

Is God Cruel and Capricious?

Comedian, actor and television presenter Stephen Fry recently blamed God for the world's ills. What is the real reason for all the injustice and pain?

During RTE Television's religious programme *The Meaning of Life*, screened Sunday 1 February, Stephen Fry accused God of being cruel, stating, 'I have no time for this mean and monstrous God. I would say to God, "How dare you create a world in which there is such misery that is not our fault?" . . . Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid God who creates a world which is so full of injustice and pain? . . . The moment you banish Him life becomes simpler, purer, cleaner.'

Just what kind of God is revealed in the Bible? Would we be better off without Him? And is He really responsible for such a terrible world?

God's original purpose

The great Creator God wanted to reproduce Himself – to bring into being His very own children and train them to become like Him – true immortal sons of God. They would possess His perfect character, always do the right thing, and act in love *for their own benefit and that of others* (Galatians 5:19-23).

As part of the training process, He gave instructions that would maintain a relationship with Him. Through internalising His way of love and mercy people would learn the way

that produces happiness and peace.

The earth was created in a perfect state (Genesis 1:31), as were Adam and Eve. However the perfect character God wanted in His children couldn't be manufactured. By definition, humanity had to be given free will to *decide* how to respond. Without the capacity to make choices, we would just be robots, not literal sons of God. Hence His admonition in Deuteronomy 30:19 to 'choose life.'

Humanity has chosen not to go God's way and instead has elected to decide for themselves how they will live. But God's laws cannot be contravened. Just like the law of gravity, they automatically exact a penalty if broken.

Adam and Eve, living in a flawless world of peace and harmony, were taught the way to a successful society by God. They were given the option to select between right or wrong. God's way, based on His laws, is designed for our good, to build a family relationship with Him. He shows us the way to happiness and success. He wants us to keep all the Ten Commandments, for our own benefit. They teach us, in outline form, how to love one another and to

love God, both now and for eternity.

Just imagine the kind of world it would be if everyone obeyed them all. No murders, no thefts, no broken homes, no poverty, no false religion, no war.

Violence begets violence

After Adam and Eve broke off their relationship with their Creator, God did not abandon them entirely. Their younger son, Abel, showed a desire to rebuild that relationship, but his brother Cain was jealous and killed him. One man's rage led to the first murder.

For many generations people went their own way and did as they pleased for the most part until by Noah's day they had produced a world so corrupt and violent that God was grieved in His heart that He had made man (Genesis 6:5-7, 13). He

'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live'
(Deuteronomy 30:19).

saved righteous Noah and his family and destroyed the rest of mankind to make a new start.

Then, not many generations after the Flood, people cooperated to build the Tower of Babel as a mark of their rebellion against God. Knowing they would quickly become violent again, God dispersed human beings to pre-

vent them from conspiring to commit more evil. By confusing their language and scattering them into small groups across the globe, He delayed the inevitable (Genesis 11:1-9).

Chosen to set an example

More generations passed, until a man called Abraham chose to obey God and, as a result, was blessed. Certain promises, both physical and spiritual, were made to him.

Abraham's immediate descendants, Isaac and Jacob (also called Israel) inherited these promises. Jacob's sons became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel (probably the best known is the tribe of Judah, still known as Jews today), who were chosen by God, not as favourites, but as an example to all the other nations of the benefits of obedience. By obeying God they would have reaped immense national blessings (Ezekiel 20:4-13, Deuteronomy 7:7). Other peoples would have seen the peace and prosperity and would therefore want to emulate Israel. Not only would there be world peace, but also good health (see Exodus 15:26).

Four centuries later these tribes found themselves in slavery in Egypt and had lost much of their knowl-

edge of God. However God did not forget His promises to Abraham.

Following the Exodus, during which God freed the Israelites with miracles, He again taught them His laws and they agreed to follow them. They were then brought into the land of Canaan. Here the Almighty told them to kill all the inhabitants. Why would He do this?

A truly merciful God

The people already living in this land were exhibiting the same evil behaviour as those before the Flood, including sacrificing their own children to their false gods (Deuteronomy 12:31).

Like those lost in the Flood, they were killed, not as a punishment, but *as a mercy, since God will resurrect them all to physical life in the future.* They will then have an opportunity along with their children (including those they sacrificed to their false gods) to live in a world of peace and happiness under the laws of God.

God describes the kind of world His laws would produce in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Most would like to live in a world like this.

God says: 'All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of

the Lord your God . . . the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you.

The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God.'

The rest of chapter 28 of Deuteronomy describes the horrific consequences of not keeping the laws of God – consequences all too familiar in today's world.

Choose life!

So why did God create such a terrible world? The answer is, *He didn't.* He created a perfect world in which people would be free to choose between the good way or the bad way. One would lead to health, happiness and everlasting life. The other would lead to the proliferation of illness, hatred, murder, crime and all the other ills we see around us today.

Christ's Reign on Earth

Many scriptures reveal that following Christ's visible return will come one thousand years of peace and prosperity on earth.

- At His return, Christ will stand once more on the Mount of Olives, and the mountain will break into two parts (Acts 1:9-12; Zechariah 14:3-5). That can only happen once and has not yet occurred.
 - Christ will rule the whole earth from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:9) for a thousand years, assisted by those human beings who are now being trained (Revelation 20:4-6).
 - Nations will seek to learn God's way (Isaiah 2:1-3).
 - The Feast of Tabernacles will be kept every year in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16-21) and all nations will go up to worship God there.
 - There will be no more war (Isaiah 2:4). Instruments of war will be turned into agricultural machinery.
 - There will be no more hunger (Amos 9:13-15).
 - The nature of animals will be changed (Isaiah 11:6-9).
 - All the earth will know God (Isaiah 11:9, Habakuk 2:14; Jeremiah 31:34).
 - God's spirit will be available to all who wish to obey Him (Jeremiah 31:33; Joel 2:28-29; Hebrews 8:10-12).
- For more information on Christ's rule, please request our new booklet *Christ's Reign on Earth*.

God said, 'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live' (Deuteronomy 30:19).

God's laws show us the way to love Him first, and then to love our fellow humans. Only when everyone obeys them will there be freedom from the horrible suffering that so many experience through no immediate fault of their own.

Sadly mankind has chosen a path away from God and the results are evident in the views expressed at the beginning of this article.

Our Creator will continue to let men and women go their own way until the results are so calamitous that without His intervention all life would truly be obliterated (Matthew 24:21-22). Never until this present age could we glimpse the possibility of this happening, but in recent decades we can now see how easily this could occur.

God will bring peace

When people realise they will never produce peace by their own methods and are facing total annihilation, God will step in. At that point He will install His government and institute His laws and this will finally bring a peaceful and prosperous world. That time must surely be imminent.

All the dead who have been misled into a harmful way of life by false religion and their own human nature will be restored to physical life. They will be taught the way that brings happiness, peace, and, ultimately, the spiritual blessing of eternal life.

This is not a second chance for those who haven't accepted Christ, but the first opportunity for them to really understand what God is asking of them, and the wonderful future He is offering to all.

For more information on this subject, please request our booklets *Who Is God?* and *What Happens After Death?*

Jan Schroeder

God's Name: Worthy of Respect!

Many use God's name or that of His Son, Jesus Christ, as an epithet, an exclamation, or a curse. What does it mean to respect the name of God?

Respect is 'esteem for a person or other entity (such as a nation or a religion)' (en.wikipedia.com). Everyone, it seems, demands respect for their views, their lifestyle, even their football team. However, respect for God seems to be dwindling.

Exodus 20:7 states, 'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.'

In the modern world, the words 'in vain' no longer have much meaning. Traditionally they imply trivialising God's name, using it in a pointless manner and generally showing a lack of respect.

God is our family name

Names identify who belongs to a

particular family. Most would want good and honourable things associated with their family name and would find it offensive if others were to treat it with disrespect. Indeed feuds have resulted from one family disrespecting another family's name.

Since mortals are begotten as sons of God following repentance, baptism and receipt of the Holy Spirit, it is important to respect our new family name (Ephesians 3:14-15; 1 John 3:1-2). We should never misuse the name of our merciful Creator, because 'Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

Most who profess to follow Christ would agree that it is wrong

Examples of 'Vain' Usage

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Holy Bible explains that the commandment forbids:

'Hypocrisy, making a profession of God's name but not living up to that profession' – in modern parlance, claiming to be Christian but behaving in a secular fashion.

'Covenant-breaking, if we make promises to God . . . yet perform not to the Lord our vows' – for example, breaking marriage or baptismal vows.

'Rash swearing, mentioning the name of God or any of His attributes in the form of an oath . . . as a byword, or to no good purpose' – perhaps using expressions such as, 'As God is my

witness,' to try to add weight to a probable falsehood or to some information where we are unsure of the facts.

'False swearing' – calling on God as a witness to a lie, perhaps in a court of law, where it would be called 'perjury.'

'Using the name of God lightly or carelessly' – where God's name is used as a sort of 'filler' in speech, when the speaker cannot come up with a more decorous expression of surprise or shock.

'Profanation' – using the various names of God or Christ as swear words.

Using God's name in 'charms and spells' or in 'jest.'

to use God's name in cursing, false swearing and suchlike. But could we trivialise that holy name in other ways and not realise it?

For the time being, the world is swayed by the thinking of Satan the Devil. It is saturated with his ideas and he does not want anyone to know the one and only true living God and certainly not to respect Him. So we need to be careful that we fulfil this commandment in all its aspects.

God's name is holy

The prophet Isaiah declared that God inhabits eternity and that His name is holy (Isaiah 57:15). True followers of Christ will hold both His name and that of His Father in heaven holy. The King James version of the Bible declares, 'Holy and reverend is His name' (Psalm 111:9) implying that only God is worthy of these titles.

We are admonished to live His revealed way of life, setting an example among the people of the world. This may include immediate family members, neighbours, colleagues and friends with whom we interact on a daily basis. Some may misuse God's name, but we must be spiritually alert at all times, so we do not slip into following their wrong example.

Throughout the ages, people have used God's name lightly, with a significant increase in recent times. Some usage might at first seem acceptable.

Take for example those who post wishes on Facebook thinking that by adding the Lord's name at the end they become prayers. This could fall into the category listed above of using God's name as a charm or talisman hoping to gain divine favour to obtain the wish.

Jesus, when talking to His disciples and by extension to us, said, 'Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you' (John 16:23). Christ did not say, 'if you wish any-

thing in my name.' His instruction is meant in the context of a true prayer, according to God's will and in the name of, or 'by the authority of,' Jesus Christ. Let us not make foolish requests, using God's majestic names.

All God's commandments are righteousness

In addition to holiness, righteousness is also used to describe God. Psalm 119:172 states, 'All Your commandments are righteousness.' God's people are also called to be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16) and righteous (1 John 2:29; 3:7). These go hand in hand and are essential to our salvation.

Paul says, without holiness 'no one will see God' (Hebrews 12:14). After we have been made aware of our failings, we must strive with God's help to allow Jesus to live His life through us. With Christ in us and righteousness as our goal, we can

access His power to avoid habitually breaking any of God's commandments, including the third.

We are to reverence and deeply respect God in all that we do, remembering that we are approaching the time when the entire world will be judged, in the same way spirit-begotten Christians are being judged now (1 Peter 4:17-18). At Christ's return they will be changed into spirit-born sons of God (1 Corinthians 15:50-57). At that moment they literally become full members of our Heavenly Father's family (1 John 3:1-2), able to assist Christ in bringing the remainder of mankind to that same glory (Revelation 20:4-6; 21:1-7).

To study further what the Holy Scriptures reveal about God's wonderful plan to enlarge His family, please download or request our booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*

Ademola Adesupo

Pornography's Appalling Toll

According to the BBC, children as young as 12 are worried they may be addicted to pornography. One in five surveyed 'said they had seen pornographic images that had shocked or upset them.' Many girls feel 'they have to look and behave like porn stars to be liked by boys' (www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-32115162).

Childline reported that one boy found that viewing porn was changing his view of girls, and he was concerned this would affect a future marriage (ibid).

Primary schools are alerting police and social services to parents who allow young children to play video games with violent or sexual content (*Daily Telegraph*, Monday, March 30, 2015).

And it isn't only children. A

fortnight earlier three male judges were removed from office and a fourth resigned after being found to have been watching pornography on court computers (*Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, March 18, 2015).

Jesus said that if a man looked at a woman to lust after her, that was tantamount to committing adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28). Pornography creates lust and therefore breaks the sixth commandment.

Pornography is as addictive as gambling, smoking and taking other noxious drugs. It can also destroy marriages and families.

If you need help with this addiction, or are concerned about a relative or friend, please request our free booklet *Overcoming Pornography Addiction*.

The Decalogue

Evidence of Divine Origin

Who wrote the Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue? Was Moses the author? or God? How can you know for sure?

From time immemorial Judeo-Christian societies have regarded the Ten Commandments as fundamental moral absolutes – divine laws to regulate man’s relationship with God and one another (Matthew 22:37-39). Not any longer, it seems! There are all too many critics who wish to discredit the Bible and deny that the Decalogue (meaning ‘ten words’ or ‘ten pronouncements’) is of divine origin. But Scripture leaves us in no doubt, stating that the Ten Commandments were ‘written with the finger of God.’ Here, in brief, are three key proofs that point to their divine origin.

Unique content

First, the divine authorship of the Ten Commandments is apparent when we look at the quality of these fundamental decrees. There is no comparison between any moral codes produced by other ancient civilisations and the moral content of the Decalogue and its related laws in the Bible. In the annals of human history they are unparalleled, light years apart from humanly devised laws of the period.

If the Ten Commandments were of human origin, surely the mighty civilisations of antiquity, rather than Israel, would have been prime candidates for producing them. Although great in their physical achievements and worldly wisdom (1 Kings 4:30), in the fields of religion and ethics they failed to distinguish themselves.

Chester G Starr, in his *History of the Ancient World*, makes this profound statement, ‘In the general history of the ancient Near East people

we call successively Hebrews . . . Israelites . . . and from 500 [BC] Jews were *an utterly insignificant group politically and artistically. Only in the field of religion and in the great monument that resulted thereof, the Old Testament, did they excel*’ (page 135). They excelled because the ‘oracles of God were revealed to them’ (Romans 3:1-2). The superior quality of the Ten Commandments is evident when realising that the Decalogue has a divine label attached to it. After all, in formulating god laws, the created cannot compete with the Creator as divine Lawgiver.

Benefits of God’s laws

How much happier, more equitable, and peaceful this world would be if humanity observed just the last six of the Ten Commandments: children honouring and respecting their parents (5th commandment), no murdering other human beings (6th), no illicit affairs with their devastating consequences for both adult and child (7th), no stealing what belongs to another (8th), no bearing false witness intent on damaging reputations (9th), no coveting others’ possessions (10th). This alone would produce a great improvement in human relationships.

Decalogue reveals one God

The second point of evidence is that the first of these commandments reveals the existence of one God to the exclusion of all other (man-made) deities. At the time of the Exodus, the belief in many gods and goddesses was prevalent as archaeological evidence shows. The Israelites were to be different in that

they were to worship God only, as instructed in the first commandment. ‘I am the LORD your God . . . You shall have no other gods before Me’ (Exodus 20:2-3). Belief in one God was unique.

Centuries before the Exodus the patriarch Abraham and his immediate descendants knew the Creator as ‘Almighty God’ (Genesis 17:1). The patriarch recognised Him as ‘Judge of all the earth’ (Genesis 18:25), *one* God and Judge of all mankind. Later



Shutterstock

God revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites as I AM THAT I AM, the ever-living or eternal One (Exodus 3:14, King James Version).

Later still, one of the psalmists had this to say about the various gods worshipped among the other nations in the Middle East: ‘For all the gods of the peoples are idols . . .’ (Psalm 96:5). To this writer, it wasn’t a question of God being the most powerful among other gods. There just weren’t any other gods in existence, as the prophet Isaiah makes clear, ‘For I am God, and there is no other’ (Isaiah 46:9) and, ‘. . . Besides Me there is no God’ (Isaiah 44:6).

The belief in one God as reflected by the first commandment is backed up by secular history. ‘Though not as powerful as Mesopotamia and Egypt, the ancient kingdom of Israel has lasting importance in world history. Unlike their neighbours, the Israelites had only one God’ (*Atlas of Past Times*, article

‘Land of the Bible,’ by John Haywood, page 30).

To summarise this point, the concept of one God was known nowhere else on Earth apart from the people of the Book – the Israelites. Of all the nations, they alone were made aware of the one true God, ‘You only have I known among all the families of the Earth . . .’ (Amos 3:2).

No nation has ever claimed authorship

The last of these three points is that critics who deny the divine authorship of the Decalogue are unable to answer the question, ‘Who originated the Ten Commandments?’ They fail to show who among the nations of antiquity produced them, seeing that no scholar in ancient Egypt, or theologian in Babylon, or philosopher in Greece has ever laid claim to inventing them. Neither have the Israelites ever claimed that they originated with them, stating in the Hebrew Scriptures that they were given by God.

Humanly, ancient Egypt, as su-

perpower of the day, would certainly have been better placed to produce a set of sound laws than the fledgling Israelites. But the Egyptians nowhere refer to the Decalogue in their hieroglyphic writings or highlight them on their wall paintings. It was left to the Israelites, as newcomers in the Middle East, to preserve the Ten Commandments and related moral laws for posterity (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).

The legacy of the Israelite Exodus was a compilation of moral laws by which to live – laws that are applicable for all times.

Both Old and New Testaments state unequivocally that these commandments are of divine origin, ‘written with the finger of God’ (Exodus 20:1; Romans 3:2, and Exodus 31:18), and that the Creator wants these and related laws in the Bible to serve as a timeless moral code for His creation. Such a divine origin reveals a moral Being very much involved with His creation. Scripture states, ‘God created man in His own image, in the image of God He creat-

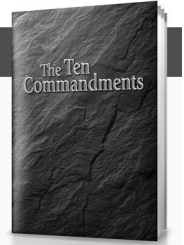
ed him; male and female He created them’ (Genesis 1:27). The Ten Commandments play a crucial role in revealing God’s character attributes that we are to embrace.

Ask yourself: Do I live by the moral absolutes that God gave at Mt Sinai, or do I reason the Ten Commandments away as ‘Jewish’ laws that are no longer binding on Christians today?

Gerhard Marx

Learn More

God revealed the heart of His standards – the Ten Commandments – long ago at Mount Sinai. But what sets them apart from man-made rules and guidelines? What do they reveal about the nature of God Himself? In this booklet you’ll discover the answers to these questions and more.



Contact our office address on page 1, or request or download it from our website at www.GNmagazine.org/booklets.

How Is God ‘One’?

Jesus stated that He and God the Father ‘are one.’ He also said that all true Christians would become one with them. How can God be many individuals, but one God?

The apostle Paul explained that Christ had indeed been ‘equal with God but made Himself of no reputation [‘emptied Himself of His privileges,’ in other suggested translations] to become man (Philippians 2:6-7). As God in the flesh, Jesus allowed Himself to be worshipped (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; John 5:18; 9:38). Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9 tell us that only God should be worshipped. God commanded the angels to worship Christ (Hebrews 1:6)

The declaration by Moses, ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God,

the Lord is one!’ (Deuteronomy 6:4), has caused consternation to many who try to understand who and what God is. Most Jews, even those who claim Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, rule out the possibility that He could be the Son of God, on the same divine plane as God the Father (John 5:18).

The Hebrew word translated ‘one’ in Deuteronomy 6:4 is *echad*. Its meanings include the number ‘one’ and associated meanings such as ‘one and the same,’ ‘as one man, together’ [unified], ‘each,

every,’ ‘one after another’ and ‘first [in sequence or importance]’ (Brown, Driver and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1951, p. 25).

Where this verse is quoted by Christ in the New Testament the Greek word for ‘one’ has a similar range of meanings (Mark 12:29).

Biblical passages reveal two distinct individuals, the Father and Jesus Christ, as God (Hebrews 1:8; John 1:1-3, 14). In other words, God the Father and Jesus the Son form a family, so far comprising only two individuals, perfectly united as one (John 10:30; John 17:11, 22-23).

To study this important subject further, please request or download our free booklet, *Who Is God?*



Q Why are women not allowed to give sermonettes and sermons in Church services?
Question from the Internet

A By examining the Scriptures, we find that women held many very important roles in the history of Israel and the Church. In the New Testament, we find that the older, experienced women were to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5).

We also find that many early Christian women taught their families out of the Word of God. Paul reminded Timothy of the things he had learned as a boy from his mother and grandmother. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul wrote, 'When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.' Paul implies that much of Timothy's faith and understanding came as a result of the example and teaching of his mother and grandmother. Obviously, they were very good teachers.

Nevertheless, when it comes to teaching in a Sabbath service, God gave that responsibility to the ordained elders of the Church, who were men.

Throughout the New Testament, the ordained elders were to be the primary teachers during a Sabbath or worship service setting. Paul wrote that women were not to be fulfilling that role within the Church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

In his letter to Timothy, Paul

added, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:10-12).

These verses may seem to be a bit harsh today, but this is not about the ability or importance of women, but the teaching role that God defined in the Bible.

Q Why do your pastors and elders live in such wealth? Why do they not live like Jesus Christ and own nothing?

HK, Kent

A If Jesus really was so impoverished, it is doubtful He would have been able to associate with high-ranking officials as He did, nor could He have supported His own ministry.

Indications are that He owned, or had use of, a house in Capernaum (Matthew 13:1, 36), although elsewhere He relied on friends and followers to provide lodgings or slept outdoors (Matthew 8:20). Additionally, His clothing was of such high quality that when He was crucified, the soldiers cast lots for His tunic rather than tear it (John 19:23-24).

As a 'carpenter' (probably a builder of some sort), He would have been used to a reasonable, but not extravagant, standard of living.

Scripture allows for ministers of

Jesus Christ to receive a *living wage*. Paul wrote, 'The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should *live* from the gospel' (1 Corinthians 9:14, emphasis added).

That said, the United Church of God in the British Isles has a predominantly volunteer ministry, supported by several part-time office staff and volunteers. Any perceived 'wealth' owned by pastors and elders is a result of paid employment *outside* the Church.

Q My church teaches that Christ returned in 1914. Is this true?

CA, Horsham

A This idea has no biblical or historical basis. If Jesus did return in 1914, why is the world still in such a mess? Scripture shows that Christ could not possibly have come yet, because the whole world will witness this awesome event and many will fight Him (Revelation 19:11-21; see also Matthew 24:29-31 and Zechariah chapter 14.)

Jesus also said that no one, not even He, knew when God Almighty would send His Son back to the Earth (Matthew 24:36). Focusing on a date is not important, although the signs of the times indicate that Christ's return cannot be far off. More important is that a Christian develops the holy, righteous character of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:1-5).

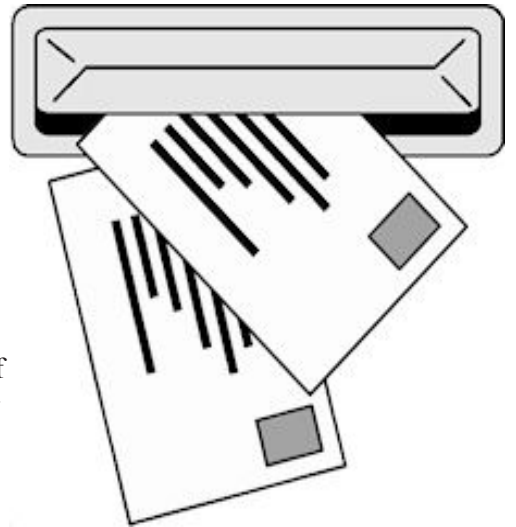
For more information on this subject please read 'Christ's Reign on Earth' on page 2.

Let the Bible Answer...

Does the Bible have anything to say about watching films with horror, violent, or sexually explicit content?

The principles are found in Philippians 4:8 and Colossians 3:1-2.

Letters from our readers



God's judgments cruel?

After reading the articles 'Middle East Chaos: What's Happening and Why?' and 'The Jihadist Worldview: What's Behind the Mideast Brutality?' in the January/February 2015 issue of *The Good News*, I feel compelled to comment on them.

Both articles are well written and give a clear statement on what the newly proclaimed Islamic State/caliphate are trying to achieve in the Middle East, and it certainly isn't 'good news.' It's all very well condemning Islam, but I feel that today's Christians tend to overlook what the God of the Old Testament did so that his 'chosen' people could get to the Promised Land.

Scripture clearly states that God ordered capital punishment for men, women and children in very large numbers. I'm certain that many Christians don't realise that thousands, perhaps millions, of human beings experienced death either by God's direct hand or by others on God's orders.

Christians are told all about God's love and forgiveness but aren't told about the vast number of people

God has slain or the circumstances of their deaths. God acted as judge, jury and executioner which to me doesn't sound very much like a God of love and forgiveness.

G B, Exeter

Editor's comment: Since mankind generally does not understand God's purpose, He is often accused of wrongdoing, when He is actually acting in justice and mercy.

All who have died, whether by God's mandate or simply because of man's inhumanity, will be resurrected and given an opportunity to repent, be forgiven and follow God's way of love.

For further explanation please read our lead article 'Is God Cruel and Capricious?'

Our common enemy

Your *Good News* magazine and booklets are a real eye-opener as to what is going on in the world. Our enemy and God's enemy, Satan, is trying to manipulate the nations. We can rest assured that God's plan will come to fruition.

Reader from Hertfordshire

Literature strengthens and guides

I have not written for some time as I am now 94 years old and my memory is not as good as it could be. I still find the correspondence you send of great interest and a guide for me in my daily life.

V T, Langport

May God bless you all. You are our great lifeline to the truth that has strengthened and enlightened us through some very dark times.

JK, Lincoln

Your studies and teachings are a daily encouragement to share the good news with those the Lord places in my path.

Reader from Dorset

Thank you for your magazines, they are so helpful in understanding God's word.

JH, Isle of Man

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