

## **GOD QUESTIONS: Just WHO Does God Think He Is?**

*A lot of the content of this talk including more facts and background is available in the book "Jesus Is Involved In Politics! Why aren't you? Why isn't your church? Neil Mammen, Rational Free Press, 2010. Available at [www.NoBlindFaith.com](http://www.NoBlindFaith.com) and Amazon.*

When Pastor Greg contacted me he asked me to speak on this series that you've been covering: Who are you God? He gave me a number of questions that I would need to address. So here's a list of what we'll address today and 3 that I will only cover in the notes available online.

- 1. Where does God come from?**
- 2. If you are a loving God, why did you command Israel to wipe out entire nations of people, including innocent children? Later Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.**
- 3. Why is God a Man of War? (Exodus 15:3 KJV)**
- 4. Why was God such an angry God in the Old Testament?**
- 5. Why did God not want man to see his face? Why was it hidden by clouds or darkness? (Ex. 33:20-23 KJV)**
- 6. God appeared to many men in the Bible. Why does this not occur today, or even in recent history?**
- 7. Did God really plan to kill Moses? Ex 4:24**

### **Background**

Let's start first with some background about God to put all this in context.

As some of you know from when I visited before, I was born in Ghana. Some of you are thinking that that is a town in Texas. Actually it's a country just off the West Coast of Africa. From there I moved to Sudan. Now some of you are thinking, well that IS a town in Texas, left at the Dairy Queen just on Hwy 84. Yes it is, but the Sudan I grew up in is also in Africa, it's where we currently are seeing the Christian persecution in Darfur. It's known as a terrorist country.

From Sudan I moved to Yemen. Yes, another terrorist country and no, no city in Texas by that name. Shortly after that I was able to come to the US to go to college. I ended up at Oregon State University. However being that my parents could not afford all the expenses once I got here, I had to get a job to pay some of my expenses.

Now the law in the States was that I was not legally allowed to take a job *off* campus unless I got a work permit. Not having a permit, I naturally looked for a job *on* campus. It turned out that the only job I could find was in the dining room. And because I'd never held a real job before in my life, the only job I could get was at the bottom of the rung. So not only was I in the dining room, but I was also in the dish room, and not only was I in the dish room, but I was in the lowest level job in the dish room - slop.

The job was doing slop for breakfast every morning from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. This means I sat next to this large conveyor belt and kids put their used trays on the belt on one side of the partition. My job on the other side was either to remove the silverware and trash from the trays or empty the leftover food into this monster garbage disposal. The disposal was so big my entire arm could have fit down it. The first few days I was so scared of it that I had nightmares. I think they eventually made a horror movie about it. I write about this in the book.

Anyway, I would get up at 4:30 a.m., shower and walk the three miles to campus (I didn't have a bike yet – yes, and you guessed it – it was uphill both ways, 105 degrees in the freezing snow and I was barefoot and only had a ragged torn thin T-shirt. Anyway, you get the picture). I would work in the dish room till 9 a.m., and then go to my first class of the day. For those three hours, I was stuck across from this really cute gal also doing slop. So in effect, I had a captive audience, and I naturally used this great opportunity to ...witness to her. No really! Okay, maybe I was a nerd. Or maybe that was just how I

flirted. And yes, you can feel sorry for her, stuck for three hours a day across from some “know-it-all” Indian loudmouth computer engineer wannabe from the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

Well, after a few months of this she said in frustration, “God this, God that, that’s all I hear about God. God wants *this* from us, God wants *that* from us, God is jealous, God wants us to worship Him; God does what He wants when He wants to. He sounds very selfish, arrogant, and proud – *just who does He think He is?*”

And at that moment, I got chills down my spine. I turned to her and I told both her and myself. “Why, He thinks He’s *God*.”

“Oh,” she muttered realizing what she had just said.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, He thinks He is God.

But let’s go a step further. He doesn’t just *think* He’s God, He *knows* He’s God. Because He *is* God.<sup>3</sup>

And being God, He can be as selfish as he wants.

And being God, He can be as jealous as he wants.

And being God, He can be as proud as he wants. Why? Because the rules that apply to us, don’t apply to Him.

Now some of you might still say, “Why? Why shouldn’t God be subject to the same rules that we are. How come God can be jealous, how come God can be selfish, how come God can be egocentric, how come God can do the very things he tells me not to do and I can’t do those things?”

Doesn’t I Corinthians 13 say, “Love is never envious or jealous or selfish?”

Isn’t God supposed to be love?

But the Bible says he’s a jealous God. He destroys people for disobeying him.

Don’t we seem to be contradicting ourselves?

The answer still is “Because He is God.”

Now remember. God still has to be moral. He still has to be non capricious. Bad is still bad even for God. God cannot stop being good even if he wanted to. But here’s the difference.

These rules are for us not for God for handout.

Assume you have a kid. If that’s hard, assume that you are babysitting a kid. While stumbling through the kitchen, the kid happens to find some matches and starts to play with them. He lights a couple and blows them out. That’s fun. So he lights a couple more and blows them out, and then he does it again. This is pure fun, and then.... you catch him.

“Aaaargh” you say, “Maaaaaatches!!! Matches? Matches! You don’t need no steenking matches, you can’t play with matches” and you take them away from him.

Now a few minutes later, it being winter, it starts to get cold, so you decide to what? To light a fire in the fireplace. Guess what you use to light the fire? Right, the very same matches, in the very same matchbox, and you light them in the very same way that our little kid did.

Now in the eyes of the kid, what’s the big difference between what you are doing and what he was doing? Absolutely nothing! How come you get to use the matches but he can’t? In his eyes, it’s just not fair. But in yours, it makes perfect sense. And what’s worse, nine times out of ten, you could try to explain the reasoning to the kid, but he’d still think you were unfair because he has no intention of burning the house down and he knows that he won’t burn the house down, he just wants to play with those matches. But still, he doesn’t get to play with the matches, but you do! In fact, you could play with those matches before lighting the fire if you wanted to. Why? Because the rules that apply to him, don’t apply to you. You are the adult. He’s the kid.

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<sup>1</sup> Don’t forget and an economic liberal who was against guns and effectively pro-choice.

<sup>2</sup> The good news is that months later, after I’d been promoted three times to a cushy job checking meal cards, this gal came up to me and said: ‘Thanks for all those talks in the dish room. I’ve decided that I do believe in God.’

<sup>3</sup> Despite what Shirley MacLaine tries to preach about us “all being gods, we’ve just forgotten we are gods,” only an idiot would think he was God when he wasn’t. And no real God could forget that he’s God. Look, if you are God, you’d know if you were Him or not. What sort of a feeble God forgets *anything*; much less that He is God?

## The rules are for us, not God

God is the Creator. We are the created. Let's never forget that. God can do what He wants to, when He wants to and how He wants to as long as it is consistent with His character, and let's not talk about fair or unfair.<sup>4</sup> If the minor difference between parent and child allows for different rules, how much more does it allow for different rules between a measly human and the Creator of all things and life and the entire universe with it's billions of galaxies and multiple dimensions (as many as 10 or maybe 26)? He made the rules, and He made them for us. In fact, as we said, He made the rules for our protection and *not* for His protection. He doesn't need protection.

## The Westminster Confession

The Westminster Confession says that:

*As far as we are concerned, the chief end of **man** is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*

John Piper in his excellent book "Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist" (Multnomah, 1996) expands this to the logical:

*As far as we are concerned, the chief end of **God** is to glorify **Himself** and enjoy Himself forever.*

And He can do that because He not only thinks he is God, He *is* God.

Here are some verses that show this:

**Exodus 14:4** *...I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."*

**Isaiah 60:21** *Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor.*

**Isaiah 43:6** *I [God] will say ... Bring my sons from afar and my daughter from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory whom I formed and made.*

So remember the chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy Himself forever.

But let's go a step further. You see, it is not only acceptable for God to glorify Himself, but it is of utmost importance that God be for Himself; it is vital that He desires to glorify Himself only. It is not only a logical necessity that God praise Himself, it is also a logical *necessity* that God glorifies Himself *only* and not try to be sacrificing or self-effacing. (Yes, I know you are wondering about Christ – we'll address that shortly). **It is logically and rationally necessary that God glorify Himself only**

God must be for Himself because if God wasn't for Himself, He could not be God for *us*. Think this through. If there were something else that God was to be glorifying instead of Himself, would not that something else then have to be greater than God? Let me repeat that.

If there was some other being or some other thing, even if was just the concept of *love*, that was the focus of God's praises, then would not God cease to be God, and that thing that God was glorifying then be God instead? And if that is the case, should we not be focusing some if not all of our praises on that *other* thing that God was praising?

And if God is the most powerful omnipotent being, then isn't that other God the real God? There can only be ONE all powerful being.

You see logically and rationally God has to be the greatest; there can't be anything greater than God. God has to praise Himself, or He would not then be the greatest. This can even be proven using set theory and equations.<sup>5</sup> So God has to be the center of his own praises. It's just logical.

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<sup>4</sup> By the way if you are reading this and you believe in a God but have trouble with the first part of that statement, you may be portraying a sense of your own "godness" and rebellion. This could be an ego problem of yours. Think of the audacity of someone refusing to bow down to their Creator and the Creator of the entire universe. As we will see shortly, this was the first sin in time.

On the other hand, if you don't believe in a God and get angry with these concepts, then you may have some serious God issues. Perhaps you are angry at the God you don't believe exists, maybe because he did not give you something you felt you deserved. It is difficult to explain being angry about a God one doesn't believe exists. I can understand being angry at Christians who believe God exists, but not being angry at a God, an entity you don't believe exists. That's like being angry at Thor for what the Vikings did.

<sup>5</sup> See "Can God Create a stone so big that He cannot move it?" at [www.JesusIsInvolvedInPolitics.com](http://www.JesusIsInvolvedInPolitics.com).

## God the spoiled brat?

I was once arguing with an engineer friend. He had grown up in church but didn't consider himself a Christian anymore. At one point in the argument he blurted, "You know I have trouble taking the Old Testament seriously. Everywhere I read about God in the Old Testament, He's being judgmental, vain and selfish. He's acting like a big spoiled petty brat. How am I supposed to accept a God like that?"

My friend has put the cart before the horse. Let me explain why God *must* act like that and why we can't. And why that does not make God a spoiled brat.

First, it is not wrong for God to act that way. For being selfish in itself is not evil. Being judgmental in itself is not evil; being arrogant in itself is not evil. It is only evil if we humans do it. You see the reason it is evil is because those things are reserved exclusively for God. For example, I can go for a joy ride in my own car, but that teenager down the street can't. He doesn't own it. I do. Driving a car isn't wrong. Someone *else* driving my car without permission is wrong. A judge can sentence you, but I can't. It's wrong to be arrogant because you are not more important than another human. But God *really is* more important. So the rightness or wrongness of an act is not determined only by the act, but also by who is performing that act, what authority they have to perform that act, the rights associated with that act and if they are taking something that does not belong to them.

But wait, whatever God does has to be inherently good. Why can god be selfish, jealous and proud? Let's go back to that slide. We looked at before.

**Being God, He can be**

As **SELFISH** as He wants! Why?

-Because He OWNS everything including the people who would be selfish.

As **JEALOUS** as He wants! –

-Because He CONTROLS everything including the people who would be jealous.

As **PROUD** as He wants!

-Because He CREATED everything including the people who He is proud in front of.

Isn't it logical?

## The greatest sin

Do you know what the greatest sin is? It is trying to make ourselves God. By being selfish, wanting glory or wanting praise, we are taking away from God what belongs to only Him.

Do you remember what the first sin that occurred in *time* was? It's actually not in the Garden of Eden, nor is it in Genesis.

It is in Isaiah 14:12. This is an allegory of the fall of Lucifer.

**Is 14:12** *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! 13 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne*

*above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." 15 But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.*

So we see that the first sin in time is when Lucifer wanted what belonged to God, when he wanted to make himself just like the Most High. And in fact, this then explains why we are never to be arrogant or self righteous, or self-praising, for then what would we be doing? We would be trying to be gods ourselves and trying to take what belongs rightfully to God. And that is the primary sin. And that is what got Lucifer kicked out of heaven. In fact, it is what got Adam and Eve kicked out of paradise. They wanted to be like God, starting with knowing good from evil. Wanting to be just like God has severe spiritual consequences. At the root of it all, is rebellion.

Over the eons we have forgotten why being selfish is wrong, why seeking glory is wrong. We think it is wrong in *itself*. No. It is not wrong in itself. It is wrong for *us*. It was never wrong for God, just wrong for us. But over the years, we've thrown out the baby with the bathwater, so to speak.

### God-like?

But you may complain, "Aren't we supposed to be God-like?"

No. We are supposed to be Christ-like, not God-like. We are supposed to emulate Christ in his incarnation<sup>6</sup>, not in his deity.

Now I went through all that to set the ground work for the answers.

#### • **Question 1: Let's look at that first question: Where does God come from?**

Many years ago before Einstein and Hubble came on the scene; scientists thought the universe had existed forever. And they had no trouble with this. Almost every scientist believes that things can exist for ever. In fact many believe that if even 1 thing exists then something must be able to exist forever.

So given this, they logically derived that anything that has existed forever, need no cause. but anything that began to exist needed a cause.

Let's look at that first part. Anything that existed for ever needs no cause.

Well if something had a cause, then that cause would have to precede it **temporally**. Temporally means in time. It would have to precede it in time be before it in time. Or **causally**. Cause-ally, not casually but cause-ally. In other words, you have to be before something to be able to cause it.

- **But if something had existed forever then**
- **There was no point at which it did not exist.**
- **Thus there is nothing that could come before it or precede it.**
- **Therefore nothing could have caused it, because to "cause" something you have to precede it causally or temporally.**

So it could not have a cause because nothing else could come before something that had existed forever. Does that make sense. It's always been there, so there's nothing before it.

**So people said the Universe had always existed and didn't have a cause so it didn't come from anywhere and scientists had no problem with this claim.**

But then along comes Mr. Einstein and opens the eyes of science. If you recall I spoke on this topic at this church two years ago. We called that talk: Who is Agent X? Proving Science and Logic show it's more rational to think God exists. A bunch of you came and asked if I could give you my notes on that, so we took that talk and put it together into this book that you can give to an atheist and challenge them to refute.

Anyway a few years after the Einstein and Hubble and few other scientists looked at the evidence they were able to calculate that not only is the universe **not** eternal, it's **only** about 13.7B years old and started with a big bang. (back to cosmological slide with has not existed for ever needs a cause) And since it was not eternal it needs a cause. It needs something to have created it.

But along the way to that discovery they discovered something very mysterious. Not only did they figure out that the Universe is 13.7B years old but before it was created they calculated that **time and**

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<sup>6</sup> Yes "incarnation" means "in the flesh" same root word as in carnivore, chili con carne, and carne asada. I.e. God in the bod.

**space** did not exist. Let me say that again, before the universe existed. Time and space did not exist. (slide of big bang with an arrow that shows that no time or space exists here).

That means whatever created the Universe is outside of time and space.

When the universe came into existence, not only did time and space come into existence, but up to 10 if not 22 spatial dimensions also came into existence. We can't see these dimensions but we can mathematically calculate their existence. So this means that we are not just 4 dimensional creatures. We are multidimensional creatures. That means our bodies are just vessels that are limited in 4D and our souls are in another dimension. We'll come back to this in a minute.

Oh I know, it's hard to imagine that God had no beginning and existed forever, because everything we see has a beginning and will have an end. But remember we live in a universe that **had** a beginning. So everything in it had a beginning. So it's natural that we'd think everything **else** had to have a beginning. But scientist and logic have always told us that eternal things can exist.

### **But where did God come from? What was before God?**

The short answer for this is that God did not come from anywhere because he did not **need** to come from anywhere.

*Prior to the big bang creation event, Time and Space did not exist.*

So let's think this through: God is the cause of everything. And Time is something that God caused. So if God caused Time (and space and the Big Bang), Agent X is not bound by time and existed before time. And similarly God is also not bound by Space and existed without space.

So the question is: What was before God? Where did God come from? And the answer is.

There was no before before God created time, so the question has no meaning<sup>7</sup>.

Let me say that again because I've had people say: Huh?

**What was before God?** There was no "before" before God made time, so the question has no meaning.

Where did God come from? There was **also** no "from" before God created space so the question has even less meaning.

You see you need "time" to have a "before" and you need "space" to have a "from."

But the instant before<sup>8</sup> God caused Time and space, the instant before the big bang, the words "before" and "from" had no meaning. In fact the word "instant" had no meaning because there was no time. In fact the word "in" had no meaning either for that matter because there was no space either. ....Whoops the word "had" had no meaning either because that requires time for a past tense.

However you look at it, before God caused Time, the words before and from had no meaning<sup>9</sup>.

- **OK question 2: If you are a loving God, why did you command Israel to wipe out entire nations of people, including innocent children? Later Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.**

Now remember, when I said that there are maybe 6 if not more dimensions that Science has calculated. Well what if our souls are in those dimensions? So here's something we need to realize. And you may think this is a shocking statement.

You don't have a soul. Let me say that again. You don't have a soul.

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<sup>7</sup> William Lane Craig says: Notice that I am not saying that this Being existed before the Big Bang temporally. He is *causally* prior to the Big Bang, but not *temporally* prior to the Big Bang. <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/docs/jesseph-craig2.html>

<sup>8</sup> Again we are stuck with having to use words that are really meaningless in a timeless dimensionless singularity.

<sup>9</sup> This is important because it explains how there can be a "spiritual" dimension. This would a dimension that is outside of our 4D space. This is a valid and logical physics concept.

You ARE a soul. You have a body. A body that is limited in time and space. And when you die what happens to your soul? It gets released from this earthly vessel and moves into a multidimensional reality.

So when you say “God killed someone” you haven’t said anything **bad** has happened. When people die, all that has happened is that they’ve been moved from a limited four-dimensional existence to a multidimensional existence. God has merely moved them from one place and time into another. God in fact has moved them from your limited space to one closer to his space.

Remember when radio first came out in Mono, then they brought it out in Stereo and wow it sounded so good. Then remember when Dolby Digital came out with 3 speakers and then 5 speakers and now 7.1. Each time you got a whole new sensation each time giving you a slightly better 3D sound. But going to a 4 Dimensional sound will be a huge jump like going from Mono to 7.1. Now imagine, if something tastes good in our 3 dimensions how much better do you think things could taste in 4 dimensions? If a color is so vibrant in 3D imagine how much more vibrant could a 4Dimensional color look? How about 4D music? In fact when we think about this, it turns out that God never actually kills anyone in **His** reality. Once God has created you as a soul, he never ever destroys you. All he’s done is move you out of a temporary frail sick and limited physical body and freed your soul to exist in His presence - if you wish to. All he’s done is destroy your body, because remember. You don’t have a soul. You *are* a soul. You have a body. A body that will be replaced eventually.

*If you are interested in seeing how my wife and I responded to the death of our daughter Caroline Lois please go to [www.NeilMammen.WordPress.com](http://www.NeilMammen.WordPress.com)*

Now **I** don’t have permission to move you into another dimension but surely God does. Because he created you. So it’s not wrong for God to kill anyone. Just like it’s not wrong for God to ask you to worship him or for him to be jealous. It’s not wrong for you to drive your car, but it is wrong for that kid down the street to take it on a joy ride.

Of course having said all this, there is a slight danger here. Because you will ask: But what’s the difference between the Israelites who massacred the people in Jericho and the 9-11 hijackers. Both claimed that they were told by God to do this horrible deed.

Here’s the difference. If God had **INDEED** told the 9-11 hijackers that they should kill Americans, surely he has the authority to do so. The issue is that we don’t think God really told the 9-11 hijackers to kill anyone. We think they were misled by a human who followed a lying demon. So don’t forget the issue here is not if God can authorize killing, of course he can. He’s God. The question is did God really **did** authorize the killing.

I would say that the only way to verify that is to provide physical evidence of God’s command. In the case of the Israelites marching around Jericho, they had their proof right in front of them. Their leader Joshua said: God told me that when we march 13 times around the city and blow our horns he would drop the walls down. And when the walls came a “tumb-aling” down, I’d say that was pretty good evidence that Joshua had indeed heard from God. In fact most every other such event in the Bible has a supernatural assurance days or weeks or moments prior to them acting out in obedience.

**Ok But the second part of that question says, but Jesus said that we are to pray for those who persecute us why is that different from the God in the Old testament.**

Let me answer that after I answer the next two questions if I may:

- **Question 3: Why is God a Man of War? (Exodus 15:3 KJV)**

The passage here says: The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

It references a song that the Israelites sing after the Pharaoh and his armies pursuing the Israelites get destroyed in the sea.

First we have to understand the more modern translations say this: "The LORD is a warrior; The LORD is His name."

This puts it in a different perspective. Is God a warrior against evil? He is isn't he? Did he destroy the evil Pharaoh? Yes he did. Was he justified in doing so? Yes again. Pharaoh was a slave owner and had enslaved the Hebrews for 400 years. Surely this was a just punishment.

#### • **Question 4: Why was God such an angry God in the Old Testament?**

A friend of mine recently claimed this:

Jesus' big innovation was to change god from a vengeful god to a merciful god, from a monomaniacal, pathological sadist to a loving father whose purpose was to care for his children. Jesus' main message was that laws should be there to help people not to control them. And that love is the secret.

What is funny is that my friend is an atheist. The silliness of trying to argue what Jesus claimed about God when you think God doesn't exist seems to have missed him. It's like me trying to argue that the tail of a Pink Unicorn that floats around is really bushy and not stringy. If I don't believe in the Pink Unicorn, why do I care what kind of tail it has? And then why on earth would I even care what a pink unicorn prophet would have to say? If God does not exist then Jesus was a liar. At which point who cares what his view of a non-existent God was? Why not make it all up as you go along?

Now my atheist friend is however right about one thing, one of Jesus' messages was that the Law was there to help not hurt us. But first this was not Christ's main message and second this was not a change in God.

God had always said the Law was to guide and protect man. So what Jesus was doing clarifying what God had always been saying. If you recall Christ acted like the Pharisees should have known better. But my friend's biggest misunderstanding is that Jesus did not change God from vengeful to merciful God. God has always been merciful.

Yet sadly this is a very common misconception, even amongst many many Christians.

You see, when we start to look deeply we realize that the God of the Old Testament was always merciful. And He always punished those who did not repent. He is still that way. God was never vengeful in any sort of unjust sense. Remember Lot and Abraham and Sodom in the Old Testament, God would have spared Sodom for even 5 good men. How about in the OT when he sent Jonah to warn Nineveh to repent? Jonah as we'll see later even complains about how merciful God is. How about all the Psalms about love and compassion in the OT?

David in the Old Testament calls God his Father, and longs to be with him.

Here are some passages that we seem to forget:

**Ex 34:6** "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.

**Deuteronomy 7:12**

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of **love** with you, as he swore to your forefathers.

**Deuteronomy 23:5**

However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you.

**1 Kings 8:23**

"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

**Nehemiah 1:5**

Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,

**Nehemiah 9:17**

But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,

Are we seeing the message here: Obey God and he will love you. Disobey God and you will get justice because God's perfectness cannot tolerate sin.

Here are many more. Just look at all that LOVE. – (you can skip through these if you want).

**Nehemiah 9:32**

"Now therefore, O our God, the great, mighty and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love,

**Psalms 42:8**

By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me— a prayer to the God of my life.

**Psalms 52:8**

I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever.

**Psalms 66:20**

Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

**Hosea 3:1**

The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

**Joel 2:13**

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

**Zephaniah 3:17**

The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. (Some one should write a song with those lyrics)... He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

**Even Jonah complains that God is TOO merciful:**

**Jonah 4:2**

He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

Notice too that Jonah is **not** talking about Israelites. He's complaining that God is merciful EVEN to non Jews. So you can't even say God was vengeful to everyone else.

And I have just begun, this is just an smattering of examples of verses from a wide array of all the Old Testament books all showing that God has always been a God of compassion and love and mercy. This way no one can say, "Oh you only picked this book or that book."

**The New Testament**

Since everyone knows of the love verses in the New Testament I don't think I need to spend any time on them so, let's now look at the judgment verses in the New Testament - before we start though:

I always play a game with high school and junior high kids. I ask them: Who is the grim reaper? Well most of the time they say: Satan, or an evil angel. Well are you ready. Let's see who the Bible says is the reaper.

**Rev 14:14** I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

17 Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." 19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. 20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

### **Battle Hymn of the Republic**

words by Julia Ward Howe (1861)

Mine eyes have seen the glory  
Of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage  
Where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning  
Of His terrible swift sword;  
His truth is marching on.

Do you know who the *real* grim reaper is? Who is the "one who is like the son of man?" It's Jesus Christ: The Son of Man is Jesus. He is the Grim Reaper. The Angel of Death. The prince of life. This passage is where we realize who is the REAL Grim Reaper despite the mythological stories. For the Son of Man will reap the earth. But the Son of Man will also redeem his own and pay the price because of his love for them.

Lest you say: But that's just in the Book of the Revelation. Well let's look at the Gospels.

Jesus himself talks about God's punishment in the Gospels.

It's an Unquenchable Fire Matt. 3:12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Remember how Annais and Saphira are struck dead for just the sin of lying in the New Testament? God is always merciful and loving and the just judge. He doesn't change between the old and new Testaments.

### **OK another question I ask people: Who is in Charge of Hell?**

You know we always see things like this on TV.

Many people have this image of Satan sitting at the reception desk of Hell saying: Welcome to Hell Mr Sadam Hussein, ah yes your room will be over there with Mr. Stalin. The room temperature will be raised to over 2000 deg at 3 pm. Have a great stay for ever....ah ha ha ha ha.

But is that really true?

So who's in charge of hell? And whom did Jesus die to save us from? Who holds the keys to death and hell?

**Rev 1: 12 -19** And when I turned I saw.. someone "like a son of man," ... his eyes were like blazing fire....Then he ... said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! **And I hold the keys of death and hell.**

So who's in charge of hell? Who holds the keys to death and hell?

**Jesus is. Jesus does.**

Remember Hell is the last place that Satan wants to go. He's going to suffer there for ever. He's afraid of Hell. He hates hell, he wants to get as far from it as he can.

**So who did Jesus die to save us from? Who puts us in Hell?**

Jesus died to save us from God, from Himself. From the wrath of God and from the Judgment of God.

It was the punishment that he has to enforce because he is a GOOD god.  
But----- you don't HAVE to go to Hell. Because Jesus paid for it ALL.

Now given all that, can you show me where Jesus came to change God from a vengeful god to a merciful God, from a monomaniacal, pathological sadist to a loving father whose purpose was to care for his children? No God has always been loving and caring and a father. Jesus only revealed to us the direct relationship that his sacrifice allowed us to have. There is no difference between God of the Old Testament and God of the New Testament.

Jesus was not all about Love. He was all about repentance and once you have repented you will be given mercy. It's because of his love that we are able to repent and experience God's mercy. God is not vengeful, he's just. God has not changed. What changed is that Christ provided the way to experience that mercy and richness of God's love. We needed a way before. Christ became the way that had always been planned before the foundation of the earth, before Adam sinned.

Note that if God was not just we would not need mercy. How can you experience mercy when there is nothing to be merciful about? When you go to a judge who never condemns anyone for anything they do, you don't get mercy. You get what everyone else gets, injustice. Yet God is merciful because though we have rebelled against him and deserve death, Christ paid that price for us and all we have to do is repent and we will experience that Mercy. Forgiveness despite all the terrible things we have done. That's a God of love and a God of Justice. God is Love, but he is also Just.

For the love of a God who does not punish evil would not be worth much if you think about it. It'll be like a wimpy noodle of a God who wrings his hands as his children kill each other while he is so wishing they would behave. It's like wanting the love of a judge who doesn't do anything to the man who raped your sister. God must be just for him to be good. God must be just for us to receive mercy. The price must be paid for our rebellion and because God loves us He pays our price himself and that is Love. But we must repent or that love is wasted. It's logical. It's rational.

A god that forgives everyone?....

- **Question 2: Now let's go to the second part of that previous question: If you are a loving God, why did you command Israel to wipe out entire nations of people, including innocent children? We answered that, but we missed this part: *Later Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.***
- **This is the passage that is being referred to here:**

**Matt 5:39** But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. . . . 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

We have to understand the context here. Who was Jesus talking to? In the same passage Jesus says if someone slaps you, you should turn the other cheek, that if a man sues for your shirt you should give him your cloak as well. Who was Jesus talking to? Many times folks have gotten commands by God to individuals confused with commands by God to governments. Let's see if we can clarify this. Let's say someone attacks you and hits you in the face and tries to steal your wallet. You file charges. It goes to court as an assault and robbery case. The prosecutor puts you on the stand. You say: On the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>, this man there, hit me in the face and tried to steal my wallet.

Now let's say the judge is a Christian and he knows you are a Christian. Does he have to now turn to you and say. "Hmm I see that you have been hit on your left cheek? Well since I'm a Christian and so are you, you must now turn your other cheek. Judgment for the defendant, i.e. the thief! One hit to the victim's other cheek.

What kind of judge is that? A California Judge. OK but he's an evil judge. But wait, isn't that what Jesus said he should do?

Immediately we see that loving your enemies and turning the other cheek is something you do as an individual and not as a government or as a government agent. The last thing we want are cops who go around making you give you jackets to felons because they robbed you.

You as an individual can voluntarily choose to do that and give compassion, but any agent of the Government must uphold justice and see that it is served first above all. The commandment to you in your office of the state is to provide justice not forgiveness.

Notice too that the purpose of government is to ensure justice is upheld and the safety of their citizens is maintained and that their culture will endure. None of this can be done if judges don't judge, policemen don't protect from enemies within, and armies don't protect from enemies without (i.e. outside).

The admonitions in the Sermon on the Mount are not to you in your office as a judge (if you were one) or to you in your office of governor or president or even senator. And certainly not to you in your office as a soldier or policeman. Perish the thought that soldiers or policemen would decide to turn the other cheek and not resist an evil person rather than protect the innocents in their nations. If this had happened with all Christian soldiers, most of you'd all be speaking German unless you were Jewish (in which case your culture and people would have been exterminated) and I'd be speaking Japanese and be considered a second-class citizen. If they decide to do it now, then all of our grandchildren will be Muslim in a few years, as half my classmates in Yemen assured me, was the eventual fate of the West, (the other

half wanted to move here).

Note carefully, some commandments like the Moral Laws are to everyone, governments, churches, families, and individuals. Some commandments are to only individuals. Some only to churches and some only to families.

### Questions not covered in the Sermon

- **Question 5: Why did God not want man to see his face? Why was it hidden by clouds or darkness? (Ex. 33:20-23 KJV)**

In the Bible Isaiah tells us about the Seraphim.

**1**In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. **2**Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Presumably they covered their face so they would not look upon God. Not because God didn't want them looking at him but from what we understand, quite simply if you look upon the face of God you will die.

Here's what Isaiah 6 says:

**5**Then I said,  
"Woe is me, for I am ruined!  
Because I am a man of unclean lips,  
And I live among a people of unclean lips;  
For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

**6**Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. **7**He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

In the presence of the pure fire of God, every impurity in you will be destroyed, you will perish on the spot. So in a sense God was protecting Moses. The only way you can come in to the presence of the Almighty is if you are covered and washed clean by the blood of the lamb. Then you can approach the Holy of Holies. Moses had not yet been washed by the blood. We will not be able to do that until after the judgment presumably. Don't create any end-time eschatology here though.

Ah but you ask, what about Abraham, he saw God. Yes but that was the pre-incarnate Christ. By the way, the word incarnate comes from the same root as carne asada or con-carne. Yup God in the Flesh.

Ah you say, what about Adam and Eve. But they hadn't sinned when they used to see God. After they sinned they were kicked out of the presence of the Almighty God. Maybe part of that was that was to protect them? We don't really know. It could also have been the Pre-Incarnate Christ too.

- **Question 6: God appeared to many men in the Bible. Why does this not occur today, or even in recent history?**

This is a very interesting question. Most people put Abraham at around 2000 BC or so. So the real question is why were there so many appearances of God in those 2500 years and not so many in the next 2000 years.

If we look at it carefully we realize that in some cases God didn't appear but just spoke to people. For instance though we see God showing up in Genesis to Adam and later to Abraham once we get past Moses and the law, God almost never shows up. Instead we see Angels coming with messages. And then by the time of the Kings we see God talking to the Kings through visions or sending prophets whom He talks to. Notice how he talks to these kings and Prophets. He talks to them but note how the author of Psalm 51 says:

*Ps 51:11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

In the OT the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit it seems would come for a time, reside with an individual and then leave. When the Holy Spirit came, he would make his presence known with prophecies and guidance.

Finally, there's this long period of silence between the Old and New Testament when nothing is documented and then God does show up in Jesus Christ to bring us atonement. Then we have the period of the miracles of the apostles and then again suddenly nothing.

So we can break this up into 4 types of interaction.

1. God appearing,
2. God doing miracles,
3. God talking to prophets or apostles through the Holy Spirit, and
4. Prophets and apostles doing miracles through the Holy Spirit.

However, if we look at it carefully we have to realize that the only reason we know God appeared so often is because it was documented for us in the Bible. So it could well be that God has appeared to others during this whole time but we just don't have reliable documentation. Not that it wasn't happening. For instance if you listen to those faith healers on TV they say God appears to them every night and asks their advice. I don't know who they are talking to but the Eternal God of the Universe would not need no measly faith healer's advice. But the point is that God could be appearing. We just want to know why it's not making the nightly news.

I would say the reason that God is not appearing is because what used to happen sporadically in the Old Testament is not longer sporadic. Remember in the OT the Holy Spirit would come and go. That is God would make his presence known and at times hide himself from us. But what has happened today?

John the Baptist says Matthew 3:11-12: He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Acts 1:4-5 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; {5} "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 2:1-4 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. {2} And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. {3} Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. {4} And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:38-39 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. {39} "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

So we see we are now in the time where God is with us, with in us. All the time. He does not take his Holy Spirit from us.

Ah but you say that's just not satisfying. You want guidance. Well this won't satisfy you either but there is guidance right here in the Bible. Ah but you want to be told the future. Yeah but we know the end, it's right here in the Bible. Oh you want something specific. Like you'll take a trip and meet a tall dark stranger. Oh wait that would be me and your trip was to Church this morning.

But if you look at the Bible the prophecies they were first of the type: If you disobey God then the Assyrians will come in and kill you and your family and will take you into exile.

And secondly if it was about the future, they were all about major things, not about individual entities doing things that were of no concern to others. Like today you will go to Morgan Hill and there you will find a great sale on clothes.

*But rather, I will change the world through you.*

Most prophecies were about nations, individuals or events that would lead to Christ and were part of God's plan. So until God decides to move again in ways that will affect nations and generations, perhaps we will not see these sorts of encounters.

You want to see miracles. But then again we are looking for something documented. Why aren't miracles seen in the paper every so often? I think it's because when we do start seeing miracles in the paper it means that the end is nigh. And frankly anyway you look at it, the end is not going to be very pleasant for a whole lot of people. So I'm not eager for that to happen yet.

But I know what you really want. You want some hard core evidence that God exists. That he is supernaturally interacting with the world now, today. I'd like that too, but I think that the evidence of his existence is being made plain to us through science on a daily basis, and through history, archeology and reason. It's called apologetics.

But I still think he acts supernaturally and does divinely bring His plan. We'll have to talk about that another day. I know it's not the most satisfying answer. But when you are dealing with an infinite mind, it's sometimes hard to discern the plans.

- **Question 7: Did God really plan to kill Moses?**

**Ex 4:24**

**24** And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Jehovah met him, and sought to kill him.

**25** Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me.

**26** So he let him alone. Then she said, A bridegroom of blood [art thou], because of the circumcision.

When we look at passages like this, we have to realize a number of things. This came from the covenant with Abraham...way back from the beginning all Abraham's descendants were to be circumcised. Hundreds of years before Moses was born. The 12 tribes of Israel all did it. Moses having grown up "Egyptian" may not have gotten it done. Then when he got married his wife probably didn't see the need for it for their kids because she did not think her sons were under the Abrahamic covenant. But

now Moses was going to go back and talk to the Israelites and claim to be their leader. Well for one, his kids better be under the covenant. He'd better be under the covenant.

Though we don't know the background fully here, the best we can figure out is that maybe somewhere in the interaction, God had told Moses that he needed to circumcise his entire family. Moses obviously was either putting it off or taking it lightly. But you don't mess around with God. Now the passage says that God sought to kill him. Of course if God seeks to kill anyone then he would have. Obviously the situation was closer to God told him, if you don't obey you will be punished. It's like my 3 year old daughter. When I threaten to punish her, do I intend to punish her always. Well many times I know that just the threat of punishment is sufficient for her to take action. I would know that God knew that the threat of punishment would have been sufficient for Moses or his wife to take action and needn't have required God to have planned to kill Moses. After all if God wanted to kill Moses independent of anything he did, God could have. Now the question is, would God have killed Moses had he or his wife not obeyed him. Yes, I think he would have and then raised up a different leader for the Jews.

But the real question is, did God know that Zipporah would obey. Yes I think he did. So he never really planned to kill him.

BTW embarrassing facts about leaders like Moses is exactly why we think the Bible is accurate. After all if the Bible were made up or if it had been edited greatly over the years, someone would have said: Hey this is rather embarrassing about Moses or gives God a bad image. Let's get rid of it. Instead they didn't change any of it because it was the word of God.