

# San Juan church of Christ

1414 Hawk Parkway, Unit C  
Montrose, CO 81401 | (970) 249-8116

## What Does God's Word Say About... Goodness of God and Old Testament Cruelty

Those who do not believe in the Bible will say that God's word contradicts itself when it says in 1 John 4:16 that God is love. They ask the question, "If God is love why did He allow nations, along with innocent children, to be utterly destroyed?" (Deut. 20:16-17). The unbeliever may also ask, "Why did God have no mercy when He allowed Israel to enter the Promised Land and commanded them 'Not to leave alive anything that breathes'?" Joshua obeyed the commandment of God when "They [Israelites] utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword" (Joshua 6:21).

It is clear that a dilemma occurs when the Bible believer affirms that God is perfect, and that everything He does is exactly the right thing to do (Isa. 6:3; Psm. 100:5, 119:68). Yet it is also clear that the Israelites were commanded by God to conduct these slaughters. When the believer is asked about these controversies of a loving God, we need to point out that God can deal with mankind as His infinite wisdom dictates (Jer. 18:6-11). Remember that God's ways and thoughts are far superior to ours. He does not look at things the way man does (Isa. 55:8-9).

God had given the people and nations mentioned in the scripture earlier hundreds of years to repent, but they failed to take advantage of the opportunities given to them by the patience of God (1 Sam. 15:2-3). God told Abraham that he could not have the land of Canaan because "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16). This means that their present wickedness [Amorites] did not warrant destruction - yet.

God's righteousness and justice are meaningless attributes if wickedness is not punished. God's goodness is seen in the hundreds of years God give them to repent; justice is seen when their continual rejection of His grace is finally punished (Deut. 9:4-6). How can God demand righteousness if there is no consequence for unrighteousness? (Ex. 34:6-7).

The destruction of the wicked helps preserve the morality of the masses, and to serve as a vital lesson to the Israelites and us (Deut. 8:20, 20:18; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11-12). The destruction of children is one of the consequences of man's free moral choice. When one sins, it can (and often does) affect others (Joshua 7:5, 20; Numbers 14:33). But we need to remember that the consequences these others face have nothing to do with their own eternal salvation. They will be judged on the basis of their own lives (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12-13). The destruction of children in the previous scriptures mentioned was a blessing instead of a curse. When we view this destruction from a temporal viewpoint it seems so needless. But viewed from an eternal standpoint, the children were much better off dying. Why? Because they have no sin to their charge, and will be able to spend eternity with God (Matt. 19:13-14). If the children had been allowed to grow up, they would have, most likely, become wicked like their parents (1 Kings 14:12-13). In conclusion, all mankind ought to learn the following Biblical truths: 2 Pet. 3:9, 15; Romans 11:22.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:  
[info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org](mailto:info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org)