



SAFE HARBOR

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The God who acts

There are many religions in our world and with them come many gods. The question that often is not answered plainly is “What makes the Judeo-Christian God the true God?”

Simply put the answer is that our God is a God who acts on behalf of his people and is active in the world they live in. This seems very simplistic and maybe even non-theological to state this but consider the following.

It is a Living God that we serve. Our God is not made of wood or metal. Nor is He an abstract concept nor a philosophical ideal. Our God lives and breathes just as He breathes life into His people. Job, in the midst of his troubles, confidently states: “***I know that my Redeemer lives...and in my flesh I shall see God***”. Isaiah affirms the Living Presence saying, “***I saw YHWH high and lifted up...for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!*** In the beginning of his epistle, John confirms the Living God, “***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ***”. Peter also writes that “***we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty***”. So we are surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses to the Living God.

The angel in the Garden Tomb declared, “***He is not here but is risen***”. The God who acts has gone to battle with the greatest enemies of the human race, death and has conquered. “***Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is your victory? O death where is your sting. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***” Since the Fall humankind has been engaged in a struggle to be restored to God and share in fellowship with Him. But sin has stood in the way, blocking our desired ascent into the heavens. By acting on our behalf, God has made a way to ascend by faith

into His presence. Try as it might, humankind could not effect so great salvation but it is given through the Son even to the sacrifice on the Cross. This is a mighty god that we believe in.

This mighty God is one who acts on the behalf of his people. He is a God who was tempted in every way as we are. Psalm 23 exemplifies the ongoing care of God to those who share in faith with Him. Evidences of Divine Intervention can be seen throughout history. ***“The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork”***. Not only does all Creation reveal the workings of God sings the hymn of glory to its Lord and Sustainer. God speaks and his voice goes out to all who will hear. ***“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in the last days to us by His Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”*** And in his speaking God makes himself known. During his time on earth Jesus brought evidence of His Divinity by his actions of renewing and strengthening the faith of those who followed as well as by the miracles witnessed by the Gospel writers. Even in death, the darkening skies midafternoon, the tearing of the Temple Curtain, the opening of the graves, all speak of the God who acts. The highest testimony is that he acts with pure love.

In Psalm we read, ***‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit.’*** It is the God who acts who sustains His people. ***“And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him or knows Him for he dwells with you and will be in you.”*** The Living God promised, ***I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds”***. By doing this in the presence of the Holy Spirit we may be sustained in our journey in life, being children of faith and strengthened by the God who acts to have the power to live above sin and in the presence of God, strong and secured in our faith.

In Scripture we repeatedly find the Living God acting on the behalf of His people. In worship and the sacraments we find the truth of God’s mercy. By faith we may stand secure in that knowledge that our God lives and gives the victory. As I used the many passages of Scripture here I would hope that you might take the time to find them and read their entirety and let God speak to you.

Reflections

When the angels brought their song to the shepherds their message was of peace to those who have found favor with God, the peace they proclaimed was a peace whereby the spirit of man could come to find rest with the Spirit of God. It was a message of the impending victory of Christ over sin, death and the power of the Devil.

Despite the revisionist take on the Christmas Story, Mary and Joseph were not Palestinians. The designation of the land as Falastin came after the Bar Kochba Rebellion, when the Emperor Hadrian wanted to erase all mention of Judah.

In Revelation, it is said that ***But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (ESV)*** God's judgement still endures and His judgement is true.

Beware of those saying peace, peace where there is no peace.

We must take great care to not be squeezed into a snow globe that is pretty to look at but essentially a sterile, powerless faith. It takes courage and strength to walk in and say "That is sin in God's eyes and His condemnation is upon you. You cannot rationalize away sin as many try to do.

There are thousands even millions of faithful Christians in the world who daily experience persecution at the hands of governments, other religions, supposed intellectuals, the media and even friends and neighbors. Jesus said "I came to bring a sword, (Mt.10:34). Yet, where the persecution is the greatest the witness of the Church is the strongest, bringing new converts into the faith. It is the duty for all Christians to engage in daily prayer the God would strengthen those facing the fiery trials of the faith.

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^[a] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. It is only by faith that true equality comes, not an equality of class or wealth or status but in personhood bonded by a common faith. Paul makes no distinction here nor does he argue for a breaking down of class or a redistribution of wealth. These are ideas of a godless society trying to imitate the great family of persons born in Jesus Christ. Treat all men and woman as persons of worth! Speaking the truth in love! Showing the sinner the error of actions and offering hope in salvation through repentance and faith.

We are admonished by Paul to fight the good fight. The Church has forgotten that it is part of the army of Christ. While He has won the victory as His followers we must take up the battle standard against the forces of evil. The Church has been infiltrated by those who would diminish the message of the Gospel. Stand true and firm in faith.

Words of Encouragement

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5:1-5 English Standard Version (ESV)