

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

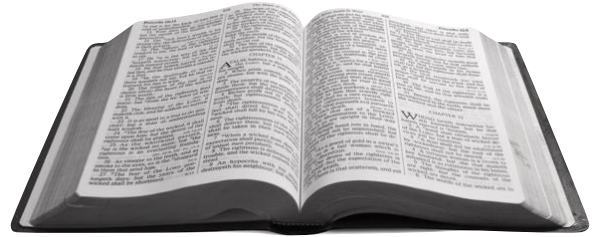
Romans 1:18

Lesson #8

Theodicy

02/24/2019

How to read the Old Testament



1

Theodicy

theos (God) + dike (justice)

The problem of a just God
and an evil world

How can God
permit evil?

How can God
ordain injustice?

2

Deuteronomy 20

“¹⁶ Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall **not leave alive anything that breathes**. ¹⁷ But you shall **utterly destroy them**, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you,



3

Numbers 31

“¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² Take **vengeance** on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people.’ . . . ⁷ They fought against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and **killed every man**. . . . ⁹ The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as **plunder**. . . . ¹⁵ ‘Have you allowed all the women to live?’ he (Moses) asked them. ¹⁶ They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD’s people. ¹⁷ Now **kill all the boys**. And **kill every woman who has slept with a man**, ¹⁸ but **save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man**.”



4

“Vengeance is mine
I will repay says the Lord”

The wrath
of God ?
Love ?
your enemy



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A popular misconception #1 The N.T. God is distinct from the O.T. God.

The God of the
Old Testament



Wrath

The God of the
New Testament



Peace



6

The New Testament

Romans 1:18 “for **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,”

1 Corinthians 16:22 “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be **Anathema** Maranatha.”

Galatians 1:8 “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **accursed**.”

Revelation 6:10 “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and **avenge** our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

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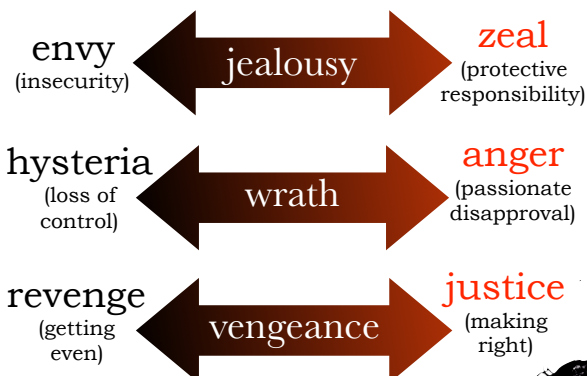
A popular misconception #2 Biblical words picture God as a “diabolical, insecure, bully.

Nahum 1:2

“A **jealous** and **avenging** God is the Lord; The Lord is **avenging** and **wrathful**. The Lord takes **vengeance** on His adversaries, and He reserves **wrath** for His enemies.”



8



9

Partial explanations

1. Response to the **severity of human depravity**.

Deuteronomy 20

“¹⁷ But you shall **utterly destroy them**, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, ¹⁸ **so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods**, so that you would sin against the Lord your God.”

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Partial explanations

1. Response to the **severity of human depravity**.

Matthew 19

“⁷ They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to *give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?*’ ⁸ He said to them, ‘**Because of your hardness of heart**, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.’”

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Partial explanations

1. Response to the **severity of human depravity**.
2. The **revelation of the Cross of Christ**.

Luke 24

"45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that **the Christ would suffer** and rise again from the dead the third day. 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all nations.'

12

Three mistakes that many Christians make in reading the Old Testament.

1. Neglecting the **literary** context.
2. Neglecting the **cultural** context.
3. Neglecting the **theological** context.



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To process the "harshness" of many O.T. passages we must respect three things.

1. The nature of God (like redemption) does not change but **its fullness may be revealed gradually over time**.

John 1:17

"For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ**."

Colossians 1:19

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for **all the fullness to dwell in him**."

Hebrews 1:3

"And he is the radiance of His glory and **the exact representation of His nature**,"

14

To process the "harshness" of many O.T. passages we must respect three things.

1. The nature of God (like redemption) does not change but **its fullness may be revealed gradually over time**.

Christ
- fullness of His glory
Codification
- Law of Moses
Conscience
- image of God

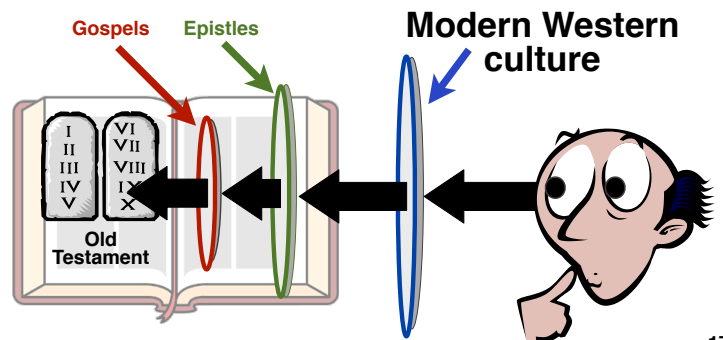
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To process the "harshness" of many O.T. passages we must respect three things.

1. The nature of God (like redemption) does not change but **its fullness may be revealed gradually over time**.
 - We should NOT read the Bible as an **encyclopedia** of "proof texts".
 - Read the Bible as a **tutorial** in and an **unfolding** revelation of theology.
 - We make a mistake when we read the O.T. as we do the N.T. Epistles - as though it all was written **TO** us or **ABOUT** us.
 - Bereans must know what **grade level** of the Biblical theology they are reading.

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We read the Bible through cultural lenses.



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To process the “harshness” of many O.T. passages we must respect three things.

1. The nature of God (like redemption) does not change but **its fullness may be revealed gradually over time.**
2. The O.T. **emphasized holiness** - defilement, idolatry, justified wrath.

Romans 5:20

“The Law came in **so that the transgression would increase;**”

Romans 7:13

“**through the commandment sin became** utterly sinful.”

18

To process the “harshness” of many O.T. passages we must respect three things.

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2. The O.T. **emphasized holiness** - defilement, idolatry, justified wrath.

Our appreciation for the Cross of Christ is directly proportional to our awareness of the gravity of our sin.



Remember

Christianity is the only religion that celebrates the death of its founder.

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The same “wrathful” language is used to describe the fate of Messiah

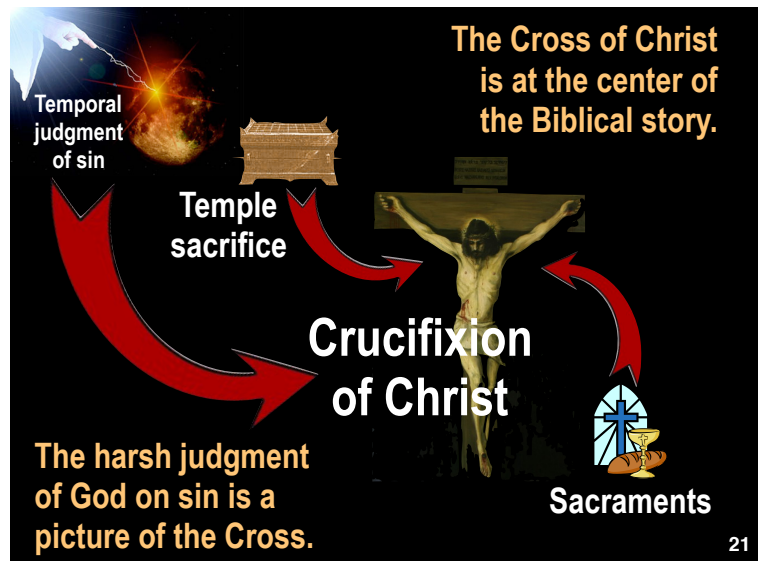
Isaiah 53

“4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him **stricken by God, smitten by him,** and afflicted. 5 But he was **pierced** for our transgressions, he was **crushed** for our iniquities; the **punishment** that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 . . . the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . 12 . . . For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Luke 24:26

“Was it not **necessary for the Christ to suffer these things** and to enter into His glory?”

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To process the “harshness” of many O.T. passages we must respect three things.

1. The nature of God (like redemption) does not change but **its fullness may be revealed gradually over time.**
2. The O.T. **emphasized holiness** - defilement, idolatry, justified wrath.
3. Reading Joshua, Judges, Imprecatory psalms, etc. **should make us uncomfortable.**

Romans 1:18

“For the **wrath of God is revealed from heaven** against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,”

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A rejection of the harshness of O.T. ethics may reflect a bias:

Not so much for Jesus’ teaching as it does for Western culture

and a disrespect for the “word of the cross”.

1 Corinthians 1:18

“For the **word of the cross** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

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Steps to Biblical Moral Wisdom

1. Understand the **NATURE** of our dignity and depravity - Gen.1-11
2. Understand the **PROMISE** in God's plan to restore us - Gen.12-17
3. Making sure we see the **SERIOUSNESS** of our problem - Ex. - Deut.
4. Making sure we see God's **SAVIOR** for our problem - Gospels
5. Making sure we see the **SOLUTION** to our problem - Epistles

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NOTE: The Law of Moses was specific in prescribing the death penalty for:

- A foreigner too close to the tabernacle
- Sacrificing to gods other than YHWH
- Worshiping false gods
- False prophecy
- Blasphemy
- Sabbath breaking
- Premarital sex
- Homosexual acts
- Prostitution
- Smiting a parent
- Cursing a parent
- Persists in disobeying parents

Holiness (separation from defilement) was at the core of Jewish identity.



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Jesus speaks as one living under that Law of Moses (Old Covenant)

Matthew 5

"¹⁷ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees**, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

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Jesus spoke of God's wrath.

Matthew 5:22

"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, '**You fool,**' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

(Matthew 5:29, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15,33, 25:41)

Matthew 25:41

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, **into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;**'"

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In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus made it clear that the Mosaic Law asked for a level of holiness that should make everyone uncomfortable.

Jesus equated "anger" with "murder" Matt.5:22

Jesus equated "lust" with "adultery" Matt.5:28

Matthew 5

"²⁹ And if your right eye makes you stumble, **tear it out**, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand makes you stumble, **cut it off**, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell."

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2 Timothy 2:15

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."

1 Corinthians 13:11

"When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."

Failing to respect the unfolding theological context of revelation is childish reasoning.



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How are we to respond to passages like:

Psalm 137:9

“How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock.”

1. Ignore them -
2. Forced harmonization -
3. **Humble harmonization -**
4. **Contextual sensitivity -**
5. Errant sources -
6. Errancy -



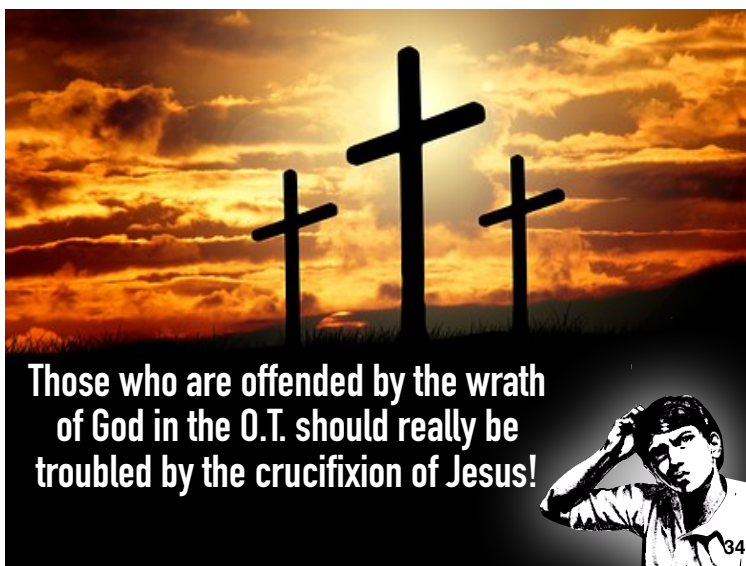
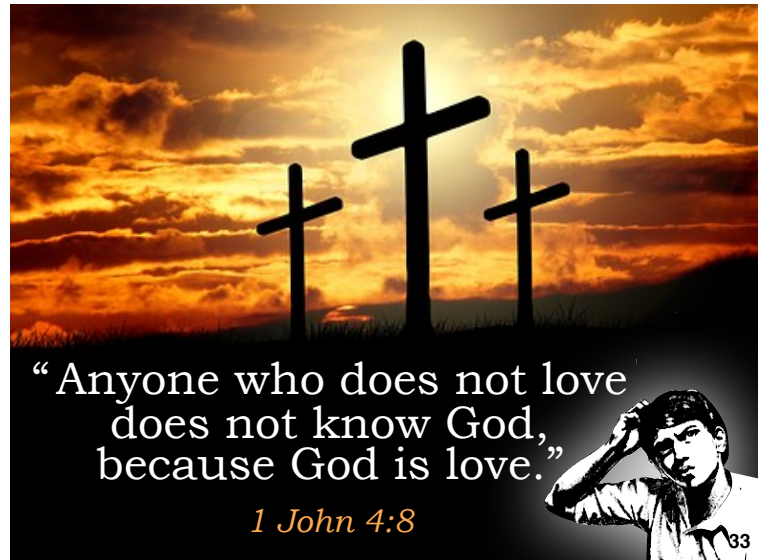
“Humble Harmonization”

1. It sees “as in a mirror **dimly**” 1 Cor.13:12
2. It **best** (not perfectly) explains all the data
3. It is willing to **admit**, “we don’t know it all”
4. It majors on **majors** not minors
5. It punctuates its affirmations with (! - , - . - ?)

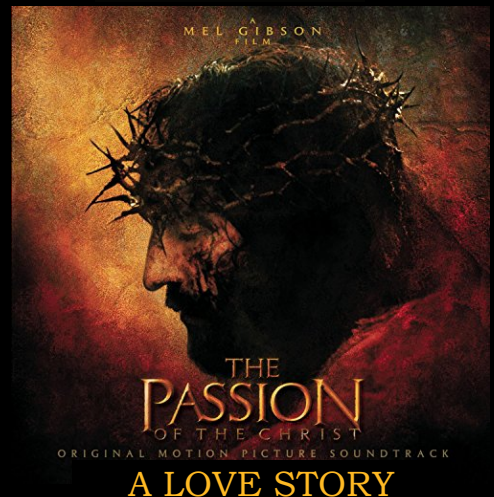
“Contextual sensitivity”

1. Our culture may **hinder** our objectivity
2. God reveals Himself **progressively**
3. Gen.1-3 truths are to be taken very **seriously**
4. We are to read like **adults** not children

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DYING WAS HIS REASON FOR LIVING



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