

What is Jesus Doing?

IS GOD UNFAIR?

In a word, the answer to this question is “No”.

That said, one of the first arguments that unbelievers (and often seekers) make when they question our faith as followers of Jesus is, “if God is all-powerful and completely good, how can He allow children to die, disease and poverty, or evil to prevail under any circumstances?”

This question obviously assumes that God operates by human standards of acceptable behavior. As we know, God, the Lord, the Creator of all things, does not answer to, nor is completely understandable by His creations. However, there is an answer to this question, and it is a theme that runs throughout the Bible.

As we see from the very beginning in the Book of Genesis, God is a Creator who desires to have a relationship (fellowship) with His creation. It was for this reason that He made man in His own image (Genesis 1:26). He also desires that we should grow into the image of His Son Jesus so that we can truly be His children for eternity (Romans 8:29). In order to understand this passage as well as the concept that God is always just and therefore “fair”, we first must comprehend, if not completely understand, the basic nature of God.

God is both Transcendent (the cause of His Creation living outside and beyond it) and He is also Imminent (involved intimately in every aspect of His physical Creation and interacting, through His Spirit, with every individual person and thing He has made).

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In order to more fully understand this concept, think of His Transcendent nature being the Creator Father who was unknowable by the people of Israel even though they were His “chosen” people. They were afraid of the raw power of the fire on the mountain that they saw and asked only that Moses would interpret the Law for them so that they would not have to be confronted by His awesome and terrifying (to them) Presence.

Now, think of the Imminent nature of God as the Person and Spirit of God represented by Jesus Messiah. While we can only approach the Transcendent God with reverence and awe, we can approach Jesus as His child, and also our friend and brother as well as Savior. We can come confidently before His (Jesus’) “Throne of Grace” to make our requests known to God (Hebrews 4:16).

In Matthew Chapter 5, the same Chapter that contains the Beatitudes, Jesus tells His followers that the sun shines and it rains on the just and the unjust. This is told to them in the context of exhorting them to love their enemies, so that they can be perfect as their Father in Heaven is perfect, the implication being that God provides His blessing of sunshine and rain on the wicked as well as the righteous and so we must endeavor to also do good to all regardless of their attitude towards us.

Is this fair? Of course it is. God intends the sun and the rain to always be a blessing and He loves all His children. When He created the Heavens and the earth, He said “It was good”. To see how this is fair from our human understanding, however, let’s take the long view.

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;

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for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

- Matthew 5:43-48

It occurred to me a long time ago that the reality of the effect of even good things on the just and the unjust can be entirely different. After all, even in human terms we see that “as a man sows, so shall he reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Think of it then this way... When it rains on the just it waters their crops. When it rains on the unjust, it washes out their house.

By the same token, when troubles come (and they will and do) to everyone, the way we approach our trials, and whether we trust the Lord or not according to His Word in Romans 8:28 (God works ALL things together for the good...) can and will have a tremendous impact upon the outcome. After all, for the believer/follower of Christ, the goal is to grow into the image of Jesus and as it is said (NOT in the Bible, but true nonetheless) “no pain, no gain”. For the wicked person, whose only interest is their own satisfaction and/or benefit, the outcome of their trials (although undoubtedly allowed by God to draw them into right relationship with Himself and those around them) is usually fear that leads to unhappiness or worse. Think of this as the sun warming the face of the just and burning the back of the wicked.

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For we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

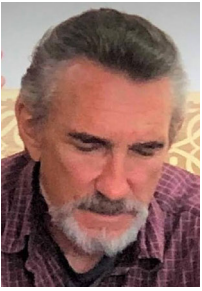
- Romans 8:28-30

Again, about this verse, I often hear both believers and unbelievers alike ask “How is this fair? If God “predestined” some for Glory and not others, why should men even bother to be good?” Again, this plays out in terms of God’s Transcendence and also His Imminence. In His Transcendence, He knows the end from the beginning.

He “foreknew” His Chosen, the “called according to His Purpose” because He is at the beginning and the end (or the beginning of eternity with His finished Family) simultaneously. He (Father, Resurrected Son and Holy Spirit) are the Alpha AND the Omega. God foreknows and predestined us because He already knows the choices we made about a relationship with Jesus and how we lived out His Word by treating well the people He put in our lives. It is WE who are living life out linearly, one choice at a time, while He sees us in real time both before, during and after the choices we will make, are making and have made. It is ALWAYS God’s desire that all would come to salvation in Christ Jesus and spend eternity with Him in Paradise. Yet as we know, some won’t, and by their own choices. That is how God is fair even if we can’t always wrap our heads around it.

Perspective is everything on earth and in Heaven. On both Heaven and earth, the Lord’s perspective is the only one that matters.

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*In His Truth, with His Love,
- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi*