

Evidences– The God of the Bible

“I’d rather be in this wheelchair knowing God than on my feet without him.” Joni Eareckson Tada

“Yea, since the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand; I will work, and who can hinder it? – Isaiah 43:13

“I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west that there is none besides me; I am Jehovah, and there is none else. “ Isaiah 45:5-6

As we consider evidence for God, we must also define who God is. Throughout history men have worshipped a supreme being, but in many cases their worship was not directed to the God of the bible. The Jews, who God gave the law to, had the tendency to forget who He was. (Deut. 4:19, Deut. 8:19). Although we are not threatened by literal idols today, unless our ideas about God match what is taught in the Bible, we are practicing idolatry. The following is not exhaustive but are some of the characteristics of the God that is worthy of our worship. Note that we are focusing on the Bible for this lesson – we are not so much giving evidence for God but trying to identify who He is.

1. **God is not like us** – He is self-existent, we are not. He is in control, we are not. He is all powerful, we are not.

Isaiah 46:5- He is like no other

Isaiah 55:8-9 - God’s thoughts are much higher than ours.

Psalm 50:16-21 - The wicked believe that God thinks like they do.

Thus, we should expect that in many cases, the way we think a problem should be solved will be different than God’s view. This is best seen in the way that God has chosen to save mankind – sending His son to the world to die a horrible death for sin. We can also see this in the following, which we plan on discussing later

- a. How God deals with evil – why is it in the world?
- b. Why does God allow me to suffer?

2. **Overview of the character of God** – Ex. 33. After the people had made the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain receiving God’s law, Moses ground the calf to dust put it in water and made the people drink. God had said he would not go with the people on their journey to the promised land but send an angel (33:3), Moses pleads with God to go with them (33:12-16) and as part of that plea, he asks God to show him His ways (33:13) and show him His

glory (33:18). God's response is that He will cause His goodness to pass before Moses and he proclaim His name (33:19). What transpires afterward is God declaring who He is to Moses. (Ex. 34:5-9)

a. **Merciful and gracious**- This statement is repeated a number of times in scripture (Ps 86:15, Ps 103:8, Ps. 145:8) as to emphasize this characteristic of God. We are familiar with mercy but the term gracious is one we use but perhaps do not consider the full meaning of the term. Gracious – “the quality of showing favor and mercy. The term is usually applied to a person of superior position and power who is kindly disposed toward a person of inferior position and power. Thus, Potiphar dealt graciously with Joseph (Gen. 39:4), Ruth found favor in the eyes of Boaz (Ruth 2:10), and Esther was treated graciously by King Ahasuerus (Esther 2:17; 5:2) (*The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*)

The penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23). That is the law and there is no exception. God had promised that the people would inherit the land, so he could not destroy them, but He was well within His rights to not go with them. His change because of the intercession of Moses shows His mercy and grace.

b. **Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands** – God's anger and our anger are not the same. God does not “fly off the handle” or “lose His temper”. His anger (wrath) can be described as “His indignation at sin, his revulsion to evil and all that opposes him, his displeasure at it and the venting of that displeasure. It is his passionate resistance to every will that is set against him (*Lexham Survey of Theology*). Just because He is slow to anger does not mean that he will not punish and in many cases the delay in judgment causes people to think that it is not coming (Ecc. 8:11).

Lovingkindness is a made-up word to translate the untranslatable- hesed. It is translated in a number of ways – lovingkindness, steadfast love, mercy when it is used to describe God. One writer describes it as “the Divine Love condescending to His creatures, more especially to sinners, in unmerited kindness” (ISBE). An entire Psalm uses the expression to describe God's behavior in every verse (Ps. 136) and in every verse states that it “endureth forever”. An illustration from modern times is shown below.

a. Story of Tommy Pigage -

“I want to tell you about the night I killed Ted Morris.”

Tommy Pigage opened his court-mandated appearance at the Trigg County High School MADD meeting with those trembling words. Standing in the back of the gym was Elizabeth Morris, Ted's grieving mother. In time she would find it in herself not simply to forgive but to unofficially adopt the young man who had collided with her son while driving drunk. Her husband, Frank, a part-time preacher and a driver for UPS, would baptize Tommy with his own hands. Years later, Tommy still called his new parents every day between 4 and 5 p.m. Though Tommy had no right to expect anything from them, Ted's parents opened the door of their life to Tommy. In the process, everything changed. Card, M. (2018).

Inexpressible: hesed and the mystery of god's lovingkindness (p. 17). Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press.

c. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin – We understand what it is to forgive, but since we do not have the nature of God, we can forgive without a price being paid. Since God is a God of absolute justice, the penalty of sin must be paid by someone. God can only forgive sins if someone dies as a result of that sin. Fairness would say that we should die for our own sins, but God through His mercy sent Christ to die in our place. The Jews in the Old Testament did not understand this, but they understood that God could and would forgive sins. They did not realize the cost of that forgiveness.

d. Will by no means clear the guilty – This is again something that is different than the way we look at things. Throughout history, justice has been something that has been perverted – the righteous have been persecuted and abused while the wicked are let off. (Ecc. 3:16, 4:1). In our culture people love to see “complex” characters in movies and books. They are a mix of good and bad qualities, and the authors would like us to see them in one light or another. With God there is no such ambiguity – if we are guilty of sin then we must pay the price (Ez. 18:21-24)

e. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and upon the children’s children upon the third and upon the fourth generation. – At first glance this seems out of character for God and is repulsive to us. This is not saying that the later generations of the sinner will suffer the penalty for their ancestor’s sin (see Ez 18:20 – The soul that sinneth it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son). They may, however, suffer the consequences of the ancestor’s sin.

Questions for consideration.

1. Some would object to God’s being almighty with the following question – Can God make a rock so big that he cannot pick it up? How would you respond to this?
2. Provide examples of the mercy and grace of God to His people throughout history.
3. Give examples of God’s slowness to anger. Why does he not bring judgment immediately? (II Peter 3:9)
4. Discuss the “fairness” of God not remembering the righteous if they forsake their righteousness later in life. Will God balance the good and evil we have done in life to come up with a final judgment?
5. Give examples of where the son or grandson of a sinner suffers consequences for the sinners actions
6. How does the God of the Bible differ from many of the concepts people have of God?