

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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Is God Cruel or Unjust?

Introduction

Almost immediately after pictures were published of a Jordanian airman burned to death by ISIS (reported 3rd February 2015) various media had comments in abundance. National leaders of the world described the burning of the man as wickedness, cruelty, and a people we shudder being associated with. While most comments condemned what was done, arrogant people grasped it as an opportunity asking:

- a) How is what they did so different from God punishing man in Hell?
- b) If ISIS is cruel and immoral, who like dogs without feeling, had the man walk between them to a cage where he stood without hope of escaping his doomed situation, how can it not be cruel of God to send people to a burning Hell for all eternity, shut in that cage of eternal darkness without hope or escape? How can that be a God of love?
- c) If what these men did was immoral then is God immoral when He banishes people to Hell for all eternity?

It is easy to brush off such questions by saying, “Whatever God does it is right and should never be questioned”. While the first part of the statement is true, we oftentimes cannot see happenings as being right and just, yet when it comes to questioning the actions of God we can ask why. The Lord on the cross asked “why” (Mk. 15:34) and in the prophetic shadowing Psalms He asked “Why” (Psa. 22:1). It all depends on the attitude of the questioning one. If the question is being asked in an insolent manner then it is wrong, but if with a submissive attitude then it is right. As the ancient writer wrote: “Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?” (Job 9:12). God is God and does not have to answer for His actions to any puny man. The moment an individual questions the character of God they are setting themselves up as a judge with God in the dock as the accused. Job asked: “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?” (Job 4:17)

Despite the questions being asked in an insolent manner, we must be able to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15). Before doing so there are truths which sinful man, with limited knowledge and understanding, must ever observe:

- a) He must never accuse God of being cruel or immoral in His judgments.
 - i) The Spirit records: “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 15:3); “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (Rev. 16:7), and again: “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” (Rev. 19:2).
- b) God is the personification of love and justice. The scriptures teach:
 - i) “There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me” (Isa. 45:21)
 - ii) “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God; he is a jealous God” (Josh. 24:19)

- iii) “And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall he go up from us?” (1 Sam. 6:20)
- iv) “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4:8)

The Response To The Questions

- 1) The observation must be made, there is no comparison, but there are many contrasts between what ISIS did and the judgment of God on the unrepentant sinner. The following truths must be clarified:
 - a) Hell was never made for the punishment of man.
 - b) God does not condemn, the sinner condemns himself to judgment by his actions.
 - c) God has provided a way of escape.
 - d) This man was given no choice, for there are many who do know the way of escape and reject it
 - e) These people burned this man alive because they did not get what they wanted.

- 2) Hell and the everlasting fire of judgment was never made for the punishment of man.
 - a) When our Lord was here He said: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). It was never God’s intention for man to spend eternity in Hell and the Lake of fire, a fact shown by His providing a way for man to escape the consequences of rebellion against Him.

- 3) God does not have to condemn the sinner, the sinner condemns himself by his actions.
 - a) The Lord did not come to condemn the world. “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Jn. 3:17), but the reality is, individuals condemn themselves to God’s punishment for two reasons:
 - i) They will not accept the gift of salvation while there is opportunity
 - ii) They refuse to bow to the Lordship of Christ while alive in this world for there is no salvation after the individual dies. They will bow to His Lordship, when they stand before Him but there will be no mercy because they are being made to bow to Him: “God also hath highly exalted him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11)

 - b) In other words, unsaved man prefers to take hell when it comes than live in the presence of God where all is peace and joy and light for all eternity. That is their decision. It would be unrighteous for God to condemn a person to Hell for not accepting His son as Saviour if He did not offer it for the whosoever.

- 4) God provided a way of escape.
 - a) To assist us in our understanding of that which the Lord endured when He bore my sin’s penalty on the cross, God uses a number of words. For man to be taken out of the realm of condemnation Christ “was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5, 6); “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him (paraphrase, It was the will of the Lord to bruise Him); he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). Christ suffered for my sins, Christ endured the exacting of divine judgment. Putting it simply, Christ endured what I should have endured for all eternity in Hell.

- 5) This man was given no choice but there are many who do know the way of escape and reject it.
 - a) God gives man a free will. Man is not a robot and God, in His sovereignty, gives man the freedom to make his own choice. Lot and his family were told: “Escape for thy life” (Gen. 19:17). God’s judgment was imminent. Today the question comes: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation” (Heb. 2:3), and then to hammer the truth home the admonition is given: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12:25). God has in love provided a way of escape. The Jordanian soldier had no way of escape. Had such been offered to him, with all speed he would have taken it. Many of those who reject God’s salvation know there is no escape from the consequences of sin, yet they refuse to accept God’s offer of salvation. Because God has provided a way of escape, there is no necessity for any human to ever be in Hell. God did not choose people to go to Hell. He is: “longsuffering . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

- 6) These people burned this man alive because they did not get what they wanted.
- a) God is not a “listen and do as I say or else” God. God’s love is shown in that:
 - i) Surely it would be cruel if He did not warn of consequences for disobedience. Therefore, He warns, saying: “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 23:33)
 - ii) He invites saying: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).
 - iii) For the individual to be banished to Hell it is because they have chosen to ignore His warnings and invitations, and in most cases, knowing the consequences they deliberately reject the invitation.

The Other Question

This document has been dealing with those who have heard and understood the gospel, but what of those who have never heard of the Lord and His finished work? Is it fair of God to condemn them to hell? What about those who are incapable of understanding the gospel, or little children who die before the age of understanding?

The scriptures give us indications of how God will deal with such situations.

- a) The question is asked: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). In Romans Paul, by the Spirit, informs us that God will judge “according to truth” (Rom. 2:2). John, in Revelation, wrote: “True and righteous are Thy judgments” (Rev. 16:7). This makes it clear that whatever the outcome of any judgment by God, it will be just and righteous.
- b) Furthermore, God seeks to make all men aware of His being and power (Rom. 1:19-20). Abram was an idolator and no gospel preacher came to him. How did he learn about God? The same as any other individual who seeks to “find God”, God will reveal Himself to them and bring them into contact with others who will tell them the way of salvation. We read: “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia” (Acts 7:2). No matter where an individual is in this world, if there is the slightest movement toward God, swiftly He will come to their aid.
- c) The judgment of God is not the same for all unsaved. When informing man of the judgment of the Great White Throne when the unsaved will stand before the Lord, twice over we read: “Judged . . . according to their works” (Rev. 20:12, 13). Paul makes the same statement (2 Cor. 11:15). When the Lord was here His words were recorded: “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.” (Matt. 11:20-23). Again, the Lord spoke very plainly saying judgment will be according to knowledge: “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Lk. 12:47-48). It will also be according to understanding (Matt. 13:15). This is important for there are many who have heard the gospel, but for whatever reason did not understand the message or the solemnity of it.

Conclusion

God is always righteous in all His judgments. He manifests His love by warning of coming judgment and providing a way of escape open to the whosoever. Being Light (1 Jn. 1:5), there is no darkness in Him at all. Thus, we must never liken God to the savagery of men but accept the truth that God is perfect in all His judgments.

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