

The Greater than all Orishas

Nearly 20 years ago, though a keen admirer of the gods of Yorubaland, I somehow ventured into reading through the Bible, the Christian Scriptures. To me at that time, I was only reading another best-seller and classic, a book whose God was certainly a stranger to me.

I soon developed considerable respect for the book and its God. For one thing, the Bible is so brutally frank, unpretentious and honest. All its great heroes were portrayed just as they were, warps, blemish and all. The very first passage that really caught my attention as I read through was Deuteronomy 32:8-9. In the Good News Version which I was reading, it says:

“The Most High assigned nations their lands; he determined
where peoples should live,
He assigned to each nation a god, but Jacob’s descendants
he chose for himself”.

This passage made a lot of sense to me. To me the issue was very clear: God almighty has assigned gods to each nation, and any nation that takes its own gods seriously stands to reap the benefits. Oh of course, I was envious of the descendants of Jacob whom the Almighty chose for Himself. Deep down I wished I could belong to Him too. But I quickly consoled myself with the Yoruba adage: *Ibi ori da ni si laa gbe* (you live where heaven has assigned you).

Most of the Old Testament, as I read along, only went on to reinforce this my basic belief. I could see the children of Jacob winning spectacular victories over mighty opponents, but then there were instances where much smaller nations did get some victories over them too. In fact on some occasions the Israelites were actually evacuated from the Land of Promise by their enemies! It was quite easy for me to conclude that if you served your gods and were obedient, you got rewarded and if you neglected them you also reaped the consequences. In fact most of warfare in Yorubaland, and certainly elsewhere, is getting your opponent to disobey his gods, as exemplified in the story of Kurumi of Ijaye in his war with the Ibadans.

I received my next major jolt on getting to the 82nd chapter of the Book of Psalms. Till today, there are still aspects of this Psalm that I am still only discovering; but even at that first reading, several things were crystal clear. The Psalm opens on a tough note:

“God presides in the heavenly council; in the assembly of the gods he gives his decision:
You must stop judging unjustly;
you must no longer be partial to the wicked!

Pretty heavy stuff. It continues in like manner showing the anger of the Most High God against this assembly of the gods. In verse 5, this Scripture reads:

“How ignorant you are! How stupid! You are completely corrupt, and justice has disappeared from the world”

In verse 6 comes the bombshell - judgement:

““You are gods,”” I said; ‘all of you are sons of the Most High’.
But you will die like men;
your life will end like that of any prince.

The Psalm ends with a clear declaration that the Most High God will one day take over all the nations:

“Come, O God, and rule the world; all the nations are yours”.

Of course, I had seen earlier on, how the Most High God judged individual gods when there were direct confrontations between them. For instance in Exodus 12:12 He threatened to punish all the gods of Egypt, which He did (see also Num 33:4); while His judgement of Dagon (the god of agriculture - Orisa-Okò/Obatala - of the Philistines) is well known (1 Sam 5:1-7). Since the Yoruba nation is known to have migrated down to present location from somewhere in the Middle East, there is little doubts that the gods brought down to Ile-Ife were part of the gods so judged in the instances above.

“If He likes let Him come and destroy all of us” was however my response to the information in Psalm 82! And I shrugged my shoulders. Though I continued to attend Church for the protection it offers against witches and wizards etc (I loathed incisions and the myriads of sacrifices of appeasement the local gods always prescribe), my heart or perhaps sympathy was much with the local gods. *Ibi ori da ni si laa gbe.*

The turning point for me came as I came to the book of *the Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament. There in Chapter 17 I was confronted with a commandment from the Most High God. A commandment I knew I had to respond to one way or the other. Beginning from verse 26 one reads, concerning the Lord God Almighty:

“From one man he created all races of mankind
and made them live throughout the whole earth.
He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and
the limits of the places where they would live”

Well, that is a re-affirmation of Deuteronomy 32, with the addition that this Most High God determines not only geographical locations people will be assigned to, but also the TIMES as well. Talk of being in total control. The passage went further on to explain God’s earlier actions recorded in Deuteronomy. In verse 27 of Acts 17 we read:

“He (God) did this so that they would look for him,
and perhaps find him as they felt around for him.
Yet God is actually not far from any one of us; ..”

In verses 30-31 comes the bombshell, a clear-cut command I could either obey or disobey:

“God has overlooked the times when people did not know him,
but now he commands all of the them EVERYWHERE
to turn away from their evil ways. For He has fixed a day
in which he will judge the whole world with justice
by means of a man he has chosen.
He has given proof of this to everyone
by raising that man from death!

The Most High God is commanding **everyone, everywhere!** Jesus is the Ultimate Judge! My heart throbbed. I needed to know Him more.

Thanks be to God, I have since learnt that the Most High God is welcoming into His family anyone who will simply receive His Son Jesus (i.e. accept His sacrifice, teachings and commandments); and believe in His name (John 1:12). I have learnt from the Bible that Jesus is God’s way of speaking to us “these last days” even though He tried many other ways in times past (Heb 1:1).

More significantly I learnt that by trusting in Jesus, I myself becomes *de facto* a god. True, folks like Ogun, Oya, Sango, Oluorogbo, Orunmila, Osun etc once ordinary men and women who lived in Yorubaland, were upon their deaths deified and labeled 'gods'. This is because while they were alive, they were possessed by some spirits which manifested themselves using these hapless people as media. In every culture around the earth, these same spirits (fallen angels?) have expressed themselves through willing/ignorant human agents. My 'godship' however is by far superior, being graced to partake even of the divine nature of the Almighty Himself (2 Peter 1:4, Ephesians 1:20-21, 2:6). *Egbe ori omode!*

The Bible does not leave any room for independent gods running the show on earth. In Jeremiah 10:11, God gave the instruction:

“Thus you shall say to them: “The gods
that have not made the heavens and the earth
shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens”.

We wait to see who will have the last word!

People who refer to Jehovah El Elyon, the Most High God, as a foreign God are terribly wrong; and most certainly have been blinded by the “god of this world”, Satan (2 Cor 4:4 KJV). Jehovah is NOT a local God, but the God of all the earth (see, for instance, Psalm 97). And He has commanded **all** to turn to Him. He who disobeys does that at his own personal peril.

My friend if you are still following the gods who demand sacrifices and blood (including human blood - if not overtly, then implicitly through road accidents/war-mongering etc), it is time you turned to the living God. The One Who gave His own blood for you rather than demanding yours or that of your loved ones. I plead with you, do turn to Jesus today.

Do not put your decision off. Do not delay any further. Today is the day of salvation.

For counsel or prayers, contact a Bible believing Church near you or come to us at
The Redeemed Christian Church of God

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10 Wasca Lane, off OAU Road 7, near the University's 2nd Gate, Ile-Ife.

Sundays: 9.00 am Tuesdays, Thursdays: 5.00 pm