

God Doesn't Kill

There are so many Bible stories where God used His people to slaughter tribes of people. This has been used to say that 'God breaks His own commandment- Thou shalt not kill.' How does one rightly reconcile these gruesome stories with God's commandment to love one another? How does one rightly reconcile God's command to not kill with His apparent killing of people?

Let us take a look at the sixth commandment. "Thou shalt not kill." Ex. 20:13 "All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer"); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health--all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment."

Patriarchs and Prophets, pg. 308

It is clear that hatred and revenge, injustice and cruelty, are what this commandment condemns. Let us look at a few stories and see if God broke His commandment. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." Genesis 6:5-7 Clearly, the LORD intervened at this time in earth's history, sent a flood, and destroyed the antediluvian world.

If there is any doubt that the LORD sent the flood, the following statement will make it clear. "Above the roar of the tempest was heard the wailing of a people that had despised the authority of God. Satan himself, who was compelled to remain in the midst of the warring elements, feared for his own existence. He had delighted to control so powerful a race, and desired them to live to practice their abominations and continue their rebellion against the Ruler of heaven. He now uttered imprecations against God charging Him with injustice and cruelty. Many of the people, like Satan, blasphemed God, and had they been able, they would have torn Him from the throne of power. Others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the

ark and pleading for admittance. But their entreaties were in vain. Conscience was at last aroused to know that there is a God who ruleth in the heavens. They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. In that terrible hour they saw that the transgression of God's law had caused their ruin.” PP, pgs. 99,100

From these inspired statements, several things come clear.

1. The antediluvians caused their own ruin by their disregard for God’s law.
2. The devil feared for his existence from the flood.
3. After pleading with the people for so long, God stepped in executing justice up on them.

The Bible declared that the Lord would destroy them. Clearly, the Lord tried every means possible to save the people from their sins and when it became clear that there would be no change, God stepped in and executed justice. Did God kill them and break His own commandment?

The best way to illustrate this would be in a human court room. Someone is on trial for murder. The evidence is presented; truly, the person is guilty of this heinous crime. As the case comes to a close, the jury pronounces the sentence of death on the guilty individual. Finally, the judge hands down the sentence and the murderer dies for his crime. The jury and judge sentenced the person to death; were they guilty of murder? Of course not, they simply took the evidence and passed sentence based on all the facts. The person died because of their own evil deeds!

That is the way it is with God and humanity! God bears long with people/nations. He gives them every opportunity to turn from their wicked ways and accept His goodness. However, when the wicked heart of man reaches a point, that only God can see, where there is no possibility of change, then God passes sentence and executes justice and judgment. This was the case with the tribes of Canaan that were erased from existence.

Some have looked upon the carnage of the Canaanite tribes and declared, “I don’t like the God of the Old Testament; I like Jesus better.” They can’t reconcile statements

of slaughter with Jesus' love. At the fall of Jericho, we read, "And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword." Joshua 6:21

"To many these commands seem to be contrary to the spirit of love and mercy enjoined in other portions of the Bible, but they were in truth the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness. God was about to establish Israel in Canaan, to develop among them a nation and government that should be a manifestation of His kingdom upon the earth. They were not only to be inheritors of the true religion, but to disseminate its principles throughout the world. The Canaanites had abandoned themselves to the foulest and most debasing heathenism, and it was necessary that the land should be cleared of what would so surely prevent the fulfillment of God's gracious purposes.

The inhabitants of Canaan had been granted ample opportunity for repentance. Forty years before, the opening of the Red Sea and the judgments upon Egypt had testified to the supreme power of the God of Israel. And now the overthrow of the kings of Midian, of Gilead and Bashan, had further shown that Jehovah was above all gods. The holiness of His character and His abhorrence of impurity had been evinced in the judgments visited upon Israel for their participation in the abominable rites of Baalpeor. All these events were known to the inhabitants of Jericho, and there were many who shared Rahab's conviction, though they refused to obey it, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, "is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath." Like the men before the Flood, the Canaanites lived only to blaspheme Heaven and defile the earth." PP, pg. 492

We could cite many more like examples; Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10), Uzzah (2 Samuel 6), the slaying of Sennacherib's

Army (2 Chronicles 32), and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. In every case, the principles remain the same. Rebellion against God, judgment, and then its execution are part of all these Bible stories. It is clear from these stories that God doesn't kill, but rather that God allows people to fully develop their purposes, and based on their choices, executes judgment. May we use the wonderful gift of choice to serve the God of compassion, truth, and justice!!

