

Question: Does God strike people dead if they do not get everything exactly right?

God's character is predominately that of compassion, grace, love and forgiveness; but that does not mean he will not punish unrepentant sin. Speaking to Moses on the side of Mt. Sinai, God described himself as "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7). While the Bible does contain stories of individuals being immediately struck dead, these were incidents where someone openly and willingly disobeyed clear instructions from God (1 Samuel 6:6-7; Leviticus 10:1-2; Acts 5:3, 9).

On the other hand, consider what happened when King Hezekiah called the people to come celebrate the Passover after having purified the temple from years of misuse. Although the law of God said that Passover should be celebrated in the first month (Leviticus 23:5), they ate it in the second month because there were not enough priests sanctified in time to eat the Passover meal in the first month. When the people arrived, they were not ceremonially cleansed; but King Hezekiah prayed: "May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone who sets his heart on seeking God-- the LORD, the God of his fathers-- even if he is not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary." Then we are told, "And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people" (2 Chronicles 30:18-20).

In the New Testament, Jesus' disciples were accused of violating the Sabbath law when they ate kernels of grain in the fields. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that David and his men had eaten the consecrated bread that was lawful only for the priests to eat (Mark 2:23-28) because they needed food to survive. Jesus then added, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Yes, God did strike some people dead; but he was and is primarily a merciful and forgiving God. It is one thing to knowingly defy the instructions of God, but it is another to seek to honor him to the best of our ability even if we do make mistakes. Our salvation from sin is based on the grace of God and not our ability to

understand and do everything right (Ephesians 2:1-10). If we could always do everything exactly right, there would be no need for forgiveness by the grace of God. So long as we seek to serve him from our hearts with integrity, we have nothing to fear. Our God never has been nor is he today eager to destroy anyone (2 Peter 3:9).

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