

Why the blood and guts in the Old Testament?

In an interview, David Pawson (a famous Bible teacher) was asked:

"How can a God of love allow natural disasters and bad things to happen?"

He replied, 'What made you think God is a God of love?' before explaining God is a God of love, but also a God of holiness and justice, whose love for us is so pure that he cannot stand sin.

This is the context for this session - GOD IS HOLY. How would you answer someone who asks how a loving God can allow suffering and killing, in the Old Testament?

A few things to think about when answering people.

Firstly, people that don't know God personally won't understand him (just like someone who doesn't know you won't understand you!) Then we also say that in the Old Testament there was no way for God to change people's hearts. Only Jesus can do this. So where there was evil, it had to be cut off - just as a cancer is removed in a body. Finally the big mess in the world shows that God and the Bible is true. Bad things happen because the world is in a mess because man rejected God and the devil wants to kill and destroy. It shows we need God, the only one who turns bad to good. And it is people who cause problems, killings and suffering very often - it is not God! God is also right at the heart of suffering - he feels people's pain and he sends his people out to help those who are hurting. We don't know why God doesn't always step in but often people have told God to go away, so is it a surprise?! And God hasn't made us like robots or slaves. He gives us free choice. So he didn't create a world where he controls everything and everyone!

GOD IS HOLY

Read Isaiah 6.3 and Revelation 4.8. What are the angels saying about the Lord..?

But what does holiness mean, what is its relevance to us? Summarise 1 Peter 1.13-16

NEW AND OLD TESTAMENT HOLINESS IN CONTEXT

The law and 10 Commandments given to Moses in the Bible are a covenant - with 613 rules and regulations about the way to live right before God. God was holy and the only way to be made and stay right with him was by obeying these rules. There were consequences for obeying and disobeying God's rules (see Deuteronomy 28 for example).

The people of Israel were a chosen people. God covenanted to be their God and do many things for them. In return they had to be righteous (live right) before him. **Leviticus 11:45** says, "I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy." This still stands for us today. God is not looking for good people, but a holy people, purified by God, throwing off evil. Today, only through Jesus are we made right with God - 1 Peter 3.18

So, why do we need to be holy? Check out Mark 7.21-22 and 13 evils in the human heart

READ: Romans 6.23 - Romans 12.1-2 - Hebrews 12.1-2 - and 1 Peter 2.24

ISRAEL, EGYPT AND PHARAOH

QUESTION - There were 10 plagues that came over Egypt. Can you list them? Did you know that each plague was sent by God in order to attack a particular god of the Egyptians? For example, there were gods of the Nile, a frog-like god, a fertility god, a god of the crops etc. God was quite specific. **POINT** - **God does everything for a purpose.**

QUESTION - Did God harden Pharaoh's heart? **READ** - Flick through the plagues starting in Exodus 7. **QUESTION** - How many times does God harden Pharaoh's heart? **QUESTION** - How many times does Pharaoh harden his own heart?

POINT - God gives people free will, but there is a point at which people become so evil, they can step beyond the grace of God and they're given over to their evil desires and God will bring about justice one way or another. **SEE Romans 1.18-32.**

The Egyptians were destroyed in the Red Sea after Israel had crossed, demonstrating God's hand at work. Repeated, deliberate disobedience and rejection of God cost Pharaoh and Egypt dearly.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

A clear time when people rejected God on such a regular basis and way that God brought judgement on them. They had heard the message about God, and had rejected it over a long time. **READ - Isaiah 3.9 and Ezekiel 16.49** - showing they were proud of their sin. They were also sexually perverted (**Jude 7 and Gen 19.5**) They committed crimes against God (**Gen 13.13**) and people (**Gen 18.20**). God heard the cries (**Gen 18.21**). God would've spared them for a few righteous people - but only Lot and his family could be found (**Gen 18**). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed - **Gen 19.24** and on. Note that an innocent man was spared - Lot.

NOAH AND THE FLOOD

This was a one-off event (flooding). Some debate as to how many people were alive at the time - and also how wide an area was flooded, but no matter:

READ Genesis 6.5-8 and Genesis 6.5-8

Again we see a pattern where God spares Noah and his wife (innocent) and their household. We see that evil in the world was very great - filled with violence. We find sexual deviance (**Gen 6.1-2**). Noah apparently preached a message of right living for 100 years (**2 Pet 2.5**). Noah gave the people many warnings of a flood. This was ignored by people, who were destroyed.

JONAH AND NINEVEH

A clear time when people who turned back to God were saved when they were going to be destroyed by God - **READ Jonah 1.1-2, then Jonah 3.3-10. What did God say in verse 9?**

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMALEKITES - 1 Samuel 15

READ 1 Samuel 15.2-9

1. The Amalekites had attacked the helpless Israelite stragglers on their way from Egypt, when they were weary and worn out. **READ Deuteronomy 25.17-19.**

2. Before the attack, what does Saul go and say to the Kenites? (verse 6)

So, the Kenites are given a chance to get out - this would have served as notice to the Amalekites that something was about to happen!

3. Some of the Amalekites legged it, so not ALL were killed - see 1 Sam 27,30 and 1 Chr 4.43

4. We know that the Amalekites made God angry in 2 ways - they failed to recognise God and the destiny of his people told to them (repeatedly, over a period of at least 400 years) - and they attacked the weak of Israel, going against the law of war.

5. We know that the Amalekites continued to repeatedly oppress, terrorize, and vandalize Israel for 200-400 more years! Yet Amalekites were freely accepted as immigrants to Israel during this period.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THOSE IN THE LAND OF CANAAN -

QUESTION - What does Genesis 15.16 tell us about the destruction of the Amorites?

Truth is that God doesn't go on allowing the wicked to own the land. Archaeology has revealed how wicked and evil the Amorites were - sexually transmitted diseases were common.

READ Deuteronomy 9.4-6 and summarise what it says:

In Deuteronomy and Leviticus we find many of the 613 rules and regulations God gave Israel. Many of these rules may seem a little strange to us but they were there as the exact opposite of what the people in Canaan were doing - God was warning his people away from doing these evil things that God HATES...

1. Immorality (STI's, sexual deviance, perversions and widespread divorce and remarriage)
2. Injustice (the rich were getting richer, the poor getting poorer, the in rm were discarded)
3. Idolatry (Canaan full of astrology, occult, fertility cults, spiritism and pagan rituals)

CONCLUSION

We need to be holy, to be obedient to God and know that we can help change lives, cities, nations through our prayers and faithful witness. God is just and holy. When Jesus became sin on the Cross, God turned away. God's love is so holy and so great, that he cannot look on sin. That is why we can now only come to God through accepting Jesus, by his blood shed on the Cross.