

What Does the Bible Say About . . .?

January 22, 2007

Salvation Part I: Old Testament

Follow-up

- I. I received two follow-up questions from last time that we will take a few moments to examine:
- A. The punishment for sin, from the very beginning, was death. Why would there be such an extreme punishment even for minor sins?
1. The key to this is understanding the holiness of God. Of course, to fully answer this would really take another whole study on holiness, but let's look at it in a shortened version tonight.
 2. Holiness in its most basic definition means "set apart for a special purpose." In that general sense our good china would be "holy" because we keep it separate from our regular dishware and only use it for special occasions.
 3. God is holy in a much more profound sense. (What are some ways we can think of in which God is holy? (e.g., different/special/unique as spirit, as always consistent in character, promises, etc., and loving, humble, powerful)
 4. Some of the clearest passages in the Bible on God's holiness can be found in the book of Leviticus. Let's read two short selections. **Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:1-4** (Be holy for I am holy).
 5. There are many other similar passages, but I think we get the idea. What kind of people does God want us to be? (Holy, like God is holy.) Looking at these two selections, what does it mean for us to be holy like God is holy? (Obey commandments. e.g., honor your father and mother, make no idols)
- B. That is a pretty impossible task, isn't it? Wait, it gets even harder. Read **James 2:8-11** (to break part of Law is to break all of it.)
1. What does this tell us about holiness? (It cannot be compromised or it is not holy.)
 2. Example of 1 part sewage in gallon of pure water is still poisonous.
 3. Remember also that "little sin" unchecked grows into "bigger sin" and all sin contaminates those around.
- C. "So why couldn't God just change the rules?"
1. Salvation and creation must be consistent with God's own nature.
 - a. If God allowed even some sin, God would not be just. And that would be inconsistent with God's nature. If God were no longer consistent in nature, God would no longer be holy and no longer God!

What Does the Bible Say About . . .?

January 22, 2007

- b. God and sin are completely incompatible. God's holiness is complete. To compromise it would be to destroy it.
 2. One more point in this far-from-complete answer: We were created to be in close intimate relationship with God.
 - a. Since sin is incompatible with God's very being, it would be impossible for God to be in that kind of association with sinful creatures.
 - b. In addition, if God settled for a lesser creation by changing our nature, God's nature would be changed too. God's love would be compromised.
 - c. Love is at its fullest when it is mutual, voluntary, and unwavering. If we could not sin, or even if we could only sin in a limited way, we would be controlled beings. If we were controlled/limited, our love would not be free and voluntary. God would have settled for a lesser love and would have changed God's own nature to do so.
 3. We've just scratched the surface, but the answer in a nutshell to why God couldn't just change the rules is this: To change the rules God would have to go against God's very nature and, in fact, be less than God.
 - D. Very briefly, the second follow-up question is this: The Biblical history only has a few examples of people who failed, and only one nation. Couldn't some others have done better?
 1. The Israelites spoke directly with God. They had numerous people who had exceptionally close contact with God: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David.
 2. They had miracles performed in front of them or even through them (Moses).
 3. Israel had a visible presence of God in the wilderness, at Mt. Sinai.
 - a. Also had the prophets, the Commandments, and the Scripture.
 - b. Were freed from captivity more than once (Egypt, Babylon) by God's open and direct intervention.
 4. Who or what nation could possibly think they could do better?
 - a. Such a nation would have to be incredibly arrogant, completely deluded about themselves, or perhaps just plain racist to think they or anyone else would be any different.
 - b. Besides, we do have the records of the other nations of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and all the smaller Canaanite nations. They were even worse.