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The 'Vengeful Psalms'

The so-called 'imprecatory psalms' are deemed to show the contrast between the God of the Old Testament and the supposedly new vision brought by Jesus

by James McBride

King David, '*...a man after God's own heart*', and other Bible writers appear to harbour a simmering resentment against their opponents. Psalm after psalm calls out for the severest of retributions against them: '*...My enemies are fierce as lions, LORD God! Shatter their teeth. Snatch out their fangs. Make them disappear like leaking water, and make their arrows miss. Let them dry up like snails or be like a child that dies before seeing the sun. Wipe them out quicker than a pot can be heated by setting thorns on fire*' (Psalm 58:7-9). Not very nice! Examples can be multiplied.

We can, of course, understand their frustration—it's unlikely that similar thoughts have not crossed our minds at some point! But such a stalwart as King David—venerated by his nation and by most Christians? And did he not have God's Spirit with him: '*...Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward*' Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward' (I Samuel 16:13).

Perhaps we are missing something—after all, this is 'the Word of God'. Could it be that hidden here is a divine characteristic we don't yet understand?

The New

Before you argue that 'Jesus isn't like that' or, 'Jesus loves all', consider this: '*... The Son of Man [that's Jesus] will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all the offenses, and those who*

practice lawlessness. And they will throw them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of the teeth' (Matthew 13:41-42). Or, addressing the Pharisees, '*...Serpents! Offspring of vipers! How shall you escape the judgment of Hell [Gk ge'henna]?*' (ch 23: 33).

And the apostle Paul: '*...The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*' (II Thessalonians 1:6-10)

Even the oft-repeated 'Lord's prayer': '*...your Kingdom come*', implies the destruction of all other kingdoms!

Solidarity

The Psalmist gives us a clue to this apparently sadistic attitude '*...I am a companion of all them that fear you, and of them that keep your precepts*' (Psalm 119:63). And echoing the commandment, he says: '*...Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate you? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*' (Psalm 139:21-24).

The Psalmists so rejoiced in the Law of God and in His testimonies, meditating day and night on their deep personal significance, that they perfectly

Deceived? Not Me!

reflected the mind of God in their opposition to all that was contrary to that perfect Law of life: *'...David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain'* (II Samuel 23:1ff).

As with the Psalmists, every Christian must come to totally abhor every action, every thought that is contrary to the mind of God. We must diligently study the Scriptures to learn what is the divine will—and to avoid deception!

Published by:

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
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