

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

Does God Enjoy Punishing People?

The Bible contains many stories of God’s judgment. God consumed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining fire and brimstone upon them (Genesis 19:24-25). God judged the wickedness of Jerusalem by having the Babylonian army break down its walls, burn down its temple and palaces, and capture its people (2 Chronicles 36:14-19). In Noah’s day, when the whole world was wicked (Genesis 6:5), God drowned them in a flood, and he is going to bring judgment upon the whole world again (2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 16: 20:11-15). It appears that judgment is part of God’s character; he rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Sometimes, people claim that God’s judgmental nature indicates that he enjoys hurting people. So, then, is that true? Does God enjoy punishing people? Does he revel in the suffering of those who disobey him?

Let’s consider one group that God brought harsh judgment upon: the Canaanites who were living in the land that God promised to Israel. God judged their wickedness by sending the Israelites to completely destroy them:

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD [YHWH] your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD [YHWH] your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD [YHWH] your God.

So, these Canaanite cities, and the people who lived in them, were to be completely destroyed. Israel did not end up fully keeping this command (Judges 1:21, 27-33; 1 Samuel 15), but they did completely destroy some of the Canaanite towns, as we can see in Deuteronomy 3:

Deuteronomy 3:3-6

So the LORD [YHWH] our God gave into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his

people, and we struck him down until he had no survivor left. And we took all his cities at that time—there was not a city that we did not take from them—sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides very many unwalled villages. And we devoted them to destruction, as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon, devoting to destruction every city, men, women, and children.

It's worthwhile to note that God didn't treat these Canaanites harshly because they were Canaanites, but because they were behaving wickedly. In Deuteronomy 13, God instructed that if *Israelites* behaved the way that these Canaanites did, and devoted themselves to serving foreign gods, then the Israelite cities should be destroyed also (Deuteronomy 13:12-16). So, the punishment that God gave to a city that served idols was total annihilation, and he enforced that standard equally among all of the people in Canaan. (For more on the destruction of these Canaanite cities, see our teaching, "[Does God Command Genocide](#)")

Did God enjoy carrying out this punishment? Some suggest that he did, because many times, when God is prohibiting the worship of idols, he describes himself as "jealous;" he wants our attention and honor to be directed at him, not at other so-called gods (cf. Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 6:14-15; 32:21). So, then, perhaps he takes some satisfaction in taking vengeance upon those who spurn him. However, there is good reason to believe that God did *not* enjoy carrying out these punishments upon the Canaanites. You see, even though God's judgment upon the Canaanite cities was severe, it was not swift. God waited a long time to punish them. Here is what God told Abraham about those nations:

Genesis 15:13-16

Then the LORD [YHWH] said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

So, God told Abram that his descendants would inherit the promised land, but four hundred years would have to pass first. Why did they have to wait? Because the Amorites—the people whose cities the Israelites destroyed in Deuteronomy chapter 3—had not completed their iniquity. God was not chomping at the bit to destroy the Amorites; he gave them four hundred years to turn away from their iniquity before he brought judgment upon them. This is not swift judgment at all; in fact, this is demonstrating another part of God's character: God is *slow to anger*.

Psalm 86:15

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Exodus 34:6

The LORD [YHWH] passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD [YHWH], the LORD [YHWH], a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness

Just like God was slow to anger when it came to punishing the Amorites, he was also slow to anger when he pronounced judgment on the city of Nineveh:

Jonah 3:4

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

God gave the Ninevites forty days to change their ways. Unlike the Amorites, the Ninevites repented and turned away from their evil actions (Jonah 3:5-9), and so God forgave them. He did not subject them to the punishment that he had threatened (Jonah 3:10). He gave them time so that they would have a chance to do the right thing.

Just like he did for the Amorites and Ninevites, God is displaying this same forbearance to us today. As Peter said:

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

So, God is in no hurry to judge the wicked. God does not want to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:16-17), and he gives people every opportunity to repent and be saved. He does not enjoy punishing people. He expresses this plainly in the book of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 18:21-23

But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD [YHWH], and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

In fact, not only does God take no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked, but he rejoices when the wicked repent and are saved:

Luke 15:8-10

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

So, does God enjoy punishing people? No, not at all. He wants wicked people to repent and live, not to stay wicked and die. He waits a long time to punish the wicked because he wants them to be saved.

What does God's reluctance to punish the wicked teach us? Well, one thing it teaches us is that God will accept our repentance. God's desire is for us to be saved, and God has provided us every possible chance to turn to him. He's inviting us to turn from our wicked ways and live. We should not be afraid to submit our lives to God, because he is not harsh or unreasonable (Matthew 11:28-29), but he's merciful. As David said:

2 Samuel 24:14

David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD [YHWH], for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

Another thing that God's forbearance does is it shows us how we should act. James teaches that we too should be slow to anger:

James 1:19-20

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Since God has been merciful to us, we should also be merciful to others (Matthew 6:12; 18:21-35). This doesn't mean that we should allow others to mistreat us, but we should not be eager to retaliate against them. We should extend grace to others, and give people the opportunity to make things right.

So, then, God does not take pleasure in our punishment. God is slow to anger, and he desires that everyone be saved and live. He is glad when people turn back to him. We, too, should not take pleasure in the suffering of the wicked, but instead should seek to restore others to repentance and forgiveness.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/119Ministries#](https://twitter.com/119Ministries#)