

heaven: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” *(Luke 13:28)*.

So the saints in glory will see the misery of the wicked under the wrath of God: “And they shall go forth and look on the caresses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched” *(Isaiah 66:24)*. The smoke of Babylon’s torment is represented as rising up for ever and ever, in the sight of the heavenly inhabitants *(Rev 14:9,10; 19:1-3)*.

At the day of judgment, the saints in glory at Christ’s right hand will see the wicked at the left hand in their amazement and horror, will hear the Judge pronounce sentence upon them, saying, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angles,” and will see them go away into everlasting punishment. But the Scripture seems to hold forth to us, that the saints will not only see the misery of the wicked at the day of judgment, but the fore-mentioned texts imply, that the state of the damned in hell will be in the view of the heavenly inhabitants; that the two worlds of happiness and misery will be in view of each other. Though we know not by what means, nor after what manner, it will be; yet the Scriptures certainly lead us to think, that they will some way or other have a direct and immediate apprehension of each other’s state. The saints in glory will see how the damned are tormented; they will see God’s threatenings fulfilled, and His wrath executed upon them.

**When the glorified saints shall see it, it will be no occasion of grief to them**

The miseries of the damned in hell will be inconceivably great. When they shall come to bear the wrath of the Almighty poured out upon them without mixture, and executed upon them without pity or restraint, or any mitigation, it will doubtless cause anguish, and horror, and amazement vastly beyond all the sufferings and torments that ever any man endured in this world; yea, beyond all extent of our words or thoughts. For God in executing wrath upon ungodly men will act like an Almighty God. The Scripture calls this wrath, God’s fury, and the fierceness of His wrath; and we are told that this is to show God’s wrath, and to make His power known; or to make known how dreadful His wrath is, and how great His power.

The saints in glory will see this, and be far more sensible of it than now we can possibly be. They will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them. They will not be sorry for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises. These two things are evidence of it:

**(1)** That the seeing of the wrath of God executed upon the damned should cause grief in the saints in glory is inconsistent with the state of perfect happiness in which they are. There can no such thing as grief enter, so as to diminish the happiness and joy of that world of blessedness. Grief is an utter stranger in that world. God hath promised that He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow *(Rev 7:17; 21:4)*.

**(2)** The saints in heaven possess all things as their own, and therefore all things contribute to their joy and happiness. The Scriptures teach that the saints in glory inherit all things. This God said in John’s hearing, when he had the vision of the New Jerusalem *(Rev 21:7)*. And the Scriptures teach us to understand this absolutely of all the works of creation and providence: “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” *(1 Cor 3:21,22)*. Here the apostle teaches, that all things in the world to come, or in the future and eternal world, are the saints’; not only life but death; men, and angels, and devils, heaven and hell, are theirs, to contribute to their joy and happiness. Therefore the damned and their misery, their sufferings and wrath of God poured out upon them, will be an occasion of joy to them. If there were any thing whatsoever that did not contribute to their joy, but caused grief, then there would be something which would not be theirs.

**Why the sufferings of the wicked will not be cause of grief to them, but the contrary**

**(1) Negatively** — It will not be because the saints in heaven are the subjects of any ill disposition; but on the contrary, this rejoicing of theirs will be the fruit of an amiable and excellent disposition. It will be the fruit of a perfect holiness and conformity to Christ, the holy Lamb of God. The devil delights in the

misery of men from cruelty, and from envy and revenge, and because he delights in misery, for its own sake, from a malicious disposition.

But it will be from exceedingly different principles, and for quite other reasons, that the just damnation of the wicked will be an occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory. It will not be because they delight in seeing the misery of others absolutely considered. The damned suffering divine vengeance will be no occasion of joy to the saints merely as it is the misery of others, or because it is pleasant to them to behold the misery of others merely for its own sake. The rejoicing of the saints on this occasion is no argument that they are not of a most amiable and excellent spirit, or that there is any defect on that account, that there is any thing wanting which would render them of a more amiable disposition. It is no argument that they have not a spirit of goodness and love reigning in them in absolute perfection, or that herein they do not excel the greatest instances of it on earth, as much as the stars are higher than the earth.

And whereas the heavenly inhabitants are in the text called upon to rejoice over Babylon, because God had avenged them on her, it is not to be understood that they are to rejoice in having their revenge glutted, but to rejoice in seeing the justice of God executed, and in seeing His love to them in executing it on His enemies.

**(2) Positively** — The sufferings of the damned will be no occasion of grief to the heavenly inhabitants, as they will have no love nor pity to the damned as such. It will be no argument of want of a spirit of love in them, that they do not love the damned; for the heavenly inhabitants will know that it is not fit that they should love them, because they will know then, that God has no love to them, nor pity for them; but that they are the objects of God’s eternal hatred. And they will then be perfectly conformed to God in their wills and affections. They will love what God loves, and that only. However the saints in heaven may have loved the damned while here, especially those of them who were near and dear to them in this world, they will have no love to them hereafter.

It will be an occasion of their rejoicing, as the glory of God will appear in it. The glory of God appears in all His works; and therefore there is no work of God which the saints in glory shall behold and contem-

plate, but what will be an occasion of rejoicing to them. God glorifies Himself in the damnation of ungodly men. God glorifies Himself in all that He doeth; but He glorifies Himself principally in His eternal disposal of His intelligent creatures: some appointed to everlasting life, and others left to everlasting death.

The saints in heaven will be perfect in their love to God; their hearts will be all a flame of love to God, and therefore they will greatly value the glory of God, and will exceedingly delight in seeing Him glorified. The saints highly value the glory of God here in this world, but how much more will they do so in the world to come. They will therefore greatly rejoice in all that contributes to that glory. The glory of God will in their esteem be of greater consequence than the welfare of thousands and millions of souls.

**They will rejoice in seeing the justice of God glorified in the sufferings of the damned**

The misery of the damned, dreadful as it is, is but what justice requires. They in heaven will see and know it much more clearly, than any of us do here. They will see how perfectly just and righteous their punishment is, and therefore how properly inflicted by the supreme Governor of the world. They will greatly rejoice to see justice take place, to see that all the sin and wickedness that has been committed in the world is remembered of God, and has its due punishment. The sight of this strict and immutable justice of God will render Him amiable and adorable in their eyes. They will rejoice when they see Him who is their Father and eternal portion so glorious in His justice.

Then there will be no remaining difficulties about the justice of God, about the absolute decrees of God, or any thing pertaining to the dispensations of God towards men. But divine justice in the destruction of the wicked will then appear as light without darkness, and will shine as the sun without clouds, and on this account will they sing joyful songs of praise to God, as we see the saints and angels do, when God pours the vials of His wrath upon antichrist *(Rev 16:5-7)*. They sing joyfully to God on this account, that true and righteous are His judgments *(Rev 19:1-6)*. Their seeing God so strictly just will make them value His love the more. Mercy and grace are more valuable on this account. The more they shall see of the justice of God, the more will they prize and rejoice in His love.



**They will rejoice, as it will be a glorious display of the power and majesty of God**

God will show His own greatness in executing vengeance on ungodly men. This is mentioned as one end of the destruction of the ungodly: “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” (*Rom 9:22*). God will hereby show how much He is above His enemies. There are many now in the world, who proudly lift up themselves against God. There are many open opposers of the cause and interest of Christ. “They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth” (*Psalms 73:9*). Then God will show His glorious power in destroying these enemies.

The power of God is sometimes spoken of as very glorious, as appearing in the temporal destruction of His enemies: “Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy” (*Exodus 15:6*). But how much more glorious will it appear in His triumphing over, and dashing in pieces at once, all His enemies, wicked men and devils together, all His haughty foes! The power of God will gloriously appear in dashing to pieces His enemies as a potter’s vessel. Moses rejoiced and sang when he saw God glorify His power in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea. But how much more will the saints in glory rejoice, when they shall see God gloriously triumphing over all His enemies in their eternal ruin!

Then it will appear how dreadful God is, and how dreadful a thing it is to disobey Him. It is often mentioned as a part of the glory of God, that He is a terrible God. To see the majesty, and greatness, and terribleness of God, appearing in the destruction of His enemies, will cause the saints to rejoice; and when they shall see how great and terrible a being God is, how will they prize His favor! How will they rejoice that they are the objects of His love! How will they praise Him the more joyfully, that He should choose them to be His children, and to live in the enjoyment of Him!

**They will rejoice with a greater sense of their own happiness, by seeing the contrary misery**

It is the nature of pleasure and pain, of happiness and misery, greatly to heighten the sense of each other. Thus the seeing of the happiness of others tends to make men more sensible of their own calamities; and

the seeing of the calamities of others tends to heighten the sense of our own enjoyments.

When the saints in glory, therefore, shall see the doleful state of the damned, how will this heighten their sense of the blessedness of their own state, so exceedingly different from it! When they shall see how miserable others of their fellow-creatures are, who were naturally in the same circumstances with themselves; when they shall see the smoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their horrible shrieks and cries, and consider that they in the mean time are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity, how will they rejoice!

This will give them a joyful sense of the grace and love of God to them, because hereby they will see how great a benefit they have by it. When they shall see the dreadful miseries of the damned, and consider that they deserved the same misery, and that it was sovereign grace, and nothing else, which made them so much to differ from the damned, that, if it had not been for that, they would have been in the same condition; but that God from all eternity was pleased to set His love upon them, that Christ hath laid down His life for them, and hath made them thus gloriously happy for ever, O how will they admire that dying love of Christ, which has redeemed them from so great a misery, and purchased for them so great happiness, and has so distinguished them from others of their fellow-creatures! How joyfully will they sing to God and the Lamb, when they behold this!

**The ungodly warned**

How destitute of any comforting consideration your condition will be, if you perish at last. You will have none to pity you. Look which way you will, before or behind, on the right hand or left, look up to heaven, or look about you in hell, and you will see none to condole your case, or to exercise any pity towards you in your dreadful condition. You must bear these flames, you must bear that torment and amazement, day and night, for ever, and never have the comfort of considering, that there is so much as one that pities your case; there never will one tear be dropped for you.

God will exercise no pity towards you. If you might have His pity in any degree, that would be of more worth to you than thousands of worlds. That would make your case to be not without comfort and

hope. But God will exercise no pity towards you. He hath often said concerning wicked men, that His eye shall not spare, neither will He have pity (*Ezekiel 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18*). He will cast fury upon you, and not spare; you will see nothing in God, and receive nothing from Him, but perfect hatred, and the fierceness of His wrath; nothing but the mighty outpourings of wrath upon you every moment; and no cries will avail to move God to any pity, or in the least to move Him to lighten His hand, or assuage the fierceness and abate the power of your torments.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, will have no pity upon you. Though He had so much love to sinners, as to be willing to lay down His life for them, and offers you the benefits of His blood, while you are in this world, and often calls upon you to accept them; yet then, He will have no pity upon you. On the contrary, He will be your judge, to pronounce sentence against you.

You will find none that will pity you in hell. The devils will not pity you, but will be your tormentors, as roaring lions or hell-hounds to tear you in pieces continually. And other wicked men who shall be there will be like devils; they will have no pity on you, but will hate, and curse, and torment you. And you yourselves will be like devils; you will be like devils to yourselves, and will be your own tormentors.

But if you repent and turn to Christ before it is too late, you shall be of that joyful company, who will have all tears wiped away from their eyes, to whom there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. You will be of those who will rejoice at the glorious display of God’s majesty and justice, in His wrath upon His enemies; and you will enter into the joy of your Lord, and there shall never be an end of your joy. □

—Adapted from the writings of  
Jonathan Edwards  
(1703–1758)

## THE REJOICING OF SAINTS AND THE WRATH OF GOD



*“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her...And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever” (Revelation 18:20; 19:1-3)*

When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.

It is not only the sight of God’s wrath executed on those wicked men who are of the antichristian church, which will be occasion of rejoicing to the saints in glory; but also the sight of the destruction of all of God’s enemies: whether they have been the followers of antichrist or not, that alters not the case, if they have been the enemies of God, and of Jesus Christ. All wicked men will at last be destroyed together, as being united in the same cause and interest, as being all of Satan’s army. They will all stand together at the day of judgment. They will all be of the same company.

And if we understand the text to have respect only to a temporal execution of God’s wrath on His enemies, that will not alter the case. The thing they are called upon to rejoice at, is the execution of God’s wrath upon His and their enemies. And if it be matter of rejoicing to them to see justice executed in part upon them, or to see the beginning of the execution of it in this world, for the same reason will they rejoice with greater joy, in beholding it fully executed. For the thing here mentioned as the foundation of their joy, is the execution of just vengeance: “Rejoice...for God hath avenged you on her.”

**The glorified saints will see the wrath of God executed upon ungodly men**

This the Scriptures plainly teach us, that the righteous and the wicked in the other world see each other’s state. Thus the rich man in hell, and Lazarus and Abraham in heaven, are represented as seeing each other’s opposite states (*Luke 16:19-31*). The wicked in their misery will see the saints in the kingdom of