

Is Ours a God of Love?

Most people in the religious world believe that the God of Heaven is a loving God. And we believe this too, don't we? We sing a song, "God is Love", and He is isn't He? And there are many in the world today who believe God would never let any "good" people end up in Hell. This idea is believed widely in the denominational world. All "good" people will go to Heaven and only the really bad ones, the worst of the worst will end up in Hell. And, if you are a good moral person, not even necessarily a Christian, our God of love and mercy will spare you from the fires of Hell.

Some Christians even believe that God will overlook minor sins. After all, we are basically good people, aren't we? Surely God will not hold every little sin against us, will He? If you don't believe that these things are believed and taught today, maybe you need to go to a few more funerals. Most denominational clergy preach the deceased right into Heaven. It makes little difference what kind of a life they lived while they were alive, but in death they have found peace and comfort in Abraham's bosom. And they tell the deceased's family that "they're in a better place now" or that they "won't be suffering anymore". And they say these things about some of the most un-Christian and sinful people out there. So is this true? Is everyone going to a better place when they die, where there is no pain and no suffering? I would like to believe this too, but I'm afraid I would only be kidding myself if I did.

We are lucky that God doesn't deal with people today as He did under the Old Law. The patriarchs and the Children of Israel had much more personal interaction with God than man does today. God often meted out punishment very swiftly, which made it necessary for people to be on guard at all times. And if they did mess up, they better be ready to accept their punishment. I fear many today have developed a false sense of security as under the New Testament punishment generally doesn't come until after you die. People today don't see God dealing directly with sin, which is why so many have lost their Godly fear. And with a prominent Social Gospel being taught about a God of love, kindness and peace, why wouldn't people buy into this idea that God is only a God of love, and not one who would kill and destroy.

The Old Testament is our tutor (Gal 3:24). This means it is something given to us so we can learn from it. So, let's look at a few

passages and see what God Himself wanted us to know. In Genesis chapters 6-8 we find the account of Noah's ark. Now, we all know the story of Noah's ark, right? But let's look at the part of this story that we don't hear much about. In chapter 7 there are 3 verses (21-23) that basically tell us that, "all flesh died that moved on the earth". Common sense would tell us that there had to be great suffering, death and destruction associated with the flood. All human life outside the Ark drowned.

Could you imagine the panic as people tried to climb to higher ground as the flood waters rose? Women, infants and children struggling to stay afloat on what ever they could grab on to, and finally drowning when they couldn't swim any longer. Think about all of that death and destruction. Many thousands, maybe even tens of thousands of lives were lost in the flood. And yes, this was our God of love and kindness that caused all of this tragedy and death. As we look further in Genesis (chapter 19) we find the story of Lot and his family in Sodom. We know this story too, right? The city was filled with sin and God destroyed it with fire and brimstone, and Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt when she looked back. And there is one verse (25) that simply says that, "God overthrew those cities... and all the inhabitants of the cities".

What we are not told about is the great suffering that took place as fire fell from heaven and people were burned by the falling brimstone. Here again, women, infants and children were all burned alive. Whether they were inside or outside they all eventually succumbed to the smoke and fire. Have you ever smelled burning hair and flesh? What a terrible way to die. Did our God of love cause this? The God of heaven who wouldn't have any "good" people to suffer a painful and agonizing death. How could God have been responsible for this, and yet He was. Did He not love these people?

And, there was probably no greater carnage recorded for us in the Old Testament than the accounts of the destruction of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (the Promised Land). Literally hundred of thousands of people were slaughtered by the armies of the Children of Israel. God through Moses and Joshua killed many thousands of people with swords and spears. Could you imagine the blood and gore involved in this process? Could you as a soldier imagine being ordered to kill babies and children with swords and spears? Yet this was often their

instruction from God. And God didn't just have other people slaughtered, He even had this done to some of his own chosen people (Num 25:1-9). There were 24,000 people of the Children of Israel who were killed (hung) at the direction of God. Can you imagine, God commanded 24,000 people be killed? Is this a God that loved His people?

So for you that might think that our loving and kind God of Heaven would never cause pain, death and destruction on purpose, I think that these accounts we've just pointed out prove that this is simply not true. But before you get a totally wrong impression of God we need to point out a few things. Yes God was responsible for the death of many people in the Old Testament, but does this mean he is not a fair and just God who loved man? Gen 6:5 says that before the flood, "man's wickedness was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually".

You see, mankind brought the calamity of the flood on themselves because of their wickedness. Noah tried to preach righteousness to the people, but they wouldn't listen, so they were destroyed. And Gen 18:32 tells us that 10 righteous souls couldn't be found in the city of Sodom. It was a place steeped in sexual immorality. Was this God's fault? Did he make the people this way? He simply punished them because of their immorality. And, what of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan? These were idolatrous people who had long ago forgotten the God of Heaven, their creator to whom they owed everything. This was also the problem in Numbers 25 when the 24,000 Children of Israel were killed. They started bowing down to the idols of some of the heathen people who lived around them. The very first of the 10 commandments states that people "shall have no other gods before Me." Wasn't God justified in what He did?

Heb 10: 30-31 says that, "the Lord will judge His people" and "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God". What we should learn from these verses and these events is that God will punish the disobedient. Maybe He won't do it right away, as He did under the Old Law, but sooner or later we will all receive our punishment if we are guilty. So are we lost and without hope? Absolutely not. Ours is a loving God, and He is kind and merciful. He is all of the things we would want our God to be. He even loved mankind so much that he asked His only son, Jesus Christ, to suffer the death of the cross so that man could have his sins forgiven. This act alone should prove the love of God. We

just need to make sure that we haven't grown complacent, getting the idea that God is somehow going to require less of us than He did people under the Old Law. We will all die some day and we will be judged according to our own labors (I Cor. 3:8). So, are you ready? If the Lord comes today, tomorrow, next week, if by whatever means your life ends, are you ready for judgment day? If not, and you are reading this, you may still have time.

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