



I Can't Believe
In a God Who ...

Part 4 :: I Can't Believe in a God... Who Kills Innocent Children In the Old Testament

Many people read the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible) only to be shocked by the violence they see, even some, apparently, sanctioned by God. Why did God order the slaughter of children? Why would God support war? There are answers....

Scripture: Isaiah 55: 8-9 NIV, Leviticus 18:25 NLT 1 Samuel 15:1-3 NLT, Isaiah 57: 1-2 NLT and 2 Peter 3:9 NIV

Bottom Line: If we can trust God in the things we do understand, we can also trust God in the things we don't understand.

Discussion Questions

1. What parts of the Old Testament bother you the most?
2. Realizing that sometimes rational arguments don't make any emotional sense, which (if any) of the arguments Carey outlined did you personally find most compelling?
3. Read through Isaiah 55: 8-9, Leviticus 18:25, 1 Samuel 15:1-3, Isaiah 57: 1-2 and 2 Peter 3:9. How do these passages help us understand what was going on in the Old Testament and what's happening now, after Jesus has come?
4. It's easy for us to say there should be no such thing as judgment, but as Carey said, sometimes it's more nuanced than that. Discuss the argument from Yale theologian Miroslav Volf quoted in the message:

"My thesis is that the practice of non-violence requires a belief in divine vengeance... My thesis will be unpopular with man in the West... But imagine speaking to people (as I have) whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned, and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit...

"Your point to them—we should not retaliate. Why not? I say—the only means of prohibiting violence by us is to insist that violence is only legitimate when it comes from God...Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword...

“It takes the quiet of a suburb for the birth of the thesis that human non-violence is a result of a God who refuses to judge.

“In a scorched land-soaked in the blood of the innocent, the idea will invariably die, like other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind...

“If God were NOT angry at injustice and deception and did NOT make a final end of violence, that God would not be worthy of our worship.”
Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace

5. Carey indicated that even after all the discussion, the answers would be emotionally and perhaps even intellectually unsatisfying. What can help you trust God when you don't understand?

Moving Forward

This week, don't abandon your desire to understand, but also focus on trusting when you don't understand. Trusting God when you don't understand because you trust him when you do understand will grow your faith significantly.

Changing Your Mind

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV