

Station 4: Does the Old Testament contradict the New Testament?

Introduction

- In the first Canticle, we chant "The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea" (Exodus 15:3) - we oftentimes don't consider the words that we are saying. The Lord is a man of War.
- At the end of that same Midnight Praise, we chant "O King of Peace grant us Your peace establish for us Your Peace and forgive us our sins" - The Lord is the King of Peace. We read in the New Testament that God is "the Lord of Peace" (2 Thessalonians 3:16)
- Are these two statements at odds with one another? Are they talking about two different Persons? Two different gods?
- It is common for Atheists to make similar claims regarding "the God of the Old Testament"
 - Famed atheist Richard Dawkins wrote: "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." (*The God Delusion* - Richard Dawkins p31)
 - This is not a new idea - in the 1st Century, Marcion rose up and claimed Jesus is a separate god sent by the god of Israel, who had created the world, and who was vengeful. Marcion made his own biblical canon, wrote his own gospel, and was excommunicated by the Church in 144 AD.
- "The God of the Old Testament" question usually arises with an example of one of the following:
 - Things done by characters in the Old Testament
 - Lot offering his daughters to the men of Sodom
 - The whole book of Judges but especially:
 - The Levite's concubine
 - Jephthah's daughter
 - Things God commanded the Israelites to do in the Old Testament
 - Conquest of Canaan
 - Things God, Himself, did in the Old Testament
 - The Flood

- The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- The Plagues in Egypt (and especially the death of the firstborn)
- Things God SAID in the Old Testament (i.e. the Law)
 - Laws concerning women
 - Laws concerning slaves
 - An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth
- Although we may see these passages as problematic in the 21st Century, the Fathers of the Church did not hesitate to speak about them. Given a proper interpretation of these events in their cultural, historical, literary context, as well as by reading God into the passage (as opposed to reading the passage into God) we can gain an understanding of what was really going on.
- We will take 3 examples which represent the most common arguments heard by Atheists.

Example 1: An Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth

²³ But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

(Exodus 21:23-24)

We read the above commandment from God in the Old Testament, and then the below from the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament during the Sermon on the Mount.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’
³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. ⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

(Matthew 5:38-42)

How do we reconcile the fact that God is unchanging, and that God in the Old Testament is God in the New Testament and is the Lord Jesus Christ - with this seeming contradiction?

Sources:

- Long Form Outline
- Chapter 5 in *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* by Fr Gabriel Wissa.

Example 2: The Conquest of Canaan

When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

(Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you

(Deuteronomy 20:16)

Joshua turned back at the time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms. And they struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire.

(Joshua 11:10-11)

The Lord, in the Old Testament, commanded the conquest and annihilation of the Canaanites by the Israelites and it seemed to have been carried out by Joshua to the letter of the command. And yet the Lord, in the New Testament, commands us to love our enemies...

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you

(Matthew 5:44)

How do we reconcile the fact that God is unchanging, and that God in the Old Testament is God in the New Testament and is the Lord Jesus Christ - with this seeming contradiction?

Sources:

- Long Form Outline
- Chapter 31 in *Timeless Truth in Truthless Times* by George Bassilios.

- Chapters 7 in *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* by Fr Gabriel Wissa.
- Lesson 2.9 of ACTS 3023 for a Comprehensive Undertaking of the Canaanite War

Example 3: The Flood

Genesis 6-9 is the story of Noah and the Ark and the Global Flood brought about by God to wipe out all of Creation (with the exception of Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark). This story has many different realms in Apologetics:

- Scientific: Did the Flood actually happen?
- Biblical: Other ancient civilizations have a flood narrative... did Moses just *borrow* a fairy tale he learned growing up?

The focus of this station is **neither of those** but rather on:

- Why would God send a flood to destroy Creation? Where is God's mercy?
- How could God regret making man? Did God make a mistake? (Genesis 6:6-7)

Sources:

- Long Form Outline
- Chapters 2-3-4 in *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* by Fr Gabriel Wissa.
- Lesson 2.8 of ACTS 3023 for a Comprehensive Undertaking of the Flood

Resources

- Long Form Outline
 - <https://notes.morcous.com/books/apologetics-level-2-god-exists-which-god/page/god-of-the-old-testament>
- *Timeless Truth in Truthless Times* - George Bassilios
 - The Relevant Chapters are photographed and provided here: <https://notes.morcous.com/books/timeless-truth-in-truthless-times-george-bassilios>
- *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* - Fr Gabriel Wissa
 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/b1clu7stqpi5e7x/Flood%2C%20Plagues%2C%20Wars%20and%20a%20Loving%20God%20-%20Fr%20Gabriel%20Wissa.pdf?dl=0>
- ACTS 3023 - Biblical Apologetics
 - Lesson 2.8 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/nbdg4a14951ks0a/Lesson%202.8%20-%20Flood%20-%20Global%20or%20Local.pdf?dl=0>
 - Lesson 2.9 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/haa2j92ep4vxcny/Lesson%202.9%20-%20The%20Canaanite%20War%20-%20Moral%20Issues%20in%20the%20OT.pdf?dl=0>
 - Lesson 2.10 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/gahyeom0fisda5l/Lesson%202.10%20-%20OT%20Law%20-%20The%20Ten%20Commandments.pdf?dl=0>

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