

WHAT DOES

THE BIBLE

TEACH ABOUT

GOD?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16–18).

Every society that has ever existed has believed in some kind of god. That god might have been one made by the people’s own hands, but they still treated it as though it had powers beyond their control. In truth, most of the gods people have believed in showed more of the characteristics of men themselves than of a being to admire and follow. It is common to read of the anger and jealousy the gods of the world were believed to have toward each other and of the abuse of power they were said to demonstrate toward those who would not follow them.

What a difference we see between the gods we read and hear about elsewhere and the God who is revealed to us in the Bible! The fact that men tend to worship some kind of god illustrates that God has placed within us a desire for some power and being beyond ourselves. The gods men have created all have weaknesses, just as we do. They are said to struggle with human problems and failures.

In this lesson we will study the God revealed in the Bible. He is called Jehovah, a name which declares His power. He is referred to as the Creator because we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). He has been described as the One who is all-

knowing and all-powerful, who can be everywhere at the same time since He is a spirit being. I believe that all of those characteristics are true of Him and harmonize with what God says of Himself in the Bible. However, these characteristics are not what really sets Him apart from every other being described as a god.

GOD LOVES US

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). It would not matter how much power God has if He did not care about us. The God of the Bible is so much a Being of love that He is said to *be* love. We read in 1 John 4:8, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” Verse 7 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” This love from God is not limited in its scope to those who are lovable and are always doing what is right. God has told us through Paul,

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us. Much more than, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (Romans 5:6-9).

Think of a God who loves us even when we are unlovable. Think of His loving us enough to prove His love by offering His only Son to die the most cruel death known to man so that we can have the opportunity to obtain salvation.

God's love is unlimited; it is for the whole world. When God gave Christ to die so that we could be forgiven, He was showing His love and grace for all mankind. Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."

It breaks our hearts to see a child grow up in a family where there is no love. How sad it is to see a child trying to get a father to love him or at least to pretend that he does! We could search the universe over and never find one person God does not love.

God loves us so much that He offers to be our Father. He wants us to share family relations with Him and with His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He makes the offering based on our personal faith in Him: "Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16); "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). This faith is more than just some passive acknowledgment that God exists. It is a faith which leads us to put our trust in God to the degree that we are ready to submit to Him in obedience. In this way, we can share in the wonderful salvation He offers us.

GOD DOES NOT WANT TO CONDEMN ANYONE

"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:17). The gods created by the imagination of men are said to be looking for ways to catch us in our mistakes so that they can destroy us. That is not at all the God described in the Bible.

People may rebel against God and suffer eternal condemnation as a result, but it is never because God wants it to be so. The great heart of God breaks when a soul is lost. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

When God formed man in His own image, He set His heart upon us to bring us to be with Him forever. The problem is that sin entered the world; it is a part of every person's life: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We all violate things God has told us not to do and fail to carry out things He has told us to do. Sin by its very nature demands punishment: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). On our own we are unable to pull ourselves out of the despair of sin. It becomes a web which wraps us up to the degree that we cannot escape. God wants us to be saved. He has made the way for us to be delivered from the tangled web of sin so that we can be right with Him. The price He paid for us to have salvation was to give His Son to die on Calvary as the innocent One for the guilty. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When you imagine God, picture His loving and adoring face looking down on us in kindness and love, offering us a fresh start from our sins. Picture God as a Father whose heart breaks every time we sin and fail Him. Picture God as longing for us to grow and become more like Him. Picture Him wanting us to have life and have it abundantly. It is only when we have a picture like this of God that we will be able to see Him as He is portrayed in the Bible.

GOD NEVER FORCES US TO DO RIGHT

God wants us to be saved. He has all power. He could force us to do everything as He wants. He could remove all sin. He could take temptation away. He could destroy the devil so we would have no choice but to live for Him and would be assured of going to live with Him when this life is over. If He did so, however, we would lose our power of choice. We would only be

robots computerized to follow God's commands.

God wants us to choose to serve Him and have Him as our God and Father. Thus, He made the way for us to be forgiven in Christ for all of our sins. He calls upon us to choose to believe on Him and follow His teachings. Even though Christ made the way for our forgiveness, God pleads with us to believe and to follow Him willingly.

It is like trying to get our children to do right. While they are small enough, we can force them to do everything as we want it done. As they mature, they must choose for themselves how they will live. They can either make us proud of the wise choices they make, or they can break our hearts by rejecting everything we have tried to teach them.

CONCLUSION

God is a God who wants you to be saved, but He will not use His mighty hand to force you to serve Him. He wants you to make the decision to

believe in Him and submit to His will. In Acts 2, when Peter was preaching about Christ's death and resurrection, many came to believe what He was saying. Their hearts were broken because they had been involved in putting Christ to death. They cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter said, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself" (Acts 2:38, 39).

You must decide for yourself what you believe about God. We will try to help you learn more about Him as He is described in the Bible, but it is still your personal choice. You alone can decide if you will believe in Him and find the life He offers or turn Him away and suffer the horrible consequences.

There is a wonderful God in heaven. He can be your Father if you want Him to be.

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