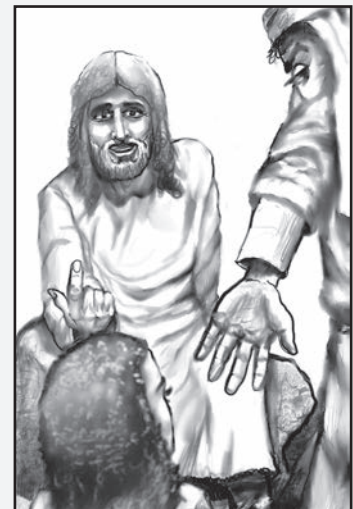
Imagine in your mind a mother watching her three-year-old daughter at the playground. All of a sudden, a man attacks her daughter. The mother should feel angry, right? When evil things happen, we get angry because of the love we feel for the people that get hurt. This example helps us understand God's holy anger.

**Read Matthew 21:12, 13 and John 2:14–16. What does Jesus say and do when He sees the evil things happening in God's temple? How does Jesus' anger in this story help us understand God's anger at evil?**

In these verses, we see that Jesus was upset with the people who did evil in God's temple. Jesus' feelings were holy. These people stole money that was meant to help widows, orphans, and the poor (Matthew 21:13; compare with John 2:16). The temple offerings showed God's forgiveness and how He made people clean from sin. But the Jewish leaders used the offerings to cheat and hurt the poor and the needy. No wonder Jesus was mad!

Mark 10:13, 14 and Mark 3:4, 5 give us more examples of Jesus' holy anger. When people brought little children to Jesus, His followers scolded the ones who brought them. That upset Jesus. Jesus said to His followers, "Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them" (Mark 10:14, ERV).

In another Bible story, the Jewish leaders waited to accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath because He healed someone on it. Jesus asked the leaders, "What does the Law say we should do on the Sabbath day? Should we do good? Or should we do evil? Should we save life? Or should we kill?" But no one answered (Mark 3:4, NIV). "Jesus looked at the people. He was angry, but he felt very sad because they were so stubborn. He said to the man, 'Hold out your hand.' The man held out his hand, and it was healed" (Mark 3:5, ERV). Do you see that Jesus is both angry and sad at the same time? Jesus is upset because the Jewish leaders had hard hearts. Jesus' anger is holy because it comes from His love. In the same way, the anger of God in the Old Testament is holy because it also came from His love. How can God not get upset with evil when evil hurts the ones whom God loves?



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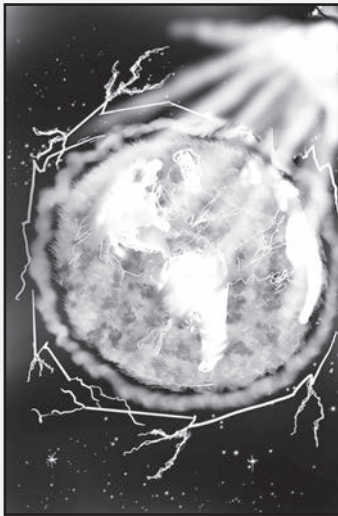
## GOD AND PUNISHMENT (Ezra 5:12)

The Bible shows us that God helps people who are hurt and suffering. God also shows His anger against evil people. Evil makes God angry. His anger is always against the things that hurt the living things that He made.

When we read Lamentations 3:32, 33, we see that God doesn't want to punish sinners. He doesn't want to judge evil people. But God is a God of love. Because God is a God of love, He must be fair and punish evil.

We see this Bible truth in the Bible stories about how long God continued to forgive His people. Again and again, God gave His people time to stop sinning and come back to Him. God sent His special messengers, the prophets, to His people. But His people refused to listen (read Jeremiah 35:14–17; Psalm 81:11–14).

**Read Ezra 5:12 and compare it with Jeremiah 51:24, 25, 44. What explanation do these verses give us about why God judged Jerusalem? (Also read 2 Chronicles 36:16.)**



**God's anger against evil will finally cause Him to destroy all sin and evil forever.**

Ezra 5 tells us that God's people continued to make Him angry. After a long while, God finally allowed Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, to remove His people from their land and take them away to Babylon (Ezra 5:12). God waited a long time before He let go of His people. He waited until there was no other way to save them (2 Chronicles 36:16). Later, God judged Babylon for the terrible things that it did to His people and their land (Jeremiah 51:24, 25, 44; compare with Zechariah 1:15).

When God judges His people, the Bible explains God's actions as **giving** the people to their enemies (Judges 2:13, 14, NLV; Psalm 106:41, 42, ERV, NKJV). That's because God is accepting their decision to serve other gods and not Him (Judges 10:6–16; Deuteronomy 29:24–26). As we saw already, God's anger against evil comes from His love and because He wants the best for everyone. God's anger against evil will finally cause Him to destroy all sin and evil forever.

**God doesn't want to punish anyone. How does this idea help you to understand God's anger? If God gets angry very slowly, we should be more patient with other people, right? At the same time, how can we protect and take care of the ones who suffer because of evil people?**

**SHOWING MERCY (Deuteronomy 32:35)**

For sure, God's anger is terrible. But His anger comes from His love. In the Old and New Testaments, God shows His anger against evil **because** of His love. God's anger needs to be terrible because evil is so terrible.

Love is important to God; anger isn't. God gets angry because sin and evil cause bad things to happen to the ones He loves. In the end, God's love will end His anger when He ends all evil. God will no longer be angry because there won't be any more evil. God's anger will stop because there won't be any need for it again. This thought is wonderful!

**Some people use God's anger as an excuse to be avengers and get back at other people for hurting them. Read Deuteronomy 32:35; Proverbs 20:22; Proverbs 24:29; Romans 12:17–21; and Hebrews 10:30. How do these verses help us to understand that we must not try to hurt the people who hurt us?**

The Bible tells us that God may punish us. When He does, He is always fair. Both the Old and New Testaments say that only God may judge and punish the people who hurt us. As Paul writes in Romans 12:19, "My dear friends, don't try to get even. Leave room for [allow] God to show [punish them with] his anger. It is written, 'I am the God who judges people. I will pay them back,' (Deuteronomy 32:35) says the Lord" (Romans 12:19, NIV).

While God judges people who are not fair and do evil, there is good news. Jesus made a way for everyone to be saved who believes in Him. Jesus "saves us from God's anger, and his anger is sure to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10, NIV). God's coming anger is part of His plan: "God planned to save us from the punishment of sin through [because of] our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not plan for us to suffer from His anger" (1 Thessalonians 5:9, NIV). The ones who believe in Jesus will be saved from God's anger.

**How does Jesus' death on the cross allow God to be both fair and filled with mercy when He does His work as Judge? What did God do to save us from His coming anger? Why should this Bible truth help you to be more patient with other people?**



**Both the Old and New Testaments say that only God may judge and punish the people who hurt us.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Idolatry at Sinai,” pages 315–330, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

When Ellen G. White wrote about the gold cow, she said: “The Israelites were guilty of turning against God. God was their King. As their King, God poured many blessings on them. The people promised to obey God. So, now God needed to punish the people who broke His law. At the same time, God showed the people mercy. God honored His law, but He gave people the freedom to choose to confess their sins and stop sinning. . . .

“God needed to punish this sin. Then the people from the countries around Israel would know that God hated when anyone worshiped the statues of gods. Moses wrote about Israel’s crime and left a record to show that God was not happy with His people for their sin. Later, the Israelites must teach people around them that worshiping statues was a sin. Their enemies would accuse Israel of worshiping the gold calf in Horeb after they promised to worship only God. God’s people would need to answer that, yes, they sinned. But then they must help other people remember that God punished the ones who sinned against Him. This punishment is proof that God didn’t excuse their sin.

“God’s love caused Him to judge His people for worshiping the gold cow. . . . Because of His mercy, God allowed many people to suffer when He judged them. God permitted them to suffer so that He didn’t need to judge millions of people and punish them. So, to save many people, God must punish the few guilty ones.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 324, 325, adapted.



**“To save many people,  
God must punish  
the few guilty ones.”**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why do you think people have a hard time accepting God’s anger? What helps you to understand it?
- ② What happens when people try to get back at those who hurt them? Why can God punish evil and judge people? Why can’t we judge them?
- ③ How did God’s punishment of Israel for worshiping the gold cow show His mercy? What other examples in the Bible show that God’s work as Judge is loving?
- ④ Why must we not judge other people?

## **“DO YOU WANT SATAN TO WIN?”**

American Bible worker Joanne Park Kim locked herself in her apartment after four drunk strangers attacked her in Mongolia. Joanne wanted to go home to the United States.

After two days, another Bible worker came to see her. She thought he came to give her pity. But instead of giving her pity, the Bible worker scolded her. He said, “Joanne, did you come all the way to Mongolia to share Jesus with your closet?! Do you want Satan to win?”

Joanne didn't expect the Bible worker to say these words to her. But Joanne needed to hear them. If the Bible worker had shown her pity, Joanne would feel sorry for herself. Then she would give up and go home. But now Joanne thought about why she came to Mongolia. At first, Joanne planned to go to Uzbekistan. So she started learning the Russian language. When the plan to go to Uzbekistan didn't work out, Joanne ended up in Mongolia. The Mongolians used the Russian alphabet, but Joanne couldn't understand a word of the Mongolian language. For the first two months, Joanne tried to learn Mongolian. She couldn't share Jesus without knowing the language. Joanne also had trouble asking for help when drunken strangers attacked her almost every week. Worse, people kept thinking that Joanne was Mongolian and spoke the Mongolian language because she was Korean.

Joanne wanted to share her love for Jesus with the Mongolian people. But she felt she didn't have much love for Mongolians left in her heart after all those drunk men attacked her.

Joanne decided to pray for help. She said, “Lord, if you want me to stay in Mongolia, please help me out of this mess. Please protect me, or show me how to take care of myself when I am in danger. Or please get rid of these drunken men.”

Joanne decided to stay in Mongolia and wait on God.

The drunken attacks didn't stop. But God gave Joanne a tool to help her protect herself: a perfect knowledge of the Mongolian language. In just three months, Joanne learned to speak Mongolian perfectly. This was a miracle! Joanne started to give Bible studies in Mongolian. She also could ask for help when she was attacked. But after the men hurt her, she had trouble loving the Mongolian people as Jesus loved them.

This mission story offers a look inside the life of American Bible worker Joanne Park Kim. Joanne helped start the Seventh-day Adventist work in modern Mongolia. Today, Joanne continues to serve as a missionary there. You can also help Bible work in Mongolia when you give your 13th Sabbath Offering. Part of this offering will help open a center for children in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Read more about Joanne next week.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**“Joanne, did you come all the way to Mongolia to share Jesus with your closet?!”**



**Joanne Park Kim**