

Good News in a Violent World

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It was a beautiful day last week on the 24th of May. In Chipperfield an elderly lady, Linda Harvey, took a walk in the local park. Later she was seen crawling out having been so badly beaten about the face that the police thought at first she had been a victim of a shotgun attack. This sort of thing is now commonplace. In the 60's and 70's one could take a child to hospital without fear for their safety from deliberate acts of violence. Now we know of 13 families grieving over the deliberate murders of their children while in hospital by a member of staff. This could be extended to the casualty departments of these hospitals. There are every day, scenes of violence in these out patient departments! Now the staff are being trained in unarmed combat, CCTV systems and panic buttons linked to security guards or local police station. All this was totally unheard of in the 1950's and 60's.

And there are still people who blithely say against all the evidence – “it is no worse now!”, and it makes me wonder what planet they are living on!

Thus we now witness ‘acts of violence’ being so commonplace now that we must make conscious decisions on how we should behave at certain time or in certain places. For example should we travel alone in the dark? - Or at all!

Job 19v7 Behold, I cry out, Violence! But I am not answered; I call aloud, but there is no justice.

The background to this is that Job had all these terrible things happen to him. Now his three friends come to cheer him up. They sat for seven days watching Job and discussing him amongst themselves for seven days before Bildad spoke to him. Bildad in chapter 18 says - its Job's fault, it is the things that he has done, essentially Job is reaping the results of being a bad man! This is the only thing he could think of.

What Job said, mouths what people see now. They feel personally that there is no justice.

Take the example of international violence, be it from the far left or the far right. These people will plant bombs knowing that they will kill somebody.

How do their minds' work we ask ourselves?

Prominent politicians and business people are always surrounded by body guards when in public.

Prov. 4v14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil men.

Essentially this chapter is advising the child to follow the footsteps of a righteous father or teaching through self discipline.

Prov. 4v16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made some one stumble.

This is terrible that it should have to be said - that some people are actually like this! But unfortunately it is true.

Prov. 4v17 For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

Bread is talked about in the Bible as being directly required for the existence of life. This is shown in the 'Lords Prayer', 'give us this day our daily bread'. Clearly this not means physical bread but means asking for God's Holy Spirit - again required for our very future existence.

Here the wicked people need this bread of wickedness to sustain them - to keep them going on this planet!

However if we bring reasons why this is occurring and what shall occur in the future; then it gives us hope to face the current problems and hold our head up high knowing that God will sort it all out.

This is part of God's Good News for this whole world.

Let us investigate the background behind this. I find that if people cannot understand something then they cannot face the problem. The converse is also true.

Lets find out what happened:-

First example:

Gen. 6v2 The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose.

Gen. 6v5 The Lord God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually

Gen. 6v11-12 Now the earth was corrupt (*ruined*) in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

Compare this with earlier in The Bible where God on numerous stages of creation 'Saw that it was Good.' Also in it says that the very angels applauded God's handiwork.

Now not very long after this we see that God said:-

'I am sorry (= *disappointed/saddened*) that I made them!'

Why had the world gone wrong so badly?

We find out in verse 4

Gen. 6v4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and bore children to them.

Essentially we see how entities abandoned God's true arrangement for them, both mankind and (*some of*) the sons of God.

Nephilim is Hebrew for 'feller', someone who causes others to fall down.

What would you do - if you personally had to face it in the flesh?

Would you desire to tough like them - to join them and thus survive, or would you try:

Not be like them, and leave it to God to sort out - but to preach like Noah did about God and behaving to God's requirements?

The second example would be:-

The account of Jerusalem during the First Century.

In 70AD the Romans surrounded Jerusalem and took the city later. Up to this time the Jews believed themselves to be Gods Chosen people, a special nation above all other nations, they felt that it was time to take the matter into their own hands! They had to get rid of the Roman occupying force. They revolted against the Romans. Josephus wrote down that the Jews were worse to themselves (from their own hands) than the Romans were! They tore at each other, and things got so bad that some ate their own children!

In both these examples the common denominator is that people left God's way of doing things. However it is common place for people to push God's way into the background. It is interesting to note that many atheists (if they care about the world) then they become restless and unhappy with the current situation.

God has a particular viewpoint on violence - do we have the same?

Psalms 11v4 The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes examine and test the children of men.

“Examine” means to carefully look to find out what each one of us is really like!

Psalms 11v5 The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and his soul hates him that loves violence.

The righteous and wicked - that includes everybody, we are all tested and the results are examined.

God detests those who are violent.

Do we hate violence like (*Yahweh*) God, or do we like it and find it entertaining?

There are very many people whose entertainment consists of watching television programs filled with violence, war, criminals, animal persecution, etc. No different to those who flooded to the old Roman Amphitheatres to excite the worldly senses!

So - What camp do we put ourselves within?

Why does God have to allow this system of things to continue?

Jonah 1v1-2 Now the word of God came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying 'Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.

This was Jonah's assignment. It was not enviable!

This was the capital city of Assyria, and they were known for their violence, particularly strangers. Captives (*or their enemies*) would have their hands or arms cut off and holes put through their lips (through which to put cords to lead them by)! The city was large, taking three days to walk around.

What was Jonah going to do?

It was just too frightening - he ran away in the opposite direction to Spain:-

Jonah 1v3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish

He then put faith in God and in chapter 3 we read how everyone repented in Nineveh and God spared them. Clearly this was very dramatic thing to occur, changing over night from a state of violence to that of peace!

Clearly ‘The Good News’ is this present worldly System is being brought to an end.

During the years around 607 BCE Ezekiel was writing about what he saw around him. We see how disgusting were the practices of the Israelites (see Ezekiel chapters 8, 12, 22 etc) at about this time.

Habakkuk 1v2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to thee 'Violence!' and you will not save?

God does provide an answer and it is going to end!

Eccl. 5v8 Therefore, says the Lord God: Behold I, even I, am against you; and I will execute judgements in the midst of you in the sight of all nations.

So we should not be amazed or surprised when this occurs because it will happen because there is someone watch and recording our daily thoughts and actions.

The words Lord God (*or High One*) in Hebrew mean The Supreme One.

An account is being kept on all of us.

However it does not mean that we should live like a hermit all by yourself.

No!

The Bible expressly tells us that we should live within The World but to be **no** part of it (ie not doing the evil things that other people do).

Luke 19v41-44 And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But they are hid from yours eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side,

Jesus was so upset when he realised what was going to occur to Jerusalem in the future. In 66 AD the Romans came and surrounded it, and 3.5 years later totally destroyed it!

Luke 21v20 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its time is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those in the city depart, and let not those in the country enter it; for those are the days filled with vengeance, to fulfil that which is written.

Flee away from the city when it was surrounded. Seems rather foolish to run out into the enemy's camp. But in reality the Romans for some reason picked up their things and left Jerusalem for three to four years, and came back later in 70 CE. This four years gave the Christians time to flee to safety into the mountain of Poley.

Think of how much faith would be required, firstly to leave your things behind, and secondly, to stay there up in the mountains for four years.

Josephus wrote about marauding bands of Assyrians killing fleeing Jews for their wealth. However the Christians left much of their wealth behind, with the consequence being the Assyrians thought:- Crazy Christians leave them alone!

What would you do after the passage of one year when nothing happens, then two, then three, then four?

Would you wish to go back and use your latest cooker instead of a mountain fire?

Well people did return and while the Pass-Over was being celebrated in Jerusalem during the fourth year, the Romans came removed trees up to 10 miles radius of Jerusalem and lay siege by putting stakes around within 3 days!

Psalms 72v7 In his days may righteousness flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more.

This talks about Solomon's 40 year reign and future prophetic rule under Jesus Christ. This is what would happen when things are done according to God's rule.

Ps. 72v18-19 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth! Amen and Amen.

Let the world be free of violence and we long for the last part of the psalm come true.

Let His glory fill to the ends of the Earth,

And let us all say Amen to that!