

Saved from What?

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Matthew 3:7–12 (NKJV) “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, ⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

What are we saved from? By listening to some preachers today we might think that God sent Jesus to save men from troubles, heart ache, poverty, stress, unemployment, sickness, political suppression, social inequality, and family breakup. Although God cares about these things, they are not the primary things from which we are saved. God sent Jesus into this world so that we might be saved from *the wrath to come*: “Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’” (Luke 3:7 NKJV)

The "wrath to come" is the final day of God's fury known as "the day of wrath" (Romans 2:5) and the "great day of His wrath." (Revelation 6:16) That day will come like a perfect storm of a category five hurricane, an F-5 tornado, a volcanic explosion, a great tsunami, an atomic explosion, and a magnitude ten earthquake all rolled into one. No one will be able to stand on that day unless they are saved from this wrath.

What is the “wrath of God”? *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* says that the wrath of God is “A term for God’s displeasure with human beings and their sinful actions. The word ‘wrath’ is a concept represented by many different words and idioms in the original languages of the Bible, all of which express the notion of justifiable anger for unjust actions.” What is the *purpose* of God’s wrath? *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* says, “The purpose of God’s wrath is not to destroy humanity (Hos 11:9). His wrath is neither a vindictive, emotional overreaction, nor is it unpredictable. In his wrath he sovereignly imposes limits on nations (Babylon, Assyria) and disciplines his own people with the desired end that they return to him (Jl 2:13–14). The OT presentation of the Day of the Lord doesn’t end with God’s anger; it concludes with the restoration of the earth, when the whole earth will be filled with knowledge of God (Is 11:9; Hb 2:14) and wickedness will be no more (Is 65:25).”

The wrath of God is so dreadful that men are told to flee from it. They are to flee into the refuge of the Savior, Jesus Christ so that they might escape.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV): “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV): “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”

The wrath of God is reserved for God’s enemies: “God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies;” (Nahum 1:2 NKJV) In reality, all men are under the wrath of God because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Apart from Christ, all men are

awaiting the wrath to come. When we understand this, the reality of our peril looms over us. Consider the following passages:

Romans 1:18 (NKJV) *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*

Ephesians 5:6 (NKJV) *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”*

Colossians 3:5-6 (NKJV) *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,”*

John 3:18 (NKJV) *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*

John 3:36 (NKJV) *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

Ephesians 2:1–3 (NKJV) *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”*

God’s wrath is certain. So why does it seem that some receive more opportunities than others to be saved. One reason is God’s longsuffering, goodness, and mercy:

Lamentations 3:22 (NKJV) *“Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”*

Psalms 103:8–10 (NKJV) *“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.”*

Psalms 130:3–4 (NKJV) *“If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”*

Another reason that some receive more opportunity to repent is intercession. In the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree found in Luke 13:6-9 Jesus revealed that the reason some are given more time is because an intercessor is holding off the wrath of God through prayer.

No one gets away with sin. Some are judged now but all will be judged later: *“Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.”* (1 Timothy 5:24-25 NKJV) How foolish it is to presume upon tomorrow’s mercies. Every sinner is living on borrowed time. The wrath of God will befall them when they least expect. It is not a matter of “if” but of “when”. Those who presume on God’s longsuffering are storing up more wrath for the day of wrath. People interpret delayed wrath as wrath denied. People have become so used to *not* being judged *now* that they imagine that they are better than others. They fail to consider that those who receive more opportunity to repent and yet refuse will experience a far greater wrath:

Romans 2:4–11 (NKJV) *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to*

his deeds' eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."

The good news is that God has made a way for us to escape the wrath to come. It is through faith in Jesus Christ and His Gospel. What is the Gospel? The gospel is the message of good news that we have been rescued from peril. That peril is the wrath of God against sinners: *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."* (1 Timothy 1:15 NKJV) Paul described the Gospel as the message of the cross whereby Jesus absorbed the wrath of God so that those who believe might receive the love of God through Him. Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16 NKJV) John Piper said: "If God were not *just*, there would be no *demand* for his Son to suffer and die. And if God were not *loving*, there would be no *willingness* for his Son to suffer and die. But God is both just and loving. Therefore his love is willing to meet the demands of his justice."¹ Consider what the Scriptures have to say about Christ taking God's wrath for us:

Isaiah 53:3–6 (NKJV) *"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*

Romans 3:25–26 (NKJV) *"whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*

Romans 5:8–9 (NKJV) *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."*

Jesus Christ alone is the believer's only refuge in the day of wrath. He is God's Ark of salvation into which men might flee to escape. Those who run into Him will be saved.

Deuteronomy 33:20 (NKJV) *"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;"*

Isaiah 26:20–21 (NKJV) *"Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain."*

Hebrews 6:18 (NKJV) *"that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us."*

In conclusion, the question must be answered, "What are we saved from?" The answer is, "We are saved from the wrath to come." How are we saved? "Through faith in Jesus Christ" That begs a final question: "Are you saved from the wrath to come?"

¹ Piper, J. (2006). *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* (p. 20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

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