

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

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Chris Katulka, Is the God of the Old Testament the same as the God of the New Testament?, Part 2

Exodus 34

Hello everybody, I'm Chris Katulka and welcome to the Friends of Israel Today.

Last week I was talking to you about an actress who gave an acceptance speech at one of the many film awards show like the Golden Globes or the Oscars on TV... and... during her speech she thanked all the people who helped her during the filming of the movie and all the people who helped her along the way, which is the right and decent thing to do.

It was after she thanked everyone that her acceptance speech very interesting. This particular actress decided to launch into her own personal understanding, her own personal theology of God from the Bible, the way she understood God's nature and character from the Bible. As she was sharing with the audience she said these words, "the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath and anger, and the God of the New Testament is a God of love, mercy, and peace."

Now this wasn't the first time I've heard this said, that God in the Old Testament is angry and the God in the New Testament was

loving, but it was the first time I've heard it on national television for everyone around the country to hear from the pulpit of the performers.

But is this understanding of God from the Bible correct. Did God deal with anger issues in the Old Testament... and then decided along the way to have a change of heart. Well, I want to answer this question, is God schizophrenic in the Bible, or does his character and nature remain the same in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

Last week I said that we would be using a verse in the Bible to define the character of God in the Bible. That verse is Exodus 34:6-7, where the Lord says to Moses, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

I showed last week that contrary to what this actress said, the God of the Old Testament is actually a God of love, compassion, mercy, grace, and forgiveness, His wrath is displayed only after His extremely generous long-suffering has been exhausted.

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So this week we want to see if that same verse that describes the God of the Old Testament also defines the character and nature of Jesus the Messiah, the God of the New Testament. If it does, then we can put to rest this notion that there is an angry God in the Old Testament and a loving God in the New Testament, and see that there is one God throughout the Bible whose nature and character is consistent throughout both Testaments.

Up front let me say this, It's easy to see the compassion of Jesus throughout the Gospels. In His mercy He healed those who were sick, He brought sight to those who were blind, He restored hearing to those who were deaf, He raised those up who were lame... and He performed all these miracles to what would be considered the outcasts of society even today.

Again in His compassion Jesus fed the five-thousand when they were hungry and removed demons from those who were possessed.

Jesus' message to His people was a message of forgiveness which is seen all throughout His teachings... He even displayed extreme forgiveness when He hung on the cross and He's looking out over the crowd that put Him up there and He cries out, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Jesus' character in the gospels is consistent with the character of God seen in Exodus 34:6-7. He is compassionate, forgiving, merciful, and longsuffering.

However, does Jesus exude the quality of God from Exodus 34:6-7 where the Lord says that He, "by no means clearing the guilty". Remember our actress friend thinks the God of the New Testament is only love, but here's the question... can the purest form of love include a righteous anger and holy wrath, and if it does, does Jesus show any of those characteristics?

I want to point you to an interesting phrase in the Book of Revelation. Jesus is called the "Lamb of God" all throughout the New Testament. He is given the title "Lamb" because it is used to describe Jesus as the Messiah that will become the sacrificial payment of our sins. Yet in Revelation 6:16 when the Apostle John is describing the progressive wrath of God on the earth, and he says

in that day people will be crying out for rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them from the “wrath of the Lamb”.

This phrase is so interesting, have you ever seen an angry lamb that is enacting judgment on other animals from the farm, I know I haven't. These two words typically don't go with one another, but here in the book of Revelation Jesus is pictured as the one bringing judgment and wrath on earth. In the next verse, Revelation 6:17, it says, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” Jesus here is, “by no means clearing the guilty”

So here's what we see. The God of the Old Testament is a God of love, mercy, and grace, yet He must uphold His holiness and His reputation and so His anger and wrath toward sin is justified.

In his book *Knowing God* J.I. Packer wrote, “God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil” (*Knowing God*, 151). And again we see that character and nature Jesus in the New Testament, so often portrayed in the light of love, is consistent with the character of the God from Exodus 34:6-7.

In today's society the concept of love has no room for wrath, it's the reason it's easy for the actress to separate God in the Old Testament

and New Testament, treating the Lord as if He's some schizophrenic God. Yet, in God's love He remains true to His character and nature, which demands sin be dealt with once for all.

The Good News is this: the wrath of God, the same wrath from both the Old Testament and New Testament, is completely satisfied in the sacrifice of His Son Jesus, whose death on the cross keeps you from the wrath to come. That's love!

So the God of the OT, He's not just angry, He fulfills every characteristic from Ex 34. He's compassionate, merciful, and loving. But He must remain holy, he must enact judgement against sin. And Jesus in the NT, He is also compassionate, and loving and merciful and longsuffering. Just as His father is in Ex 34, but in the same means He will enact judgment as the Messiah of Israel.