

Does God Destroy?

News Review – August 1974

by F.T. Wright

This article, from the News Review of August 1974, was an explanation by Fred of how the message on God's character was received when it was first presented, and how the difficult questions were resolved.

As our readers know, there recently ended a series of studies in the *Messenger* under this title. The series brought a very definite response from many of you around the world. In fact, I think that more people wrote on their reactions to this series than any other which has appeared in print in this way. Of the many letters received, the greater majority expressed deep thankfulness for a richer, deeper, higher and broader concept of the character of God.

One or two letters, however, expressed the existence of problems in reconciling the principles set forth in this series with certain statements to be found especially in the Old Testament and *Spirit of Prophecy* comments on these Old Testament statements. But I must say the attitude in these letters was very good. It was clear that much light had been seen but that the answer was not yet complete.

There have been several folk who have told me very directly, pointedly and flatly that the position taken in this series is quite wrong. Again, I would say that the spirit in which these thoughts were so openly expressed was frank but not hostile, and I can appreciate the attitude of a person who can tell me clearly how he or she feels without telling all the rest of the world first and without being hateful about it.

These few words, then, describe the reaction to this series, the existence of which varied reactions calls for further comment to up-date all on developments since this series was written.

The problem in the minds of some exists because there are

so many statements, especially in the Old Testament, which, taken exactly as they appear to read, would say that there comes a point of time when God does stretch forth His righteous hand and strikes the sinner down. These statements, it is argued, negate the arguments laid down in the series. This is the problem. We have what appears to be two different presentations of God's character in the Bible and *Spirit of Prophecy* which appear to contradict each other.

This problem is not new to us. We have rejoiced that the light of God in this message is ever shining with greater and still greater clarity. It never stands still. But there is a pattern to the coming of a new understanding of the light which is repeated every time that fresh light is given to us. We would do well to recognize this pattern and to act in reference to it.

Firstly, the Lord opens our minds to the great principles of the fresh light to be understood by us. He does not refer our minds to a long list of proof statements for this message is not built in this way. Instead, He opens to our minds the great principles involved, from which understanding we come to certain great conclusions in regard to the message.

The majority of the believers see the principles at once. Others have some problems, but bring their questions with an open, honest and enquiring mind. Then there are always the one or two who come up with a very long list of statements which, they claim, deny altogether the positions being developed. This has been the reaction in every single case with NO exceptions.

How do I respond to this situation? In the first case I frankly admit that, at this stage, I am not able to answer or explain how all these statements fit into the principles so far revealed. I also acknowledge that the statements cannot be ignored. They are God's Word to us and must be understood as they read.

To make sure we have not been mistaken, I then, in conjunction with others, very carefully restudy the whole position to see if we could have been misled. Always so far, in so doing, we have only been the more definitely confirmed. Then we have rested in faith while we waited for God, who gave us the light in the first case, to give us the answers to the statements in the second case. Without fail, He has always done this.

He has done it so clearly that the statements which appeared to deny the truth have come to confirm it still more strongly. Tragically, there have always been the one or two who, unwilling as were our forefathers at Minneapolis, to surrender preconceived ideas and opinions, have been unable to see the fullness of the truth. The result has been that they have gone out from us to walk no more with us forever.

We could give many examples of this had we time and space to retrace the history of this movement. But we will take one in some detail and will make reference to others.

Early in our history we came to understand the great principles surrounding the nature of Christ seeing quite clearly that those who deny that Christ came in the same flesh and blood as we, are Antichrist. We, likewise, saw that the S.D.A. church had come to the place where she denied this and therefore was Antichrist or Babylon.

We spoke forth these great principles and the majority of believers plainly saw, accepted and followed the light by stepping out separately from this great apostasy. Others had some problems which they brought to us in open-hearted honesty.

Then there were the two or three who emphatically declared I was wrong and brought a very long list of *Spirit of Prophecy* statements to prove it. With these statements we are quite familiar today. They are those which declare that anyone who calls the S.D.A. church Babylon and who call people out of her are not sent from God but from the devil.

These are strong statements indeed. We were calling, as we still do, the S.D.A. church Babylon, and we encourage people to leave her. Therefore the statement seemed to be written especially to condemn ourselves. We could not and did not ignore the statements, but carefully reviewed our position. It was clear enough that the S.D.A. church did deny Christ's full humanity and therefore was Antichrist.

We went to the Lord for further light, out of which came the great studies from *Romans* 9 and 11. The statements were now clearly understood and served to support rather than deny our position. Tragically, some of the folk who had been leaning so heavily on the statements could not understand and refused to take this next step, even though they had accepted all the light given so far.

So it was again on the question of the Revival and the Reformation. In fact, here we had to wait the longest for the answers, but they came. Once again the truths already revealed stood, and the movement took its greatest step forward. So it was on other points as well.

Now we come to this higher, grander, deeper and broader revelation of the character of God. Again the pattern is being repeated with exact precision.

In the depths of the Dark Ages, the mystery of iniquity gave to God the very character of Satan. From this erroneous concept the Lord has been delivering us through the light of the Reformation truths and then through the great advent message.

But only by the people who are to possess the fullness of righteousness will the character of God be fully revealed in these last days. Therefore, as we approach the last great conflict it is clear that more light must come on the nature of the character of God.

In these studies on *Does God Destroy*, the Lord has been opening to us those larger concepts. Most, with me, have thrilled to see things thus. Others have come with honest-hearted problems. There are the few who have rejected these concepts because of the many statements which they have assembled.

Again, I have admitted quite honestly and candidly that I did not have the answers to all those statements. Again, I have carefully reviewed the principles of this theme. Again, I have found the principles undeniable. Again, I have asked the Lord for clear answers on these statements and this time, far sooner than I expected, the answers have come with thrilling clarity. I pray most earnestly that the eyes of all will be opened to really see these wonderful things.

There is not space to give these answers in this tiny *News Review*. But they will be shared with you all as opportunity permits. In the meantime let living faith in God's leadership of this movement give us the patience of the saints to wait until we can see and understand God's light on this question.

However, I will take just a little space to indicate how the answers came. As I was searching, more or less at random, I read statements to the effect that the fullness of the wrath of God fell upon Christ on Calvary. Then I read that "The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries." *The Great Controversy*, p. 652.

Thus I can know, and each believer can know that at the cross we will find the answer to this problem. There we see exactly how God will deal with the hopelessly lost sinner, for this is the position in which Christ stood at that time. There we see how the justice of God is meted out. *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 3:1166; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 5:1103.

"The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same." *The Great Controversy*, p. 343. He declares "I am the Lord I change not." *Malachi* 3:6.

Therefore, God would not treat Christ on the cross, Who had there become sin for us and thus stood exactly in the position of the most sinful man, differently from any other sinful man. In other words, if we would understand the mystery of the outpouring of the wrath and the justice of God, we must understand this in the light of the cross of Calvary.

As I saw this, my understanding was wonderfully enlarged so that I saw the character of God with a beauty such as I had never seen it before. Then the problems of the Old Testament dealings of God began to disappear. Now I know we have not been misled, nor have we been misleading. God is guiding and will do so until the end. May the Lord fully open our minds to see all the truth as it is in Jesus.