

The God Who Brings Wrath

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[0 : 00] Today, we're going to encounter two of the big questions of the Christian faith, and these are two questions that both believers and unbelievers have been wrestling with for a long time, two questions with life and death consequences for you and for me.

And these are coming in the context of a sermon that is quite difficult, as you can see from the title, The God Who Brings Wrath. We have hit some, as we've been preaching through Exodus, we've been continuing through Exodus.

There have been some heavy hitters, and I think this is one that has probably hit me the hardest this past week in preparing for this. The Old Testament book of Exodus, we've been continuing this year through it.

We've learned that God is great as he overpowers Pharaoh and the empire of Egypt in order to bring his people safely out of slavery. We've learned that God is great.

We've learned that God is good as he cares for the people of Israel in their desert travels, as he brings them to Mount Sinai where they can learn his wise, his right laws, beginning with laws that forbid the worship of other gods, laws that forbid the crafting of idols to represent him.

[1 : 14] So we've learned that God is good. And now we're learning that God is with us. As God begins a covenant relationship with his people there at Mount Sinai.

But it's this truth with God, that God is with us. It's this truth that raises two big questions, two tensions that are going to trouble us, that should bother us.

And we encounter them as the Lord's messenger, as the Lord's mediator, a man named Moses. He's receiving instructions from the Lord on Mount Sinai, instructions that some of which we read at the beginning of the service.

The Lord is giving Moses plans for the tabernacle, for this royal tent where the Lord will dwell among his people. But in Exodus chapter 32, this plan for a tabernacle, it's interrupted.

It's interrupted by a development in the Israelite camp at the base of the mountain, a development that almost brings a complete end to Israel as the people of God.

[2 : 22] And this development raises two big questions about who this God is, the God whom you and I say that we worship. Now, Exodus chapter 32 is on page 72, if you're using one of the blue Bibles that our ushers handed out.

Follow along with me as I read Exodus chapter 32 in its entirety. When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, up, make us gods who shall go before us.

As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. So Aaron said to them, take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons and your daughters and bring them to me.

So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf.

And they said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it.

[3 : 43] And Aaron made proclamation and said, tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings.

And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. And the Lord said to Moses, go down for your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it and said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiff necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them in order that I may make a great nation of you.

But Moses implored the Lord, his God, and said, O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

[4 : 51] Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and all this land that I have promised, I will give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever.

And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides, on the front and on the back they were written.

The tablets were the work of God. The tablets were the work of God and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, there is a noise of war in the camp.

But he said, it is not the sound of shouting for victory or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.

[6 : 05] And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot. And he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it. And Moses said to Aaron, what did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?

And Aaron said, let not the anger of my Lord burn hot. You know the people that they are set on evil. For they said to me, make us gods who shall go before us.

As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. So I said to them, let any who have gold take it off. So they gave it to me and I threw it into the fire and out came this calf.

And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose, for Aaron had let them break loose to the derision of their enemies. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, who is on the Lord's side?

[7 : 15] Come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, thus says the Lord God of Israel, put your sword on your side, each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.

And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about 3,000 men of the people fell. And Moses said, today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.

The next day Moses said to the people, you have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up to the Lord. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses returned to the Lord and said, alas, this people has sinned a great sin.

They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin, but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written. But the Lord said to Moses, Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

This is the word of the Lord. From beginning to end, Exodus chapter 32 is filled with the wrath of God. And it can't be minimized.

[9 : 00] It can't be avoided. And we're seeing here that if God is with us, that may not necessarily bring that, you know, that warm, positive, uplifting experience that his people are looking for.

And this is because the Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people. The Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people.

It requires his anger. And this raises the first of those two big questions that I mentioned at the beginning. If you hang around Christians for long enough, you'll hear them quote scripture that says things like, God is love.

You'll encounter statements that the Lord makes in Exodus chapter 34, only two chapters later, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Now, if we think of the Lord like this, like a single diamond with many facets, and as you turn the diamond, you see the different facets, this love, this is a facet of the Lord's nature that is very popular, that is very highly praised.

[10 : 21] People like looking at the Lord from this angle. And rightly so. This is precious. This is good. Someone with this loving character truly is a rare gem.

We want people like this to be with us. We want a God like this to be with us. We want a God of love. That's good.

But what about the God of Exodus chapter 32? What about the God who brings wrath? Do you and I want this God to be with us? The first big question.

Can the God of wrath truly be a good God? Can the God of wrath truly be a good God? How can God be both a loving God and a God of wrath? Well, there are two ways to think about this.

There are two ways to approach this question. The first way to approach this question, and the first way to approach Exodus chapter 32, is to look at the people of Israel and to think, you know, what they're doing, okay, all right, I'll admit, maybe it's wrong, but it's not so wrong that it deserves this response.

[11 : 29] The Lord is being reactionary. He's being petulant. He's being unjust in punishing the people of Israel. There's no way I can worship a God like that.

There's no way a God like that can be good. This first way of thinking, it has a starting place, and that starting place is the assumption that I am a morally enlightened thinker.

It is 2017, after all, and I am more morally enlightened than those who have come before me. I see this wrong behavior from the people and this wrong behavior, this sin, you know, honestly, it doesn't look like it's so bad.

It doesn't look like it deserves this response. There's a second way of thinking, and that is that instead of starting with my moral enlightenment, self-assessed, and the second way of thinking is to start with God and to think, the Lord is a God who is perfectly good.

He's the one who's morally enlightened. If he responds with this sort of fury toward the people of Israel, then what they've done must be incredibly evil.

[12 : 39] What they've done must be incredibly evil. And that second way of thinking starts from the assumption that it's God who is morally enlightened. It's God who is seeing things accurately, who is seeing sin for what it truly is.

He's seeing things right, and I'm not. And so if his response of wrath doesn't seem incredibly evil to me, the problem's with me, not him.

Now, it might not surprise you to know that the human authors of the Bible, they adopt that second approach. They struggle to understand it at times.

There are entire books written where people are struggling to understand what God is doing and how this can be just. The apostle Paul, for example, he argues that this wrath of God, he takes this tack, he begins with God affirming his goodness, and he says that this wrath of God is something that we all deserve for our sins, and we deserve it right now.

Paul argues that the fact that we are not suffering this wrath right now as we speak, that shows how kind, how loving, how patient God really is.

[13 : 55] Paul writes in Romans chapter two, Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you presume on that?

Not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

In other words, we have misinterpreted the kindness of God. We are aghast at the wrath of God because we assume that God is, you know, God is not responding to what I'm doing right now with wrath, so he must be okay with it.

He must be okay with me. He must be okay with my sin. When the fact is that he hates all evil doing, and he's waiting with patience.

We've assumed that God will allow us to continue disobeying his good laws indefinitely. When in fact there is a day coming, and it is coming soon, when you and I will be called into account by the God who brings wrath.

[15 : 12] The Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people. There's another factor that we have to remember when it comes to understanding the God who brings wrath, and it's this.

God's wrath not only reveals how unusually kind he has been to us. God's wrath is also the other side of the coin from his love.

And this is something that we touched on when we were learning about the sixth commandment, you shall not murder, when we were learning about anger. And we learned that anger is our response to whatever threatens or dishonors the people and things that we love.

Anger is our response to whatever threatens or dishonors the people and the things that we love. If you love, you will get angry.

You can't get angry. You can't get angry unless you love. The Lord is not a God of love unless he is also a God of wrath.

[16 : 19] He has to be both. He is not a God of love unless he responds in anger to whoever threatens his people or whoever dishonors his mediator, his dearly loved son, Jesus Christ.

All of this taken together, that's how we can begin to answer that first question. There's so much more to say, but that's how we can begin to answer that first question.

How can this God of wrath be a good God? That's the first question. We'll arrive at the second question later on in the sermon. So the Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people in Exodus chapter 32.

The people have built an idol. They've built a golden calf to serve as the focal point of their worship. Now what they're doing here is in violation of the second commandments that we looked at a few months ago.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

[17 : 27] You shall not bow down to them or serve them. Now it's easy to look back from our comfortable vantage point here in 2017 and to look back and to think, you know, well how could the people of Israel do this?

How could they be that dumb? Didn't they remember only a couple of months ago all that the Lord had done for them?

Well, yes and no. Yes, they did know that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt to this mountain. They're not dumb. Their memories are still working.

But the problem is this, that they still don't trust the Lord. And they still don't trust his chosen mediator, Moses.

So the people are, first of all, they are dissatisfied with the Lord's absence. They're dissatisfied with the Lord's absence. The Lord is up there on that mountain. He's present in a special, unique way up on the mountain.

[18 : 32] They want him there in the camp with them. Which ironically is exactly what the Lord is preparing to do. That's what the tabernacle is all about. But the people have their own way of making that happen.

They say to Aaron in verse 2, up, make us gods who shall go before us. So they want something, they want something tangible, something they can see and they can touch, something reassuring and familiar.

You know, maybe something like one of those calf idols that they may have seen when they were slaves in the land of Egypt. They're not only dissatisfied with the Lord's absence, but second, they are dissatisfied with the Lord's mediator.

Moses has disappeared on the mountain for an unusually long period of time to the point where they're thinking, so is he alive or not?

That's what they tell Aaron. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. Moses has failed them.

[19 : 41] He's disappeared for too long. And so the people, they are dissatisfied with the Lord's absence, they are dissatisfied with the Lord's mediator. And so out of that fear, out of that anxiety, out of that insecurity that they feel, uncertain, what's the future going to hold for us?

We're here in the desert. We've been sitting at the base of this mountain. Aren't we supposed to go into that promised land God gave us? What's going to happen next? The people default. They fall back to that old way of thinking, the way that they grew up with, the mindset of an Egyptian slave.

They fall back to the Egyptian worship of gods shaped like bulls. They request an idol made in the image of a calf. And Aaron, Moses' brother, who's basically been put in charge while Moses is gone, Aaron feels the pressure.

Aaron feels this threat from the people. And so Aaron gives in. Aaron accommodates their request. And you know, Aaron does his best to try to make it work. Aaron tries to make it work with the worship of the Lord.

In verse 4, Aaron tells them, the people say, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And then in verse 5, Aaron says, tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.

[21 : 03] A feast to the Lord. You know, we're still worshiping the Lord here. So Aaron is forming, he's coming up with this alternative way for the Lord to be with his people.

He's coming up with an alternative altar, an alternative festival, an alternative way to begin the Lord's covenant relationship with them. This reads like a parody of what we encountered two weeks ago in Exodus 24 when the Lord forms a covenant with his people.

Worship of the Lord is now, is not mediated through Moses, it's not mediated through a tabernacle, it's mediated through a golden calf. You know, and alongside any other gods the people of Israel wish to have, these are your gods, O Israel.

Led by the Lord, that golden calf there, that's him. The essence of this idolatry is that the people of Israel, they are reimagining the Lord, or even more accurately, re-imagining the Lord.

So what they do is they take this idol, they fashion this idol with their tools, literally, they refashion this idol to look exactly how they want the Lord to look. You know, strong, imposing, while at the same time, visible, tangible, manageable, reassuring, just like the gods of Egypt.

[22 : 28] It's perfect. And this is why the Lord forbids idolatry. God forbids us from trying to shave off the parts of him that we don't like, that don't fit neatly into our 21st century mindset about what God should be like.

God forbids us from trying to reshape him, you know, into exactly the kind of God who makes us feel good, but ultimately leaves us in charge and lets us go our own way.

It's just a figurehead for us, like that golden calf was that was going to lead the people into the promised land. The theologian John Calvin, he explains it this way, we are all alike in this, that we substitute monstrous fictions for the one living and true God.

Like water gushing forth from a large and copious spring, immense crowds of gods have issued from the human mind. Every man giving himself full license and devising some peculiar form of divinity to meet his own views.

In other words, we have all made our own gods. This is what human beings have been doing to the Lord God.

[23 : 58] What we try to do is we try to put a bridle on him, we tame him, we neuter him so that he behaves nicely indoors and doesn't pee on the carpet.

A nice domesticated God. God. We want a God of love without wrath. That's our idea of a God who is good. Our counterfeit God.

We want a God of power that we can manipulate. That's our idea of a God that is great. Our counterfeit God. We want a golden calf, God of God.

Not the God of Sinai. Not the God of the tabernacle. But God the Father, he knows what is best for you and for me.

And he knows that this is not the God that we need. we need the real God. You need the real God.

[24 : 58] You need him as he really is in all of his greatness, in all of his goodness. We were made for him. We are satisfied only by him.

Do not settle for anything less than who he really is. And God the Father, he knows not only what is good for us, but he knows what honors his dearly loved son.

God the Father loves his son and he is not going to stand idly by while we dishonor his son, by rejecting Jesus, by reshaping Jesus into our own image.

God the Father is not going to long allow us to portray Jesus like he's some sort of, you know, he's a sock puppet that you stick your hand into and now he says all the political and moral things that I've given him to say.

Jesus is not a tool to advance our own idea of what life should be like. We let him speak for himself. You and I, we say that we want God to be with us, but the Lord's presence requires wrath against a sinful people.

[26 : 17] And it's instructive how the Lord brings his wrath against the people of Israel. First, the Lord threatens to destroy them entirely until Moses intercedes for them as their mediator.

But what comes as a surprise is that Moses himself, it's Moses himself who becomes the agent of the Lord's wrath against his people.

Did you notice that as we are reading this text? Moses first, he shows them with physical action how they have broken the covenant with God in verses 19 and 20. As soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, now notice it was the Lord's anger who burned hot, now this time Moses' anger burned hot.

And he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. the covenant is broken. Verse 20, he took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

All right, what's the deal with that? Well, Moses takes that calf, melts it down, takes whatever gold is left, grinds it into powder and then he pours that gold powder into their water supply.

[27 : 36] So the reason he does that is when the people drink the gold, think about what's going to happen 24 hours later, it's going to come out the other end and they're never going to use that gold to make a golden calf again.

It's defiled. I mean, maybe it's a good day if you're a septic tank technician and get rich. For the rest of us, we're not going to use that gold again for anything.

This calf is done. It's over. Then in verse 26, Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on the Lord's side?

Come to me. And all the sons of Levi, that's Moses' fellow clan members, all the sons of Levi gathered around him and he said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put your sword on your side, each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.

Now, at first this sounds like this indiscriminate kill fest. That's not what's happening. Moses, the first thing he does in verse 26 is he calls the people to choose sides.

[28 : 48] Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me. Everyone who's on the Lord's side comes to Moses. Now, a similar event happens later on in the Exodus in the book of Numbers chapter 25, and the commentators I read, they connect these two, very similar to one another, and they explain what's happening here is that Moses is instructing them to target, not just indiscriminately, they're targeting those who are promoting worship of the golden calf.

They're targeting the ringleaders. They're targeting, Moses is acting to purge the people of Israel, those who are breaking, leading them in breaking the covenant, those who have a settled, firm conviction, and know we are sticking with this golden calf.

This is how we're going to worship God. Remember that this is a covenant with the Lord. We learned two weeks ago, this is a covenant sealed with blood. That means that this is a covenant in which if a member of the party breaks the covenant, they are saying, I am going to shed my blood for this.

And so it is. That's what Moses is doing here. This is a covenant that demanded undivided devotion to the Lord.

And so it is absolutely within the Lord's rights to send Moses on this mission. The Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people, so his mediator takes up his wrath.

[30 : 21] His mediator takes up his wrath, and that is something that surprised me when I was studying this passage. Because when I thought about the Lord's mediator, the thing that hasn't often come to my mind is this, that the Lord's mediator acts also as his judge and his executioner.

He acts as his agent on his behalf. That's exactly what Moses is doing here. And in fact, the same is true of our own mediator.

our mediator of a new covenant. That's true of Jesus Christ, too. We think of Jesus as a meek and a mild man who judges no one. That's actually not how Jesus thought of himself.

And we know that because this is what Jesus said in John chapter 5. For the Father judges no one. Interesting. He says, the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.

That's Jesus. He's given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

[31 : 32] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man.

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

One day when those who have died are raised to life to be judged, Jesus is standing up and he's saying, I will be the one who does the judging.

[32 : 36] Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will be the judge, the one who stands to condemn. Jesus, the mediator between God and man, will be taking up the wrath of God against sin, against all people in all nations who persist in idolatry, who persist in substituting false and counterfeit gods and counterfeit ideas of God in place of the one true God.

God. That's the real Jesus. If you don't like that Jesus, then you don't like Jesus.

The Apostle Paul warns the idol-worshipping men of Athens in Acts chapter 17. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness. How? By a man whom he has appointed. And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

That's Jesus. And again, Paul says in Romans chapter 2, on that day, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. So when Jesus Christ returns one day, he is going to return to judge the living and the dead.

- [33 : 59] Whoever has heard his word, whoever believes in God and his mediator, will have eternal life. That's what Jesus promised. But everyone who does not believe, everyone who persists in rejecting God and his mediator, Jesus, that person will be judged and condemned by Jesus Christ.

This is the consistent teaching of Jesus and of his apostles. And as we can see, it consistently follows the pattern that God began in his mediator, Moses. The Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people, so his mediator takes up his wrath.

Now, all of this is heavy, heavy news. I mean, this has been weighing, this has been weighing on me. And this is hard to hear.

It's hard to talk about. It is, if we let this sink into our very hearts, it is soul-shaking news. And if it leaves you anxious and nervous, if it leaves you trembling, that's not a bad thing.

That's a sign that you've understood. But in Exodus chapter 32, as we encounter this God who brings wrath, we also learn that, remember, this is just one facet of who he is.

- [35 : 17] There is more to him. There is so much more to God than wrath and judgment. This is a God who he allows Moses, invites Moses to speak to him in verses 11 through 13.

And Moses appeals to the Lord in those verses. Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent did he bring them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?

Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.

Moses appeals to the Lord's reputation as a God who keeps his promises. A God who keeps his promises, who keeps his side of the covenant, even when his people don't keep their side.

Even when his people don't keep their promises. So in verse 14, we read this. The Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

- [36 : 36] So in response to Moses, the Lord chooses not to destroy his people as he had intended to do. Now at the beginning of the sermon, I mentioned that we were going to encounter two big questions about who the Lord is.

And that first question was, how can the Lord be a God of wrath and be good? How can the Lord be a God of wrath and a God of love? And now we encounter the second big question. Does the Lord change his mind?

Does the Lord ever change his mind? Because there are scriptures that portray him consistently as a God who is utterly in control of all things, planning everything that occurs in history from the beginning.

A God who foresees, a God who ordains everything that happens. And then there are scriptures like verse 14, which portray the Lord as a God who changed what he intended to do.

How do you reconcile those two portraits of God? I'm a very mean person, so I'm going to leave you all in suspense for a week. I think this question can best be answered when we look at Exodus chapter 33.

- [37 : 44] So come back next week for more cliffhanger. For now, let's ask why this is here. Let's ask first of all why this is here, because I think this is important.

Why does the Lord want us to see him relenting? Why does he want us to see him relenting from that full measure of wrath that he had intended to bring on his people? I think the answer seems to be this.

The Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people, so his mediator takes up his wrath and also takes away his wrath. His mediator also takes away his wrath.

That's what the Lord wants us to see here. And this is amazing news. This is good news. This is news that can move you and me from trembling, from anxiety, to wild, exuberant joy.

The God who brings wrath is the God who loves us. And he loves us enough to appoint a mediator. A man who will intercede for us, who will plead our case before him, who will take away the wrath that he rightly feels against us.

[39 : 03] So the mediator of our new covenant relationship with God, he does so much more than Moses ever could.

I mean, we read in verse 32 where Moses says, if you will forgive their sin, but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.

Moses offers to die. He wants to die with his people. In John chapter 3, we read this. Yes, Jesus is going to come back to earth to judge the world.

That day is coming. Until that time, he stands as our savior, the savior of anyone and everyone, without exception, who believes in him.

Jesus has come as God's loving gift to the world. Jesus comes as one who brings eternal life, who brings the good life to people like you and me, people who deserved only his wrath.

[40 : 40] Jesus acted. He became the propitiation for our sins. That word propitiation, that means that Jesus was the sacrifice, the one who God directed his wrath against.

Jesus took all of that anger, all of that wrath, all of that punishment. He endured it on the cross, in my place, in your place.

You and I, we have violated, we have broken God's law, just like our spiritual ancestors, the Israelites, did. We've acted unrighteously, we've twisted and we've misrepresented and we've dishonored the God that we claim to worship.

But the Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter three, but now, but now, the righteousness of God has been manifested, has been revealed, apart from the law.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift.

[42 : 03] Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins.

So God has directed all of his wrath that was meant for me, that was meant for you who believe in him, it's all been directed against Jesus Christ already, 2,000 years ago.

There is none left, not a drop left, for those who believe in him. God has counted all of Jesus' righteousness to me and to you, so that everyone who believes in him is perfectly and fully justified, accepted, affirmed, welcomed into God's presence.

God has proven, the Lord has proven, that he is a God who is in the right. He never passes over sins. He never just ignores them and acts unjustly, as though they didn't happen.

He has fully and finally dealt with our sins when he gave his own son to be crucified on our behalf. There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[43 : 38] What good news. What good news. And that is the gospel. That is the good news of Jesus Christ.

Yes, the Lord's presence requires wrath against sinful people. Yes, his mediator takes up his wrath and he will someday.

But that same mediator also has taken away his wrath. So the God who brings wrath is also the God who loves us and has accepted us, welcomed us, and brings us new resurrection life.

forever and ever. The God who is great and the God who is with us is the God who is good to us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our Father, we thank you.