Crimson wrote on Thu, 03 November 2005 17:12This seems more directed at a believer than a non-believer. See, I believe that man created the concepts of "good" and "evil", pretty much based on the Golden Rule.

You asked how can a benevolent God exist if there is evil in the world. The question presumed the existence of God and therefore so did the answer.

Crimson wrote on Thu, 03 November 2005 17:12Some of the things God has "done" also seem pretty evil. Such as punishing man for eating the forbidden fruit, killed everyone in the big flood. Also, why is there an "old covenant" and a "new covenant" with God? Did he change his mind?

In a way you could say God changed His mind. I see it that He 'changed reality', to correct a human failing we were unable to repair ourselves. Like a parent will let a child make mistakes, to learn a lesson, they will also prevent a child from making a fatal mistake while they are still learning.

The change between the old covenant and new covenant centers entirely on Jesus, God come to earth to overcome sin. Prior to this event, you could make the argument that someone who turned away from God had no way of returning to Him. This would be indicated by God's 'harsh' method of dealing with extreme sins in the old testament. People that had completely turned their backs on God were a burden on those who followed God, without any potential benefit. They could not come back, and only served to turn the faithful against the creator.

With the introduction of Jesus, overcoming the human's inability to come back from oblivion, the new covenant was required as the reality of the old was no longer valid. Humans now had the potential to come back to God, no matter what they'd done in life and so the 'harsher' methods of the past had to be done away with. Like patching a game, a new set of rules were now in effect.

As to God seeming to do 'evil', like killing everyone in a flood, we need to look at a few different things. First, is killing by its very nature 'evil'? When God handed down the ten commandments He said "Thou shall not kill" (or a more accurate translation may be 'thou shall not murder'), not "Killing is wrong no matter what, even if I do it". He created the universe, and understands it to its very core. Animals, plants, etc all die eventually, this is written into their nature, by what created them. God understands why and when things must die, and takes appropriate action to that end. He told the rest of us not to interfere as we lack the knowledge to understand why something is alive to begin with, let alone when it should die.