

... Cruel or Kind? *continued from p. 1*

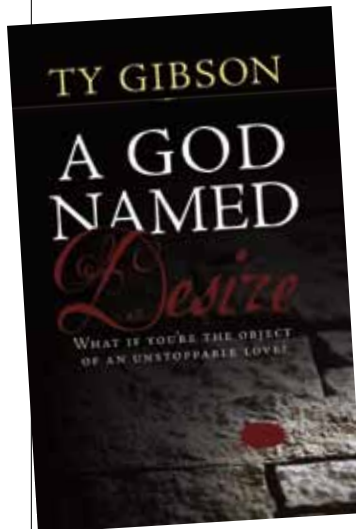
when Lot is reluctant to flee from Sodom, God goes to the merciful extreme of yanking him out by the hand (19:16). Here is the heart of the OT God on full display. He is eager to save and reluctant to execute judgment, but He is forced to intervene with judgment when the freewill actions of humans create irreparable situations of evil and suffering.

On every page of Scripture we witness God in anguish as His heart of infinite love bleeds forth both justice and mercy for an abusive and abused race of rebels. What else can He do?

... Kibidula, *continued from p. 3*

and villages of Tanzania, which creates an interest to learn more about the Bible and spiritual truths. Please continue to pray for the work that is being done in Tanzania through Kibidula Farm Institute and our church family. Amen.

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Our purpose is to help proclaim the gospel
of our Lord Jesus Christ through the spoken and published word.*

MISSION UPDATE

The Newsletter of Light Bearers Ministry



Cruel or Kind?

By Ty Gibson

Q: Why is God so cruel in the Old Testament (OT) and so kind in the New Testament (NT)?

A: The short answer is, He's not. A thoughtful reading of the whole Bible reveals no difference in character between the God of the OT and the God of the NT. In fact, the God interacting with people in the OT was none other than Christ Himself, the very One whom we meet in the flesh in the NT (John 8:58; Exodus 3:14). We imagine that some of God's biblical actions are cruel only when we fail to grasp the true gravity of sin and the true nature of love.

First, simply take note of the fact that the NT includes divine acts of judgment similar to those found in the OT, and that the OT includes many revelations of God's mercy. Those who see the supposed cruel-God/loving-God dichotomy in Scripture call attention to certain divine acts

in the OT—such as the Flood, the plagues of Egypt, and the execution of Achan—then suggest that God does not do such things in the NT. But Ananias and Sapphira were executed by God for their blatant dishonesty... in the NT (Acts 5). Also, the seven last plagues and the final destruction of the wicked are truths we find in the NT (Revelation 16-20). Clearly, the God we encounter in the NT is the same as the God we encounter in the OT.

When context is taken into account, it becomes evident that there is no instance of divine cruelty anywhere in the Bible. There are, however, instances in which God necessarily responds to the human sin problem with justice. In each case He is doing what is best in order to preserve righteousness and save as many people as possible. He always does what is right for all involved, even when acts of judgment are necessary (Deuteronomy 32:4). All of God's actions are performed as the perfect

application of justice and mercy as each case warrants.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is a prime example of God's true heart when responding to evil.

The first thing we see in the story is that God was prompted to deal with Sodom because of the "outcry" of real people who were being brutalized (Genesis 18:20). Thus the story opens by telling us that this OT God cannot bear to see human beings suffer, and yet He is not eager to destroy the evildoers either. He is, in fact, hesitant. So He tells Abraham what He is planning to do. Abraham proceeds to reflect God's merciful heart back to Him by pleading on behalf of Sodom. What if there are 50 righteous people in Sodom, will You not spare the city for their sake? God answers, Yes, I would. Abraham moves in his interceding plea from 50 to 45, then to 40, 30, 20, and finally 10. Every step of the way God answers in favor of sparing the city. Even

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KIBIDULA FARM INSTITUTE

CONSIDER THIS . . .

Let the eye be fixed on the Sun of righteousness. Do not make your dear, loving heavenly Father a tyrant; but see His tenderness, His pity, His large, broad love, and His great compassion. His love exceeds that of a mother for her child. The mother may forget, "yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49:15), saith the Lord. Jesus wants you to trust Him.

Ellen White, *Mind, Character and Personality*, p. 809

He would have us comprehend something of His love in giving His Son to die that He might counteract evil, remove the defiling stains of sin from the workmanship of God, and reinstate the lost, elevating and ennobling the soul to its original purity through Christ's imputed righteousness.

Ellen White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 206

The people who rejected Christ were soon to see their city and their nation destroyed. Their glory would be broken, and scattered as the dust

before the wind. And what was it that destroyed the Jews? It was the rock which, had they built upon it, would have been their security. It was the goodness of God despised, the righteousness spurned, the mercy slighted. Men set themselves in opposition to God, and all that would have been their salvation was turned to their destruction. All that God ordained unto life they found to be unto death. In the Jews' crucifixion of Christ was involved the destruction of Jerusalem. The blood shed upon Calvary was the weight that sank them to ruin for this world and for the world to come. So it will be in the great final day, when judgment shall fall upon the rejecters of God's grace. Christ, their rock of offense, will then appear to them as an avenging mountain. The glory of His countenance, which to the righteous is life, will be to the wicked a consuming fire. Because of love rejected, grace despised, the sinner will be destroyed.

Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 600



By James Rafferty

Kibidula Farm Institute, in Tanzania, Africa, is a self-supporting ministry that works very closely with the church to reach the world with the gospel. They don't get a lot of visitors due to the 10-hour car ride from the nearest international airport in Dar es Salaam, so they were excited about my recent visit for a series of meetings there.

Kibidula is staffed by a group of wonderful, dedicated people, mostly from Europe. They operate a number of projects including a grade school, a training school for high school age young people, a lay evangelism program, a literature work, farming and, more recently, raising sheep. I was there this last November for 10 days (not including the 6 days of travel there and back). The time was divided between three groups: the staff, the lay evangelists and the high school age students.

Every 6 months the lay evangelists travel from their respective areas of Tanzania to Kibidula to receive their pay and pick up more literature. This last year, Light Bearers Ministry (LBM) shipped two containers of literature filled with the Discover Guides and another set of Bible studies originally developed at Kibidula. The lay evangelists are eager to take this material back to their home territory to utilize in evangelism. My visit was well timed so that I could spend a few days with these evangelists. We moved through

students in their early teens. They occupy three "farms," 1 for girls and the other 2 for boys. The students are taught to grow their own food. Many of them are Adventists, but even those who are not are eager to gain the spiritual, physical and mental education offered to them free of charge at Kibidula. We studied the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 with a special emphasis on the judgment in the context of the gospel.

The rest of my time there was spent with the staff of Kibidula. It consists mostly of expatriates from

who is considered one of the best translators available for Swahili. I mention this because one of the great needs in Tanzania is the translation of materials into the Swahili language. Presently LBM has only two sets of materials that we are printing in Swahili, but Tanzania needs more. Our present goal is to get a new updated translation of the book *Steps to Christ*, which is a powerful summary of the message brought to the Church at the 1888 General Conference session. We plan to work closely with Kibidula and Reuben to accomplish this goal in the next few months. If you feel impressed to help support this translation just mark your donation to LBM, "Swahili translation." Once this translation is finished we hope to translate other materials, all of which can be utilized in other African countries that also speak Swahili—Kenya, Somalia and Mozambique.

Kibidula is also involved in an extensive publishing work that is allied with the Tanzania Union Mission. It is hoped that more literature will help facilitate a greater, more prosperous distribution of books. This can be done by making tracts available free of charge throughout the towns



the book of Revelation emphasizing the gospel. It was a great blessing to encourage them in their ministry.

Another group I spent time with a few mornings was the 30 or so

Europe, with one American family, as well as Jason Fournier from Canada with his wife Antwinette from South Africa. There were also some Africans on staff, including Reuben,