

## Always Take it as it Reads?

God said it. I believe it. That settles it.

We at *Father of Love* ministries believe that God is exactly like Jesus, and as such, God is unequivocally non-violent. Many people attack us for believing such a thing, because we aren't taking the Bible *as it reads*. Yes, the safest course with reading the Bible is to take the Scripture plainly as it reads.

However, what about the verses that (if strictly taken as they read) are apparent contradictions? What are we to do with the passages that explicitly say God did something, and then later on we read that someone else was responsible? Consider the following apparent contradictions:

- Who assaulted Job—God (Job 2:3) or Satan (1:12)?
- Who led David to number Israel—God (2 Sam. 24:1) or Satan (1 Chron. 21:1)?
- Who killed Saul—God (1 Chron. 10:13, 14) or Saul (1 Chron. 10:4, 6)?

Taking the strictly literal view of Scripture also leads people to believe that God sends delusions (2 Thess. 2:11), deceives (Jer. 4:10; Ezek. 14:9), hides truth (Matt. 11:25), tempts (Matt. 6:13), creates evil and darkness (Is. 45:7; Amos 3:6), etc. Does God want us to take the Bible as it reads in an ultra-literalistic way that paints Him in such a light?

In this tract we've provided a few of the apparent contradictions found in the Bible which show both God and another agent being described as doing the same thing. Below the verses are quotations by various scholars and commentators which help us harmonize these passages with a single, yet powerful, principle: *God is often described as doing what He simply allows.*

## God Said to do What He Allows

### Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?

God	Pharaoh
Exodus 4:21 And <b>the LORD said</b> unto Moses... " <b>I will harden his heart,</b> that he shall not let the people go."	Exodus 8:15 But when <b>Pharaoh</b> saw that there was respite, he <b>hardened his heart,</b> and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.
<p><b>"When God is said to harden men's hearts,</b>-to deliver them up to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28),-to send them strong delusions (2 Thes. 2:11)... it is infinitely far from being meant of an efficacious impulse in God Almighty. That <b>all those verbs,</b>- to harden, to blind, to deliver up, to send delusions, to deceive, and the like,-<b>are by an ordinary Hebraism only PERMISSIVE in signification, though active in sound,</b> is placed without all controversy." Jackson, <i>The Providence of God Viewed In The Light Of Holy Scripture</i>, p. 401</p>	

### Who Destroyed Judah?

God	Nebuchadnezzar
Jeremiah 13:14 ... <b>saith the LORD: "I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them."</b>	Jeremiah 21:7 ... <b>saith the LORD, "I will deliver [Judah]... into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon... and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy."</b>
<p>"As is so often the case in Jeremiah as well as with other biblical authors, <b>'God and God's agents... are... the subject of the same destructive verbs'</b>... as a matter of historical fact, it was these people, not God, who mercilessly slaughtered multitudes and decimated the city. Reflecting the Principle of Redemptive Withdrawal, <b>Yahweh merely left his rebellious people alone (Hos 4:17), thereby giving them into the hands of the ruthless Babylonians.</b>" Greg Boyd, <i>Crucifixion of the Warrior God</i>, vol. 2, p. 874</p>	

### Who Afflicted Job?

God	Satan
Job 2:3 And <b>the Lord said</b> unto Satan... still he [Job] holdeth fast his integrity, although <b>thou movedst me [God] against him, to destroy him without cause.</b>	Job 2:6-7 And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, he <i>is</i> in thine hand; but save his life." <b>So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.</b>
<p><b>"God's only part in Job's suffering was to remove the hedge of protection that surrounded Job</b> (Job 1:9-12). Therefore, even when it says that the Lord brought these sufferings upon Job, it is a clear case that <b>the Hebrew idiom is in play in which God is said to do that which He only permits.</b>" Troy Edwards, <i>The Permissive Sense</i>, p. 123.</p>	

### Did God Make Absalom Commit Adultery?

God Caused Absalom to Sleep with David's Wives
2 Samuel 12:11-12 <b>Thus saith the LORD,</b> "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and <b>I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.</b> For thou didst <i>it</i> secretly: but <b>I will do this thing</b> before all Israel, and before the sun."
<b>... Often the Scripture attributes to God what He only permits to be done; or what in the course of His providence He does not hinder.</b> David, however, considers all this as being permitted of God for his chastisement and humiliation" (Adam Clarke Commentary on 2 Samuel 16:10-11)

## **The Common Denominator**

In the above examples the passages in the left columns imply that God was the One who actively caused these events to occur, while the passages in the right columns say that God was not the instigator of these things. In each instance scholars interpret **God as being described in Scripture as doing what He permits**. This principle also answers all of the contradictions found on the first page.

In the last example given God gives us a "Thus saith the Lord," that He took David's wives and caused Absalom to go "in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." 2 Sam. 16:22. If God Himself says "I will do this thing before all Israel..." (2 Sam. 12:12), why should we not take it as it reads? How should we know whether or not to take a verse as it reads?

## **Something Else is Going On**

Imagine if after decades of marriage, you saw your loving spouse suddenly act in shockingly cruel ways toward a disabled person. Would you quickly admit that your wife has a dark side, or would you investigate deeper and at least give them a chance to explain?

When we read verses about God in Scripture that seem contradictory to the life of Christ, we must remember that Jesus said, "**He that hath seen me hath seen the Father**" (Jn. 14:9). All Scripture is inspired, but not everything should be taken strictly as it reads, as we have seen that oftentimes God is described as doing what He merely permits.

When verses about God don't look like Jesus, we can be confident something else is going on "behind the scenes." Our God is fully revealed in His Son, and He never changes (Mal. 3:16; Heb. 13:8)—the God of the New Testament is the same as the Old.

We're told to take the Bible as it reads, and we should do this most of the time. Yet at times, a plain reading results in apparent contradictions:

- *Who hardened Pharaoh's heart:*  
God (Ex. 4:12) or Pharaoh (Ex. 8:15)?
- *Who destroyed Judah:*  
God (Jer. 13:14) or Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 21:7)?
- *Who afflicted Job:*  
God (Job 2:3) or Satan (1:12)?

Could we imagine Jesus doing any of the above? Do we accept the texts at face value which describe God doing these things? Or does Christ provide the lens for understanding God's true character, inviting us to look beyond the surface? Jesus said "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).

How do we resolve the tension between these pictures of God and the life of Christ? This study will provide you with a powerful tool that explains many of the violent portraits of God found in the Old (and New) Testament.



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