

God of the Old Testament

Outline

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

Atheists commonly make arguments about "the God of the Old Testament" and contrast Him with "the God of the New Testament." Is there really a contradiction there?

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)

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

How can God be both a "man of war" and "the Lord of peace?" Are these statements at odds with one another? Are they talking about two different Persons? Two different gods?

Introduction

- 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
- Things God commanded the Israelites to do in the Old Testament
- Things God, Himself, did in the Old Testament
- Things God SAID in the Old Testament (i.e. the Law)

Bad Arguments

Before looking at the categories in depth, we should address some "Bad Answers." When presented with the question of "The God of the Old Testament", Protestants typically provide one of the following two answers:

- None of this stuff ever happened
 - "These are just stories" - "These are for a moral lesson" - etc.
 - This is not an Orthodox Perspective
 - If these things are fiction, and God could have chosen to reveal Himself in any way that He wanted, then that means God chose to reveal Himself with fictional acts of war, etc. That is way worse than the reality!
 - We are getting God's perspective on these real events that happened
 - Definitely, in the time of the Old Testament, there was a lot of war and a lot of evil things... and Israel was a part of that world. So if you remove these specific events from history, you're not removing evil from Israel's history, but you're removing God's perspective on it.
- God didn't change, man just didn't understand him back then [but now we do]
 - "The people at that time were really primitive and we find their primitive understanding of God" - "They thought God wanted them to do this, but it wasn't" - "Now we understand what God really wants"
 - usually Protestants mean 'the enlightenment' or 'the reformation' is what brought us to the understanding of what God really wants
 - This redefines the Scripture from something given by God, to being human speculation about God, which opens up criticism in the New Testament as well (e.g. "St Paul didn't understand women" etc.). Now the Scripture is not authoritative, but I am authoritative over the Scripture
 - This is still not a sufficient answer to the question because it doesn't answer "why" but only answers "what now" (i.e. "we have left this behind")
 - Note: This is not to be confused with the concept that God reveals Himself more and more over time (i.e. milk vs solid food)

Things OT Characters Did

Just because it is in the Scripture does not mean it is approved by God, or a model for good behavior, or encouraged by the Church. The following are some commonly arisen examples that you can research and prepare with.

- Lot's offering of his daughters to the men of Sodom
- The whole book of Judges

- Levite's Concubine
- Jephthah's Daughter

See Chapter 5 subsection "The Unfortunate Concubine" in *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* by Fr Gabriel Wissa.

See Chapter 6 subsection "Lot and His Daughters" and subsection "Jephthah's Daughter" in *God is a Man of War* by Fr Stephen de Young

Things God told Israel to do

The Conquest of the Israelites into Canaan is probably the most common form of the "God of the Old Testament" argument.

- Why did God command the conquering of the Canaanites?
- Were the Canaanites really annihilated by the Israelites? Were they supposed to be?
- Why didn't God give them another chance?
- Why did God single out the Canaanites, a single ethnic group?

See Chapter 31 in *Timeless Truth in Truthless Times* by George Bassilios.

See Chapters 5-6-7-8-9 in *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* by Fr Gabriel Wissa.

See Lesson 2.9 of ACTS 3023 for a Comprehensive Undertaking of the Canaanite War

Things God Did

The most common items in this category are:

- The Flood in the time of Noah
- The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- The Plagues in the time of Moses (and especially the death of the firstborn)

And the main question in both cases stems down to "where was God's mercy?"

See Chapters 2-3-4 in *Floods, Plagues, Wars... and a Loving God?* by Fr Gabriel Wissa.

See Lesson 2.8 of ACTS 3023 for a Comprehensive Undertaking of the Flood

Things God Said

The last category is related to "problematic" Laws that were instituted by God. In particular:

- Asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac
- [God Forced Women to Marry their Rapists](#)
- [Laws Concerning Slaves](#)

- [An Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth](#)

Typically, someone who makes this argument is not aware of cultural or historical context, and definitely not aware of what the actual Laws concerning women and slaves are in the Scripture.

Resources

- *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>
- *God is a Man of War* - Fr Stephen de Young
- *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-%20Slavery%2C%20Women%27s%20Rights%20and%20More.pdf?dl=0>

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