

Reconciling the God of the Old with the God of the NT, 1 of 4 – 4november2023

Hi all,

One of the biggest struggles Christians have is reconciling the God of the Old Testament with Jesus' claims of the goodness of the Father God.

And then there are believers who fear for their salvation because of their image of the Old Testament God. Jesus they love, the Father they fear and keep at a distance.

One Baptist told me their pastor taught God blesses with the right hand, and punishes with His left, and you never know which one is coming into your life. He was telling me how he had been set free from his fear and had received overwhelming peace about his salvation, because I had taught him how to understand the Old Testament in context.

This is what I hope to do with this study. We will look at what the writers of the New Testament told us the Old Testament was for, and we'll set in context some difficult to understand passages along the way.

This put the fear of God into the hearts of many 6th graders

Back in the day when I was a 6th grader, corporal punishment was still in practice (spanking). The method was a wooden board applied 3 times to the bottom of an offending child. In 6th grade my class had just such a child.

To this day I remember when he was called out of class, and just outside the closed door, punishment was applied. Each whack reverberated through the halls of the school. I'm sure all twenty something of us in that class noticeably jumped with each 'smack' when the paddle found its target. We all behaved the rest of the year, none of us certain exactly where the line was between just getting detention after school and 3 whacks with the paddle.

That's how many see the Father God of the Old Testament. Class, stay in line or else - and you don't really know what you might do that in His mind rises to the level of getting that left hand of punishment the Baptist talked about.

Mommy, daddy, where do babies come from?

That question from their 4 year old has caught many a parent by surprise. It is a wake up call that their adorable little toddler has become their own little person with all sorts of questions about life.

Consider your answer to that 4 year old, and then consider how you would answer that same child now 12. Then consider the talk you will have with them when they begin dating. How you answer the 4 year old will be very different than the talk you have with them when they start dating.

Why is that? Because they haven't matured in their understanding and life experience to handle the intimate details at age 4. They have all the same body parts they will have as a teenager, but they don't have the maturity and ability to understand the subject, nor are they yet able to handle the responsibility that comes with that knowledge.

Why don't we give drivers licenses to 4 year olds? They have all the same body parts required to drive a car: Hands, feet, their senses. But they don't have the maturity required to handle the responsibility that comes with that knowledge.

What it shows is that knowledge is progressive.

While knowledge is progressive as a child grows, the framework in which their parents guide the household and family are never changing. Their love will never change. Their love for the child will never change. The basic rules of how they run the house will never change. Within that framework of never changing, a child progresses in knowledge and maturity.

Those parents pick up the dirty clothes and put them in a hamper. They train their toddler to do the same, which is new to that child at first. They will keep (trying) to train that child when they are 10 to do the same. They will keep trying when they are a teenager to do the same.

The rules of the house don't change, but the progression of knowledge within that house, within those rules, will change over time. The toddler may go around the house throwing everything from their clothes to some toys to the pet cat into the dirty clothes bin, and come to mommy with a beaming face at the good job they did. And mommy will cheer them on and praise them, then go rescue the cat.

But 4 or 5 years later they are no longer throwing the cat in the dirty clothes hamper, they are perhaps doing their own laundry as mom and dad train them to become responsible adults. Knowledge is progressive within the set framework of mom and dad's personality and rules of the house.

God never changes, but revelation of Him and His ways is progressive

"In many portions and many ways God in times past spoke to the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir over everything, and by whom He also made the ages."

Here we see progressive revelation of the Father God within the framework of His never changing character. He spoke in times past in 'many portions' and 'many ways'. The Greek of these two words is interesting.

Translations struggle with the word 'polymeros'. The 'poly' means 'many', and 'meros' means 'parts', but carries with it the 'parts' included various methods over a period of time about how something is communicated. Some translations say 'sundry times, and 'many ways', while others say 'many portions', still others 'many (different) parts'.

The Greek word translated 'various manners' is 'polytropos'.

'Poly' for 'many', 'tropos' means 'ways'. Combined it says: "God spoke in many parts over time and many ways in times past to the father by the prophets, but in these last days has spoken to us in (through) His Son...."

God treated mankind like that 4 year old who asked where babies come from. He had to speak to them in many parts over time, using various methods, on their primitive level and culture in the Bronze Age (3300BC to 1100BC).

Paul wrote another revelation about Old Testament times

In I Corinthians 10:6 and 11, saying of Israel: "Now all these things that happened to them are for as examples to us, upon whom the end of the age has come."

This reveals God made an example of Israel for the rest of the world to see, sometimes with severity, sometimes with tenderness, but always fair within the context of their primitive and ungodly cultural setting. They were like the kid getting spanked as an example for the rest of the kids.

They were called in Exodus 19:6 to be a whole kingdom of priests to God, and were treated with that expectation. They were given a revelation of wise moral and dietary codes, and even instructions how to approach Almighty God. No other nation got that, so they were treated differently.

It is the reconciling those differences within their OT culture, and through our eyes living in New Testament times, that we will look at next week. Until then, blessings,

John Fenn

<http://www.cwowi.org> and email me at cwowi@aol.com

Reconciling the God of the OT with the NT 2 of 4, Right is right – 11november2023

Hi all,

We left last week talking about how the knowledge of God is progressive within the framework of who He is. That frame work never changes, but how He deals with people within the framework of who He is does change. We must consider an infinite God plus infinite time means infinite revelations of who He is.

In the Old Testament they had a certain amount of revelation, but in the New Testament we have a clearer revelation of who He is. But there is more: Ephesians 2:7 tells us the Father 'in the ages to come will continue to show the exceeding riches of His grace which is towards us, in Christ Jesus. More revelation of His kindness towards is in the ages to come. Ages. Plural. Amazing.

He is love, light, joy, peace, long-suffering, justice and righteousness and all good things. But within those characteristics of the Father God are the ability to apply who He is in a relatable way to each stage of Israel's history.

This will get you thrown off a cliff

When Jesus was in His home town at the 'gathering' (Hebrew: synagogue), in that time most likely someone's home, they handed Him the book of Isaiah. He read from 61:1-2.

In a prophecy about Himself, He read; 'The Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the teachable (meek), to heal the broken hearted....and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' Then He sat down and everyone stared at Him. He told them that passage was now fulfilled.

If you read that passage you'll discover Jesus stopped mid-sentence of Isaiah 61:2. Verse 2 reads: "...to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus sat down after saying 'to preach the acceptable year of the Lord', stating that part was fulfilled.

They didn't like that, and attempted to throw him off the nearby cliff. He couldn't tell them there would be about 2,000 years allowed for Gentiles to be given the chance to know the God of Israel between 'the acceptable year of the Lord' and the 'day of vengeance of our God'. But He told them the part that was revealed at that moment, up to that moment in time: "...to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' That's the age we live in.

We see the progression of revelation once again.

Jesus' first coming was about the acceptable year of the Lord, so that is the portion of His personality we see. There is another part of His personality, 'the day of vengeance of our God', which we as His disciples and children of the Father God, will never personally experience.

Consider that a child may only see the good and gentle side of their dad or mom. But if someone tried to harm their child, that child would see a whole other part of their parents they didn't know existed - the side that would kill in self defense anyone who tried to harm their child. So it is with we children of the Father, being recipients of His love and not His wrath.

But the Jesus who returns at the Battle of Armageddon to destroy the enemies of Israel and God and who will then set up a world-wide earthly kingdom, is the same Jesus seen in the gospels. But the revelation in this age is the day of acceptance.

In this age of gender confusion

Popular culture would have us think a man should be peaceful, gentle, never wanting to fight, just wanting to get along with everyone. But that is partly incorrect. Part of what makes a man a man is the potential to kill in self defense anyone who would threaten his life or the lives of his loved ones.

It is goodness with the potential to do great harm to an enemy that contribute to righteousness. Righteousness is 'rightness'. For a husband and father to be complete, to be 'right' both elements must be in place. He must love his family with all his heart, and therefore carry within himself the threat of violence against anyone who threatens his family. That is right-ness. When a husband and wife make vows to one another, part of those vows include loving and honoring, but another element is that both of them will fight whatever forces would seek to destroy their union.

To say it another way, grace must by its nature, have a flip side of accountability. Noah was told to build a boat, that is grace. If he disobeyed, he would have died with the rest of the people. That's the accountability

part of grace. Grace is from the heart of the giver of grace and is unlimited. But once grace is given it becomes the responsibility of the receiver of that grace to respond appropriately. Grace always has conditions to receive that grace.

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. That is grace. That whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. That is the condition of grace. Grace is given, but the condition is you have to believe in Jesus if you want to receive the benefits of that grace. Eternal life is found only in believing in His Son. Outside of that you cannot receive the Father's grace.

If a person cannot stand up for what they believe and those they love, that is not strength and righteousness, that is weakness. Self control without a moral foundation is weak. (Knowing what is right and wrong and being morally strong enough to stand up for right)

That's one reason people struggle with the idea of a God who is also a warrior. They think strength and morality mean no fighting; "Let's talk about it and not fight." But, if God is who He says He is, but lacks the moral strength to stand up for who He says He is, He isn't God.

Next week, specific examples in the OT. Until then, blessings,
John Fenn
<http://www.cwowi.org> and email me at cwowi@aol.com

Reconciling God of OT with God of the NT, 3 of 4, penalties

Hi all,

In the first week I shared how revelation of the Father is progressive. I had quoted Hebrews 1:1 but didn't give that reference. It says in old times the Father spoke in many parts and many ways to the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days has spoke to us through His Son..."

Last week part 2 was about how we are in 'the acceptable year of the Lord', but showing the other side of His person is 'the day of vengeance of our God.' I mentioned Jesus couldn't tell them there would be a roughly 2,000 year gap between 'the acceptable year of the Lord' and 'the day of vengeance of our God', but didn't explain it. This 2,000 year time or '2 days' prophetically, is for Gentiles to be given the chance to enter into covenant with the God of Israel.

Paul spoke of this in Ephesians 3:1-11 where he wrote in v5-6 it was a mystery that was only revealed starting at Pentecost: "...that Gentiles might be fellow heirs..." He says the same in Colossians 1:26-27, about the "myst

ery kept secret from ages and generations" that Gentiles would be fellow heirs. That mystery being "Christ in you (Gentiles), the hope of glory." And again in Romans 16:25-26, about the revelation of the mystery that all nations (Gentiles) would given the opportunity to come to know the God of Israel.

So there again we see a progression of revelation. Even in Acts 1:6-7 when they ask if the risen Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel, the Lord tells them it is not for them to know the things the Father has placed within His own authority. But the time to bring the kingdom to earth will come...again, a progression of revelation within the set framework of who God is.

Why the Mosaic Law and why so harsh?

Paul wrote in Galatians 3:19 the law of Moses was given because of sin. In Romans 3:19 he wrote it was given "that all the world may become guilty before God." In Acts 14:15-17 and 17:30 he said God had previously overlooked man's ignorance of sin.

Romans 5:12-14 says sin was in the world from Adam to Moses, but God could not hold mankind accountable because they were ignorant of God's ways. There was no standard in the earth saying this is right and this is wrong. That's why Moses was given the Law. It defined right and wrong.

All this means God gave Moses the Law so that He could show mankind what sin was, and what righteousness was. Exodus 19:6 says God intended Israel to be a whole nation of priests to God, therefore as a nation of priests, they were to act as intermediary between God and the rest of the nations of the earth. Israel was to reveal to all the nations the ways of God. They failed.

"My little brother(s) and/or sister(s) got away with much more than I ever did."

If you're not an only child nor the baby of the family, you will most likely agree with that statement. The first child is where mom and dad treat that child according to all their discussions about how they would raise their children, all they've read, all they've experienced. That means the letter of the law. Perfection required. Swift and harsh punishment was served for any wrong doing. (For many if not most of us, lol)

I'm not suggesting God was new to parenting with Israel so He learned a few things, my point is God had to deal with Israel according to the perfection given in the Law. So He seems angry and vindictive in the OT.

Do you still love me?

But just like the parent who brings the wrath of the law down on a child, it is the law that is wrathful, not the parent having to apply the law. How many young children having been disciplined, asked through teary eyes; 'Do you still love me mommy?'

Doesn't that mom assure her child her love for her is unchanged, but she had to discipline according to the rules? Rules that were meant to protect the child and raise that child to be a responsible and successful adult. Mom wasn't angry, the rules showed the child what right and wrong is, and therefore it was the rule that is angry. The rule, the law demands perfection.

Paul would write about this in Romans 4:15 saying: "The law works wrath." And in II Corinthians 3:6-9 he calls the law a "ministry of death", "condemnation", and "the letter of the law kills". (relationships between God and man, or person to person) But the Spirit gives life.

God gave the law so He had to discipline according to the law. But the law is angry, condemning, and no one can be justified by the Law of Moses. James 2:10 says if you live by the Law, if you break 1 law you become guilty of all.

While some nations had laws similar to the 10 Commandments,

God Himself spoke these out and Moses wrote them down, which defined moral law, sanitary/dietary law, and worship law. Because God issued these 613 laws to Moses, He had to hold them to that standard within that context and that age and that culture.

There was nothing in the history of mankind from God up to that point, that told man what was healthy to eat and not eat, how to live and treat one another, and how to approach God.

Because He was presenting these standards to mankind, causing all of mankind to be found guilty before God, He had to deal with Israel according to that law He gave. A higher revelation than the law was given when He sent His only Son. That was the opportunity to deal with mankind according to His own heart: "If you've seen Me you've seen the Father." Jesus said in John 14:9

Picking up sticks, putting them in a basket

In Numbers 15 the Lord gives commands for people who sin in ignorance, and how once they find out they sinned, they may make an offering to the Lord and it will be forgiven, because it was done in ignorance.

Continuing His instruction in v30-31 the Lord says if a person sins willfully because they despise the Word of the Lord, they will pay with their life, for they have despised God's laws. The next verses, 32-33 give an example: A man is working by gathering firewood on the Sabbath day. He is brought before Moses.

Was this a sin of ignorance, or did the man know what to do and despised the law of Moses by sinning purposely? In v35 the Lord said the man had to be executed for he knew what he was doing. Was that God's heart? No, it was the law. How do we know it wasn't God's heart?

Because in the higher revelation which is the person of Jesus, in John 8, He forgave the woman caught in a much worse sin than picking up sticks on the Sabbath: The act of adultery. The Jewish leaders, going from the law, wanted to execute her. That was their context. The angry God of the OT. The perfection demanded by the Law. Jesus brought the higher revelation of the way the Father's true nature is, and forgave her. The gospels are the interface, the changing of context from the Law of Moses to grace.

In Numbers 15 the Lord clearly made an example of the man picking up sticks, but it was within the context of Israel having been given the law of Moses, which defined sin for Israel and mankind. There was little grace in the law for that wasn't its purpose. Its purpose was to define sin. Therefore God had to deal with Israel accordingly.

Next week we'll wrap this up...I hope this has been food for thought and rearranged some understanding of why the Father seemed so angry in the Old Testament. Until next week, blessings,

John Fenn

<http://www.cwowi.org> and email me at cwowi@aol.com

Reconciling the God of the OT with the NT, 4 of 4

Hi all,

Thus far we've covered how knowing the Father is a process of revelation over time. The Law of Moses was one level of revelation, but Jesus is the ultimate revelation. We covered how the Law was given to show mankind what sin was, and what righteousness was. It also showed man that no matter how much he tried, he would never be able to attain the perfection the law required.

The Lord deals with each of us according to our culture.

In Mark 4:33-34 it says the Lord spoke to the people 'as they were able to receive it'. But when they were alone He explained all things to the disciples."

The Lord never changes. He will reveal things to us 'as we are able to receive it'. And if we want to continue in the discipleship process - disciple means 'learner' - He will explain things to us.

There are Christians who believe healings and tongues have ceased. That's their church culture. The Lord doesn't kick them out of the kingdom; He gives them that part of Him they are able to receive, as they are able to receive. If they want to limit Him and their knowledge of Him like that, He will work with what they give Him. The Lord works within their church culture.

When He dealt with Israel it was on the basis of the revelation they had - the Mosaic Law. A cut and dried revelation of sin and righteousness. He limited His dealings with them to that context.

So it is culturally. The New Testament in Ephesians 6:5-7 exhorts slaves and slave owners to live unto Christ. The book of Philemon is about a runaway slave named Onesimus. He ran away from his owner in Colossae, Philemon, to the big city of Rome. There he met Paul who led him to the Lord and sent him back to Philemon to make it right and to be dealt with. Paul exhorted Philemon to be merciful, receiving him as a brother in the Lord. Paul used a play on words in v10-11, for Onesimus means 'useful'. Paul said he wasn't useful before, but now is useful.

Do these passages mean God endorses slavery? No, of course not. But He deals with man according to man's knowledge and culture. Though men and women are free in Christ, they as we today, live in cultures that do not recognize that freedom.

Kill them all! Slavery, and more

Knowing the Mosaic Law was given to show mankind its sinfulness, and how the Lord had to deal with Israel according to that law, gives us insight into how the Lord also treated warfare.

It's difficult for us to imagine the sheer brutality of warfare in the Middle East 3,500 years ago. But even more modern monarchies as well as in ancient ones, had a policy that anyone related to a former king or queen were often murdered. This assured the new sovereign their family and family line on the throne would not be threatened. Men, women, children, whole families, were murdered by the new king.

The custom of wiping out whole villages and cities was normal, that the occupying forces might make the possessions of the slain their own without further interference. The era of the law left little room for mercy.

The custom of opposing armies choosing a champion to represent them to fight it to the death, as with David and Goliath, was a common custom. God worked within the culture and customs. Working with Israel doesn't mean that is a revelation of the character of the Lord, it means He dealt with man within the cultures He found men willing to know Him.

When Christ came into this world

In Hebrews 10:5-7 we are told what Christ said when He left heaven to be conceived in Mary's womb:

"When He came into this world He said: Sacrifice and offerings isn't what you (the Father) wanted, but a body you have prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have had no pleasure. So I say, 'Look, I am coming, in the volume of the (Old Testament) book it is written about me, to do your will oh God."

What was the purpose? The very next verses reveal it: "This is the covenant I will make with them in that day; I will write my laws in their hearts and minds. And their sins I won't remember anymore." (v14-17)

Here is the revelation that He took no pleasure in Israel's sacrifices to Him for their sins. But it was needed and He had to deal with Israel according to that law, but He took no pleasure in it.

Consider that if a husband is forced to use deadly force against someone trying to harm his family, the husband takes no pleasure in having to do what he has to do. But he does it because that is required. That's how the Father was with Israel in battle, as well as the requirements of the Mosaic Law.

He was waiting until the day He could write His law in the hearts and minds of mankind, which is the new birth Jesus brought. Consider that the Law was external, given to people who were not born again, yet expected to walk in righteousness. The Father's great plan was to change the very nature of man at his core to that of a Holy Spirit recreated person who could then receive God's ways and do them because it would be man's nature to do so.

It is our nature now, to love and forgive one another. That's why we struggle so. Our spirit wants to do according to its new nature of Christ in us. As we renew our mind to that way of thinking we battle the nature of the world and our old thoughts to bring hatred and wrath and vengeance on those who hurt us.

This is why I have said so often; grace is harder than the law. The law only measured external performance, but grace measures the motives of the heart. But we can do it.

What Jesus did was to allow our spirit man to be born again of the Holy Spirit, thus able to walk with God, ruled from Christ within rather than the Mosaic Law on the outside. The Father longed for this day when man's spirit can be recreated so that His ways are part of the nature of our spirit. Now we walk with God in spite of our imperfections in our soul and body, as His children, learning as we stumble ever forward in the light of His ways.

This New Covenant in which His ways are automatically written in our spirit when we are born again, is the highest and best we have of the Father God. The ages to come I have already mentioned, will only include the Father continuing to show the riches of His grace and kindness to us. Ephesians 2:7

We may not have all the answers as to why this or that was commanded to Israel in the Old Testament. But we know the Mosaic Law was a revelation on one level, but Jesus is the highest revelation the Father could give, for He was His only son.

We started with Hebrews 1:1, but verses 2-3 complete the picture:

"God spoke in many parts and many ways in times past to the fathers by the prophets. But in these last days He has spoken to us through His son. That son has been appointed by the Father as heir of all things, and He (Father) used Him (Son) to created the ages. He (Son) is the brightness of (Father's) glory, the express image of His (Father's) nature, and upholds all things by the Word of the Father's power. When He had removed our sins He sat down at the right of the Majesty on high (Father)."

Jesus is the highest and best revelation of the Father's true nature. Whatever He had to do in the past according to what the Law and culture of the day required, His true nature is revealed in Jesus. "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." John 14:9

New subject next week, until then, blessings,
John Fenn

<http://www.cwowi.org> and email me at cwowi@aol.com