

# The Lord Sent a Pestilence

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## Blindness Leads to Misinterpretation

**W**E LIVE in such a time when the Bible is being attacked by Atheists, and even by some Christians. But we must not allow these challenges to make us lose faith in the Bible. All of the false charges being levelled against the Holy Book are just based on misconceptions and misinterpretations.

The Bible is the main revelation of the goodness of God. The mind of God is revealed in its pages. But it also contains the history of men, and often deals with those men who have the “carnal mind,” a mind that...

### **Romans 8**

<sup>7</sup> ...is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

This is the same mind that led Adam and Eve to justify themselves before God, when faced with their own sins. We should not be surprised then, when carnally-minded men look into the Bible, and only find reasons to justify themselves, and condemn God. It's been like that from the very fall of man. Their behaviour just proves the truthfulness of the Word of God, when it states that such a mind cannot understand the law of God (which is His character).

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see [i.e. “understand”] God.

## **A Nonviolent God**

The character of God is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who came to...

### **Psalm 40**

<sup>8</sup> ...magnify the Law and make it honorable,

–and to...

### **John 17**

<sup>6</sup> ...manifest [the Father’s] name [or, character].

The Law, or ten commandments, clearly state,

### **Exodus 20**

<sup>13</sup> You shall not kill.

That’s a part of God’s character. Christ revealed that very commandment, and He was “harmless.” *Hebrews 7:26*. We likewise, are called to...

### **Romans 12**

<sup>21</sup> ...overcome evil with good.

### **Romans 13**

<sup>10</sup> Love works no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law.

The angels in heaven...

### **Psalm 103**

<sup>20</sup> ...do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

Therefore, they also “do not kill,” and “work no ill to their neighbors.” Yet the Bible states that God “destroys,” and that there are “destroying angels”. We need to search into what this means, and not jump to the conclusion that God is like carnal man. God is using the language of man, but His behavior is...

## **Isaiah 55**

<sup>9</sup> ...higher than our ways.

## **God is a Saviour**

It will help to remember that God...

## **Hebrews 1**

<sup>3</sup> ...upholds all things by the word of His power.

All living things are dependent on His continued life flow, and His continued protection. Furthermore, even the full consequences sins of man are, for a time, restrained by the saving power of God in Christ:

## **Isaiah 53**

<sup>6</sup> ...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

## **Revelation 13**

<sup>8</sup> ...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

That's one principle.

## **Sin is a Destroyer**

The other principle to bear in mind is that sin separates from God.

## **Isaiah 59**

<sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that He will not hear.

## **Romans 6**

<sup>23</sup> The wages of sin is death.

Sin pays the wages of death, not God. God is the life-giver. Sin is the life-taker.

Therefore, there can come a time, when the sinner, through persistent rejection of the saving power of God, becomes so hardened in sin, that he forces God to withdraw His protection. God is love, and love cannot compel, so God is forced to withdraw from those who make it clear that they do not want Him at all, and think they can manage perfectly without Him.

## **Matthew 23**

<sup>37</sup> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!

<sup>38</sup> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

When God withdraws that protection, then destruction, which is waiting to fall on the sinner because of his sins, now falls unhindered. Before, God was holding back the consequences of the sins (acting as a Saviour); now He can no longer do so, and those consequences fall unhindered. The powers of nature, stirred out of their safe channels by the sins of man, work destruction and death.

## **In Righteousness He Makes War**

We must not think that when the Bible says that

### **2 Samuel 24**

<sup>15</sup> The Lord sent a pestilence,

–or as in the prophecy in *Revelation* 16:1, of the seven last plagues, where “vials of wrath” are “poured out,” that therefore God has a bio-lab in heaven where He concocts evil diseases. Even sinful men consider this kind of experimentation to be morally wrong. How we mar God’s character when we jump to the conclusion that He did this work, in just such a direct way as man would do it.

No, there is a better, a “higher” way, to understand God’s actions. “The end justifies the means,” is no part of God’s government. He judges and makes war “in righteousness.” *Revelation* 19:11. And “in righteousness” means “in harmony with the principles of His law,” one of which states, “You shall not kill.”

## **The Law is God’s Character**

The Law is not something God imposes on us. The kings of old time, made laws to oppress the people, but they were above those laws, and could violate them with impunity. It is not so in God’s

kingdom. He himself is subject to His law, for it is simply an expression of His own character, but stated in such a way as to apply to man's circumstances.

The Law expresses God's will:

**Psalm 40**

<sup>8</sup> I delight to do *your will*, O my God: yea, *your law* is within my heart.

It is an expression of the righteousness of God:

**Isaiah 51**

<sup>7</sup> Hearken unto me, you that know *righteousness*, the people in whose heart is *my law*.

The Law is truth:

**Psalm 119**

<sup>142</sup> Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth.

Jesus is the truth:

**John 14**

<sup>6</sup> I am...the truth.

Therefore, the life of Jesus is just a manifestation of the law of God. One more:

**Romans 13**

<sup>10</sup> ...love is the fulfilling of the law.

**1 John 4**

<sup>8</sup> ...God is love.

Here we see the absolute equality between the character of God, and the law of God. What is true about one, is true about the other. Therefore, God keeps His own law. It is a transcript of His own character.

## The Actual Agent of Destruction

Then, when we come to read statements such as “the Lord sent a pestilence,” we have to ask ourselves,

“How can a loving God, who works no ill to His creatures, send a pestilence upon them?”

To interpret this properly, we must bear in mind that God is preventing a thousand illnesses from falling on man’s head. These illnesses are created by sin, by the destruction of good that happens when men indulge in sin. When God “sends” them, it means simply that He no longer can hold them back.

### 1 Kings 2

<sup>44</sup> ...the Lord shall return *your wickedness* upon your own head.

Who created this wickedness? Man did; it is “your own wickedness.” For a time, the Lord restrains this evil harvest, hoping thereby to lead the man to repentance for his sins, and thereby allay the evil consequences. But eventually, if the man persists in his sins, in spite of God’s patience and warnings, there can come a time when the Lord can no longer restrain the evil harvest. Man sows to the wind, and he reaps the whirlwind:

### Hosea 8

<sup>7</sup> For *they have sown* the wind, and *they shall reap* the whirlwind.

When the Lord finally lets go of His restraint of a certain plague or disaster, He often says, “I sent it,” or “I destroyed them.” Wise children will be careful to note the difference between the evil, which was created by man’s sin, and the removal of the restraint of that evil. Sin is the destroyer; God is the Saviour. When God’s saving power is no longer desired, sin is left to do its work of destruction.

## The Role of the Atonement

The destruction comes “from the Lord,” only in the sense that He no longer holds back the destroying powers. But the evil is not “of

the Lord,” for it is impossible for a holy and righteous God to produce unholy and unrighteous things.

### **Matthew 7**

<sup>17</sup> A good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.

God is the good tree. He only brings forth good from within himself. Man is an evil tree. He brings forth an evil harvest, which eventually destroys him, unless he takes hold of the atonement of Christ.

### **Numbers 16**

<sup>46</sup> And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.

<sup>47</sup> And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

<sup>48</sup> And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Aaron, as high priest, was a representative of Christ, the true High Priest. Here, Aaron stands between the those who died from the plague, and those who were still alive, and the plague is stopped; it can no longer spread from the dead bodies to those who are still alive.

This is part of the work of the atonement of Christ: to hold back, restrain, and take away (as much as possible), the consequences of man’s sin. This allows time for man to be cleansed of the actual sin itself, by the same atonement.

## **A Destroying Angel**

God’s act in destruction, is to remove His restraining power. A “destroying angel” therefore, is one who is sent to remove the protection of God from a person or group of people, who have

proclaimed very clearly that they do not want such protection anymore.

This is how we are to understand the appearance of the “destroyer” who killed the firstborn of Egypt (*Exodus* 12:23<sup>1</sup>; *Psalms* 78:49), the angel who destroyed with the pestilence in David’s time (*2 Samuel* 24:15-17; *1 Chronicles* 21:15-16), the angel who destroyed a large part of the Assyrian army (*2 Kings* 19:32-25), the angel who brought destruction to King Herod (*Acts* 12:23), and the angels who pour out the vials of wrath (*Revelation* 16).

These are the same angels who...

### **Psalm 103**

<sup>20</sup> ...do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

Therefore, they act in the same way that God acts: by removing the restraint of protection that is holding back the consequences of man’s sins. When God’s saving power is removed, man’s sins accomplish the work of destruction.

### **Hosea 13**

<sup>9</sup> O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in me is your help.

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<sup>1</sup> Some translations render this word “destroyer” as: “Angel of Death” [GNT] or “death angel” [NLT].