

IF GOD IS SO GOOD . . .

Insights into the Challenge of Human Suffering from the Jesus Narrative

Divine Punishment

* The Greek simply has *hina* with the aorist subjunctive passive of *phaneroo* (“to manifest”) and can readily be translated as, “But let the works of God be manifested.” As is certainly the case in Mark 5:23, Ephesians 5:33, 2 Corinthians 8:7; as is likely the case in Mark 2:10, 5:12, 10:51 and a host of other passages; and as is frequently the case in the Septuagint and later post-apostolic writings, the *hina* here should be taken as forming an imperative, not a purposive, clause. (See Biblical Greek, M. Zerwick, pp 141-142; An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek 2nd ed. pp 144-145; Grammatical insights into the New Testament, pp 145.)

John 9.2, 3—His disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents’ sin?” Jesus answered, ‘Neither did this man’s sin nor his parents’, rather, let the works of God be manifested in him.” [Imperative]*

Divine Will

Luke 7:30 (NKJV)—But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

Luke 13.34—Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

Matthew 6.10—Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Genuinely Formidable Struggle

John 5:19—Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.”

Mark 8.22-25—They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything? He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Matthew 13.54—Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue . . . And they took offense at him . . . And he did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

John 14:7—If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

John 14.9—Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

John 3:17—Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be healed through him.

John 20:21—Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

“That the world may be healed.” — John 3.17

All Texts Quoted from the NRSV Unless Otherwise Noted

Daniel 10.12-14—Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.

The more I believed in God, the harder it became to sustain any faith. White supremacy was so pervasive that everywhere I went it was there staring me in the face—in the North as well as the South. If God loves black people, why then do we suffer so much? That was my question as a child; that is still my question.

God’s liberation of the poor is the primary theme of Jesus’ gospel.

The Christian gospel is God’s message of liberation in an unredeemed and tortured world.

The Christian gospel is more than a transcendent reality, more than “going to heaven when I die, to shout salvation as I fly.” It is also an immanent reality—a powerful liberating presence among the poor right now in their midst, “building them up where they are torn down and propping them up on every leaning side.” The gospel is found wherever poor people struggle for justice, fighting for their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Bee Jenkins’s claims that “Jesus won’t fail you” was made in the heat of the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi, and such faith gave her strength and courage to fight for justice against overwhelming odds. Without concrete signs of divine presence in the lives of the poor, the gospel becomes simply an opiate; rather than liberating the powerless from humiliation and suffering, the gospel becomes a drug that helps them adjust to this world by looking for “pie in the sky.”

Heaven and earth, must be held together in critical, dialectical tension, each one correcting the limits of the other.

Cone, James H. The Cross and the Lynching Tree

Greek’s Why vs. Jesus’ How – John 9.2-3

Herb Montgomery
Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211 | Lewisburg, WV 24901 | 304.520.0030
herb@renewedheartministries.com
www.renewedheartministries.com

Mark 9.29—He replied, “This *kind* can come out only by prayer.” (Emphasis added.)

John 16.33—I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world **you will have trouble**. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Mark 10.30—“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—**along with persecutions**—and in the age to come eternal life.

Four Answers of the Four Major Religions of the World:

- 1) Islam
- 2) Hinduism
- 3) Buddhism
- 4) Christianity

The Jesus Narrative:

1. Not a _____.
2. Not everything that happens is the _____ of a _____.
3. Preventing/Healing/Stopping Human Suffering is always _____ but not always _____.

Revelation 21.4—He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for **the old order of things has passed away**.

