

Names of God from the Bible

40 – God is Love

Every name of God is an eternal Name and the eternal nature of God is Love.

Reading: 1 John 4:7-21

It never ceases to amaze me how so many people speak as if God only became love in Jesus Christ. They talk as if the God of the Old Testament is a different God from the God of the New Testament, as if God was 'converted' at Calvary. Or if you prefer, they understand the God of the Old Testament as the God of wrath, judgment and execution, whereas Jesus Christ is the God of mercy and forgiveness.

However, nothing could be further from the Truth, as found throughout the Scriptures. Come with me back to the very beginning, the account of creation. There we find God creating a world in order to expand His influence. Each day ends with the progress report that God saw that the results were good. Such results can only flow from a God of love.

God wanted to share His blessings and dominion with humanity. He bestowed upon us immense power and authority. He provided a perfect environment for us to prosper, multiply and become increasingly fruitful. Out of His love He made us like Himself. He put limits in place for our protection. Yes, creation proved that God is love.

Through His love, God chose Abraham. He chose Jacob and Moses. God chose David and Solomon. He also chose Sarah, Leah, Ruth and Rahab. None of the people God chose were special in their own right. None was perfect.

As we consider God's chosen people, the People of Israel, we find that they did nothing to merit God's love, protection or special favour. All the good things flowed from God's unconditional love. Even today, we see the effects of God's love for His people, Israel.

Even if we consider the seemingly harsh judgments at the time of The Fall, the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Passover, and the destruction of Jericho and the Canaanite kings, in each and every situation we find they are preceded by God's acts of mercy and grace. God's judgment was never meted out arbitrarily or without due warning. There was always a way of escape. However, God never violates our freewill. Once we have determined our actions, God honours our choices but will not change the consequences.

In reality, God sends no-one to Hell, nor determines they shall endure God's wrath. Yes, judgment has been made and the sentence passed. However, God has made a way of escape available to all through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, that way of escape has to be chosen and accepted by each one of us. If we choose to ignore, if we choose to finally refuse to accept Him and His way of escape, all God will do is honour our decision and the consequences of that decision will fall upon us. It's not God's choice, it is ours. We cannot blame God if we decide to go against His will for us.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Only a God of love would initiate the Plan of Salvation. God chose to pay the penalty for our sins Himself even while we didn't have two thoughts about Him. As Paul wrote, "*God demonstrates his*

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own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” And again, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.”

God is Jesus and Jesus is God. The Plan was drafted by Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the world was created. It wasn't forced upon Jesus once He was incarnated. It was Christ's love for us that kept Jesus on the Cross. It was the Father's love for us that stopped Him sending the legions of angels to rescue Jesus and consigning us eternally to Satan's kingdom and Hell.

What does that name mean for us today

God is not willing that any should perish – because He is love. However, the choice is up to us.

Prayer

Father, I am so grateful that You are Love. Thank You for allowing me to experience Your goodness and Your love every day of my life, and for knowing I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

Additional Readings

- Psalm 103
- Jeremiah 31:1-3 & 31-34
- Romans 5:6-10

Questions

1. Why do you think people relate judgment to God the Father, and love and mercy to Jesus?
2. Has God revealed Himself as the God of love to you? How and when?
3. How does Jesus fulfil that name?