

Of God and gods....

In the narratives of the Old Testament, we find two struggles constantly through Genesis till Malachi. The first struggle is of God, where he wants the man he created to be obedient to his commandments and worship him. The second struggle is of mankind, where he wants to break free from the clutches of commandments and define good and evil themselves and thus play god. Interestingly none of either party is able to completely win over their struggles.

God was particularly concerned about one thing. One thing He hated the most, where the anger and frustration were unable to be controlled – “Worshiping other gods”. In other sense, man started worshiping the created rather than the creator. Farther looking things like sun, moons or stars or regular stuff like trees, animals or birds were made god and worshipped. But God was not silent, He did two staggering things in response- 1st he picked out Noah who was a holy man among all the men on earth and completely destroyed the Earth through the flood. But that didn't work and then God called out Abraham who was a pagan man to leave his family and follow Him. Abraham went on to become a great nation, the chosen people, Israel.

When Israel was in captivity of Egyptians, God rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh through a series of miracles at the hands of Moses. But the human tendency to worship the created rather than the creator was far from gone. The golden calf, Baal was very much favourite among the Israelites. In the closing chapters of Malachi, we find Israelites stating that it is such wearisome to worship God. Sad isn't it!

Cutting to the present, if you take a blunt look at Christianity today, we find something similar although not obvious. God's intention from the beginning was to worship Him and only Him

alone and NOT things done or created by Him. These days, Jesus is not sought after because he is God, He is the saviour, Jesus is sought after because he can heal, and he can get you out of financial troubles and in few cases get rid of evil spirits also. Big deal isn't it. The other day, I saw a sticker on a local train where one spiritual guru is claiming to do all these things with a 100% guarantee and that too only in 3 days! I couldn't help myself smiling. Don't the televangelists who come to our living room every day through television promise the same things? The televangelists and in many cases, most of the churches these days relentlessly focus on things done by Christ and not Christ himself. Today we have concepts of new generation churches, prosperity gospel, hyper-grace, and so on. Jesus loves all so come have a party!!! Although many were aghast and shocked, there are many takers for such fabrications. After all, what's wrong in it. Doesn't Jesus love all, heal all, and die for all?

In Exodus 33, we see a tense interaction between God and Moses. This happens after the golden calf fiasco. God is totally irate at this time and says to Moses that –Depart and go up from here, you and YOUR people whom YOU have brought up out of the land of Egypt and I will send an angel before you. The angel will help you in defeating the enemies and take possession of the Promised Land. Notice the- “YOUR” and “YOU”. God is on the verge of completely disowning his own people. Moses shoots back by saying that God you have misconstrued the fact, actually it is your people and you have brought them out from Egypt and if you are not coming with us and want to send some angels instead of you, Thanks for the offer but I am not interested. God eventually relented and agreed to go with the Israelites. At this time, Moses makes a rather unusual but staggering request- “Please show me your glory!” I find this unusual because Moses was involved in a few of the greatest miracles ever performed by God which clearly shows the power and sovereignty of God. Moses knew who God is and what he can do. However, Moses clearly understood the importance of the presence of God and not just the presence of his power.

He knew that it is God himself who brings in the sense of completeness and security. I end this by few lines of a poem by AB Simpson:

*Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone
Once I hoped in Jesus, Now I know He's mine;
Once my lamps were dying, Now they brightly shine.
Once for death I waited, Now His coming hail;
And my hopes are anchored, Safe within the veil.*