



February 7, 2021

“Understanding God’s Anger”

Matthew 21:12–13

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Have you ever thought about what makes God angry? In Matthew 21 we read the account of a time when Jesus, not long before he went to the cross, was in the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus became so angry about all that was taking place in the Temple that he overthrew the money changers’ tables and drove out the people who were misusing the House of God. In John’s Gospel we read about the first time, at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, that he drove out the money changers with a whip! It’s important to understand this aspect of God’s nature – that he can get angry – because without that understanding, we are liable to treat God with disrespect and disobedience if we only see him as a lovable teddy bear. And that is partly true, but there is also a grizzly bear side of God that you don’t want to mess with. Yet, the Bible tells us some wonderful aspects about the anger of God that Pastor Gary will share at the end of his message today.

### Historical Background

1. The Gospel of Matthew
  - a. The first twenty chapters cover about three years.
  - b. Matthew 21 through Matthew 28 deal with the last week of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry.
2. The Temple
  - a. Pastor Gary said, “The chapter opens up with Jesus coming into Jerusalem on what we traditionally call Palm Sunday. He [was] riding on a donkey. He [was] being hailed as Messiah by a large crowd of people [who were] cheering [as they stood along the roadside], waving palm branches. The first thing that [we read about] in chapter twenty-one that Jesus [did was that he went] to the Temple, and there in the courtyard [he found what amounts to] a glorified flea market! Josephus, the first century Roman historian, called

it the Bazaar of Annas, [who was the High Priest of the Jews].”

- i. Annas used the marketplace in the Temple as a way to make exorbitant amounts of money.
  1. When worshipers came to the Temple, everyone age twenty and older was required by the Law to pay half a shekel as a Temple offering.
  2. In Jesus’ day the common currency was Roman coins, which weren’t acceptable at the Temple because the coins had the image of one of the Caesars.
  3. People were required to exchange their Roman coins for Jewish shekels, which is where Annas made his money by charging a ridiculous exchange fee, which some Bible scholars believe was as much as twenty-five percent!
  4. The other way Annas made money off worshipers who came to the Temple was to charge high prices for an acceptable animal sacrifice (no spot or defects of any kind).
    - a. Some Bible scholars think that the cost for an “acceptable” lamb was ten times the normal price!
    - b. In that day one lamb was acceptable for a household of up to ten people.
    - c. If you thought you were going to avoid the animal sacrifice racket by bringing your own lamb for the sacrifice, you were most likely going to be in for a big surprise because the lamb inspectors, who required an inspection fee, might reject your lamb as being defective in some way.
    - d. It wouldn’t be wise to take a lamb with you from some distant village or town because of the risk of having the lamb rejected by an inspector, so people would buy their animal for sacrifice in Jerusalem.
  5. It’s been said that Annas’ annual income, based on today’s money, was somewhere between three and five million dollars!
  6. Pastor Gary said, “Annas had not only turned the sacred into the secular for personal profit, [he] had ripped people off in the process.”

### 3. Jesus’ Anger

- a. **Isaiah 56:7b** – “... for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”
- b. **Jeremiah 7:11** – “ ‘Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I even I, have seen it,’ says the Lord.”
- c. Jesus was angry about the ways Annas was an obstacle to people coming closer to God and was instead a hindrance to people coming closer to God.

- d. Pastor Gary said, “[The] Temple had become a place of profit instead of a place of prayer. It had become a place of the secular instead of a place of the sacred. It was a place where people were being taken advantage of instead of being helped to find God.”
- e. Pastor Gary said, “We need to understand that not all anger is sin. It [wasn’t] here. ... This is righteous indignation that Jesus [had] about how they [had] profaned the House of God and how they [had] fleeced the people of God. ... I think it’s important for us to recognize that there are some things that make God angry. I don’t think we need to dwell on it because I don’t think the Bible emphasizes it more than it does his mercy, but I do think that we should understand this aspect of his nature because without that understanding, we are liable to treat God with disrespect and disobedience because we only see him as a lovable teddy bear, when, in fact, there is this other part of God that is like a grizzly bear that you don’t want to mess with.”

### What Makes God Angry?

#### 4. When People Refuse To Do What God Called Them To Do

- a. Pastor Gary said, “This is by no means an exhaustive list.”
- b. The first time we see God’s anger in the Bible wasn’t when Adam and Eve sinned; it wasn’t when Cain killed Abel; it’s not when people built the Tower of Babel; it wasn’t when people engaged in sexual sin in Sodom and Gomorrah. It was when he had a conversation with Moses at the burning bush.
  - i. Moses gave a number of excuses as to why he couldn’t do what God wanted him to do, which was to be the deliverer for the Hebrew people who were enslaved to the Egyptians.
    - 1. His excuses included not having the necessary authority to speak to Pharaoh, not being able to speak well, and finally, an unwillingness to go and suggesting that God should just find someone else.
    - 2. **Exodus 4:14** – *“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.”* (Emphasis added)
  - ii. Pastor Gary said, “The first time we see God angry in the Bible is when someone was reluctant to do what God called him to do. ... I ask you, is there anything that God is calling you to do that you are not doing? ... Sometimes we think that disobedience to God [is about] the things we do. Sometimes disobedience to God is about the things we refuse to do that God is telling us to do. ... [These are] sins of omission.”
    - 1. **James 4:17** – *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*

## 5. When People Complain

- a. When the people were traveling through the Sinai region on the way to the Promised Land, God provided for them and he cared deeply about them, but the people complained about the conditions they had to deal with, the food God provided, and the leadership God provided in the person of Moses.
  - i. **Numbers 11:1** – *“Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and **His anger was aroused**. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.”* (Emphasis added)
- b. Pastor Gary said, “Can I just suggest that we be thankful for all that we have and all that God has done for us. God hears our ungratefulness [and our complaining]. ... [Complaining] is what people naturally do. It should not be [one of the] things that characterize God’s people. We should not be known as complainers. We should be known as people who are grateful [and see] the wonderful hand of God and the many ways he has taken care of us and provided for us, watched out for us, [and] protected us. When people complain, God hears it and it makes him angry.”
  - i. **Philippians 2:14-15** – *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”*

## 6. When People Love And Serve Other Things More Than God

- a. The Jewish people made statues and idols out of wood, silver, or gold, and bowed down to them in worship.
- b. **Deuteronomy 32:21a** – *“They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.”*
- c. Pastor Gary said, “[This] just goes to show us that the innate need to worship something larger than ourselves was put in us from God for God, and yet, man has misdirected it toward other objects of affection instead of God. That’s what idolatry is. ... When we don’t worship God, we will worship something else. ... There’s a modern version of [idolatry today]. When we are more devoted to things, people, and possessions than we are to God, that’s idolatry.
- d. **1 John 5:21** – *“Little children keep yourselves from idols.”*

## 7. When People Disobey The Word Of God

- a. **Isaiah 5:20, 24-25** – *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ... Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,*

*and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore **the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people...***" (Emphasis added)

- b. Pastor Gary said, "[Our] society is totally upside down now in its morals and in its standards. ... The Church needs to be right-side up, and it is the voice of Believers that will continue to bring a clear call to what is right and what is wrong in our world today based on the way that God sees [things and] his objective truth. And therefore, there needs to be a reverence for and an obedience to the Word of God. And if we don't do it, who will? The rest of the world [won't do it], so Christians have to be particular about the reverence for and obedience to the Word of God. The Bible is not just a bunch of suggestions. It is the revelation of God to man that he came in flesh to redeem us from our sins by dying on a cross and that he invites us to have relationship with him through faith in his son, Jesus Christ. All relationships are based on two things: [love and loyalty]. If you don't have those, you don't have a relationship. God demonstrated his love and loyalty to us by dying on a cross and saving us from our sins. We demonstrate our love and loyalty to God by dying to ourselves and obeying his Word."

- i. **1 John 5:3** - *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."*

#### 8. When Pastors Fail To Lead

- a. **Zechariah 10:2-3** - *"The idols speak deceit, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd."* (1984 NIV)
- b. Pastor Gary said, "There was a time in Israel's history when the pastors were not telling the people what they needed to hear and instead were telling people what they wanted to hear. I suppose there have always been and always will be pastors like that, unfortunately, but I fear that we are repeating history these days. There are a number of pastors and spiritual leaders today who are not only reluctant to teach the Bible, but they are very open about their refusal to teach the Bible for fear that its message may offend. Can I just suggest to you that what is more offensive is to deny people the opportunity to hear and believe the truth that will set them free? [This] is even more offensive! ... Please, I invite you to pray for me, and pray for our church, and pray for pastors everywhere, that we would be bold in declaring the Word of God with grace and truth because anything less than that makes God angry."
- c. **2 Timothy 4:2-5** - *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the*

*work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”*

## The Good News About God’s Anger

### 9. God Is Slow To Anger

- a. **Psalm 103:8-12** – *“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. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* (Emphasis added)

### 10. God’s Anger Is For A Moment; His Favor For A Lifetime

- a. **Psalm 30:4-5** – *“Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life...”* (Emphasis added)

### 11. God’s Anger Toward Us Was Satisfied By Christ’s Death On The Cross

- a. **Romans 5:8-9** – *“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.”* (Emphasis added)

### 12. What This Means For Us!

- a. Pastor Gary said, “The Bible [tells us about] his mercy being greater than his anger, [his favor is for a lifetime, but his anger is just for a moment. The Bible tells us the anger of God, because of our sinful disobedience, has been appeased because of the sacrifice of Christ.] God’s mercy is great, and his favor is great. His forgiveness is great. His love for [us] is great. But we serve a holy God, and we need to also recognize that there are things that make God angry, but, thankfully, on an eternal scale, the wrath of God was satisfied by the cross of Jesus Christ. So, any time you realize that you have failed God, you’ve sinned against him, appeal to his mercy, ask for his forgiveness, and every time you will find his favor.”

## Discussion Questions

1. Read **Matthew 21:12-13** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide a brief overview of the historical background of the first eleven verses of Matthew 21. (See #1 and #2a above)

3. Provide an overview of the sordid story of Annas' money-making schemes. (See #2a-i and the related subpoints)
4. Allow the people in your group to share their feelings about seeing Jesus' anger the first time they read this account.
5. Read and discuss [Isaiah 56:7b](#) and [Jeremiah 7:11](#). (See #3a and #3b above)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the reasons Jesus demonstrated righteous indignation. (See #3c, #3d, and #3e above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the first time the Bible mentions God's anger. (See #4b above)
8. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about sins of disobedience and sins of omission. (See #4b-ii above)
9. Read and discuss the Scriptures and Pastor Gary's comments about the way complaining and ungrateful people stir God's anger. (See #5a and #5b above)
10. Allow the people in your group to share examples of things, relationships, and other "idols" that have been part of their life story. (See #6 above)
11. How has the Holy Spirit been working in your life to help you see what is and what isn't an idol?
12. Read and discuss [Isaiah 5:20, 24-25](#), and Pastor Gary's remarks about disobedience to God's Word being a major reason that God's anger is kindled. (See #7a above)
13. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments concerning the need for the Church to be diligent in speaking the truth. (See #7b above)
14. Discuss examples of churches and/or pastors who have failed to lead because they do not give the highest priority to teaching the Word of God.
15. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the great need for biblically minded pastors today. (See #8b above)
16. Read and discuss [2 Timothy 4:2-5](#) and focus on the ways this Scripture applies to Believers not just pastors. (See #8c above)

17. Spend time reading the Scriptures and discuss the good news about God's anger as mentioned in Pastor Gary's outline. (See #9 through #11 above)
18. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about what these things mean for Believers. (See #12 above)
19. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)