

Does God Lie?

Rod Reynolds

Does God lie? Did Jesus Christ speak in parables to deceive people?

A reader asked for my comment, writing to me, "I know of someone who said that Christ deceived. He was referring to the... parable of the sower and the seed. [He inferred] that Christ used the parables to deceive people so they wouldn't understand." The reader went on to say that some who think of themselves as Christians justify lying if one's motive is to achieve a "good end," for example, "to get the abortion law altered" so there would be fewer abortions."

Should we lie? Should we do evil that good may come?

Jesus often used parables to teach spiritual lessons. The word "parable" is from the Greek *parabole*, from the verb *parabollo* which means literally to throw alongside. A parable, as explained in our article "Marriage Feast Parables," is by definition an analogy, where one thing is compared to another by way of metaphor or figurative speech.

The Bible is full of "parables," or analogies, type and anti-type, symbolic language and devices, from one end to the other. The Old Covenant system, for example, was symbolic of, or analogous to, a greater reality (Hebrews 8:5; 9:9). Parables can be, and in Scripture, often are, used to explain in a clear and concise fashion truths that would be much more difficult to explain without them.

The Bible was written in such a manner that it could be misunderstood, and it often has been misunderstood, not because God "lied," but because people have chosen to be misled and deceived by their own obstinate disbelief, or lack of care in studying the Bible, or in other respects leaning to their own understanding (Proverbs 3:3-5; John 5:38-47). Many have been and remained deceived simply because they have accepted the false traditions they have been taught (1 Peter 1:18). Jesus did not speak in parables to deceive people, but in part, because they were already blind, and unreceptive to the truth (Matthew 13:13-15). There were no lies in Jesus' teachings.

Even though Jesus did not often fully explain the deeper meaning of his parables to his audiences at the time he spoke to them, he explained them to his disciples. To the apostles he trained during his earthly ministry, and to others who came along later, he gave the instruction: "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops" (Matthew 10:27). The apostles immediately began proclaiming the gospel message after Jesus had died, been resurrected and ascended to heaven. They taught what he had taught them (Matthew 28:20; cf. Acts 2:42; 20:20, 27). The meanings behind the parables of Jesus are clearly explained in the Bible. Through parables Jesus was explaining truths, details concerning God and his plan of salvation, long hidden from human understanding (Matthew 13:34-35).

Satan, the arch deceiver, and father of lies, is the source of this world's false traditions which have kept most of mankind in spiritual darkness (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:1-4; Revelation 12:9). I explained this in some detail in a sermon titled "Enigma of the Bible" (sermons and articles published by us and referred to in this article are available at our

website, cogmessenger.org). You are invited to listen to it, as I go through a number of Scriptures relating to this subject in the sermon. I've also addressed the subject in several other articles and sermons to one degree or another. One of them in which I go into it in some detail is the article "Are 'Many' or 'Few' Called in this Age?," which appears in this edition of *Messenger* magazine. Also the sermon "Mysteries of the Bible" has material pertaining to matters discussed in this article.

Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). The truth is for those who are willing to accept it and act on it. God allows those who reject the truth to be deceived. What is left but deception for those who refuse to believe the truth?

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned **who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness**" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Note that it does not say that God lies to them, but that because they refuse to believe the truth, he sends them delusion, i.e., allows Satan and his agents to deceive them further. I can think of no scenario where resorting to lies would be useful "to get the abortion law altered" so there would be fewer abortions. Lies were and are used constantly, however, to support and promote "legal" abortion (see our article "Murder Is Murder" for examples).

What might help to reduce or eliminate the practice of abortion is exposing the truth about abortion, however. "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light" (Ephesians 5:6-13).

Unfortunately, lying, and the tendency to seek justification for lying, is all too common, even among those who claim to be Christians, or who may be Christians, but are leaning to their own understanding in certain respects, as opposed to being fully faithful to God's word. We don't always need to tell everything we know, but lying is a sin.

There are examples in Scripture of situations where lies were resorted to for expediency in desperate circumstances. Rahab's act of mercy (Joshua 2:1-16), though it involved a lie, was accepted by God (James 2:25). Matthew Henry comments, "This case was altogether extraordinary, and therefore cannot be drawn into a precedent; and that may be justified here which would be by no means lawful in a common case." And he further states, though it was a lie, "...God accepted her faith and pardoned her infirmity. However it was in this case, we are sure it is our duty to speak every man the truth to his neighbour [Ephesians 4:25], to dread and detest lying [Psalm 119:163], and never to *do evil, that good may come of it*, Rom. iii. 8"

(*Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible* on Joshua 2:1-7). We might note that God could, and most likely would, have delivered the spies without Rahab's lie. But he allowed her to demonstrate her faith in her imperfect way, and thus she and her family were saved.

David's lie to Ahimelech, when he was fleeing from Saul (1 Samuel 21:1-2), indirectly led to the deaths of the priests at Nob along with other residents of the city. They were murdered at the command of king Saul, who falsely accused Ahimelech of conspiring against him (1 Samuel 22:9-23).

Though human beings are often guilty of lying, God does not lie (John 17:17; Romans 3:4; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; Revelation 3:14). Jesus was persecuted because he told the truth (John 8:40). I believe it's preferable to follow his example at all times, and seek from him the strength and wisdom to do so. As our reader put it, "...if we need a good or positive outcome, then we need to ask Him for the help and the means to accomplish it! God can accomplish good working through us without us resorting to deceit."

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