

The God Of The Old Testament

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*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory . . .” —
John 1:14*

Is the God of the Old Testament a God of wrath while Jesus Christ of the New Testament is a God of love? Often Christianity presents Jesus—notice the pictures of Him—as the kinder, gentler Son of His more stern and harsh Father. Do Christ and the New Testament support that view of the Old Testament God?

Who is the God of the Old Testament?

How surprising and straightforward is the answer; yet it eludes the thinking of many. Genesis begins with God creating our world. The apostle John opens his gospel similarly by revealing who that God is:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3, 14)

As this passage patently declares, the Word is Jesus Christ. He is God and is the Creator God of Genesis. “All things were made *through Him*.”

“Word” here is translated from the Greek *logos*. *Strong’s Concordance* begins its definition as “something said.” In his *Key Word Study Bible*, Spiros Zodhiates begins his entry with “to speak.” Recall the method the Creator God used to create: He used words; He spoke. The Logos, the One who speaks, spoke this world and everything in it into existence (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, and 26).

Paul also testifies in Colossians 1:16 that Christ was the Creator:

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Paul repeats John’s idea in John 1:1 of the world being created “through Him,” indicating that Another authorized the works carried out by the Word. In the same verse, John affirms that another God Being was present: “the Word was with God.” Genesis 1:26 begins, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image.’” The “Us” is the Word and the other God, the One we now know as the Father (John 17:5).

In His last message to His disciples, Jesus confirms that He continued to follow the creation pattern. He spoke the words given to Him by the other God, God the Father: “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me . . .” (John 17:8).

In Genesis 1, the Creator God is called “God,” translated from the Hebrew word *elohim*. While this Hebrew word is plural in form, it often appears in combination with singular verbs and adjectives, indicating a body, group, class, or family that contains more than one member. John’s description agrees. Both were God, both with the surname Elohim, of the Family called God, which is currently composed of the Father and the Son, as revealed in the New Testament.

Yahweh Elohim

As we have seen, the Bible establishes that Christ is the Creator God of the Old Testament. Notice what Genesis 2:4 adds about the Creator God: “This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”

This verse marks which member of the Elohim Family is the Creator God. He is *Yahweh Elohim*, the Lord God. The entry in *Strong’s* for “Jehovah” (*Yahweh*) reads: “(the) *self-Existent* or Eternal: *Jehovah*, Jewish national name of God:—Jehovah, the Lord.” Zodhiates says of *Yahweh*, “The covenant name of God most prominently known in connection with His relationship with the nation of Israel.”

From the Bible, we see that Christ is the Creator God and that the Creator God is *Yahweh*—the God of the Old Testament. Therefore, it follows that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament.

As further confirmation, notice two verses:

» “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last.’” (Isaiah 44:6)

» “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life.’” (Revelation 2:8; see also Revelation 1:11, 17; 22:13)

Yahweh of the Old Testament and Christ of the New refer to themselves as “the First and the Last” because both are the same self-existent, eternal Being.

Consider this exchange between God and Moses in Exodus 3:13-15:

Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. *This is My name forever*, and this is My memorial to all generations.’” (Emphasis ours.)

Here, the God of the fathers of Israel reveals His name as “I AM.” Therefore, the Lord God (*Yahweh Elohim*) whom we now know as Jesus Christ also forever goes by the name “I AM.”

To this, we must add this New Testament passage where Jesus confronts the Jews:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:56-59)

Jesus declares that He is I AM, their God. No wonder their immediate reaction was to stone Him! They considered it the ultimate blasphemy instead of essential truth revealed.

The Law

The Bible identifies Jesus Christ as the God of the Old Testament, *Yahweh Elohim*.¹ Therefore, when Jesus speaks, He is both the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. Consider this fundamental characteristic of both:

» For I, Jehovah [*Yahweh*], change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6, *American Standard Version*)

» Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Considering this unchanging nature, why would many in Christianity paint such different pictures, in many cases literally, of Jesus Christ and the Old Testament God? Knowing that *Yahweh Elohim* is also Jesus Christ requires rethinking a core issue—the law. Because *Yahweh Elohim* and Jesus Christ are one and the same, a Being who does not change and is the same yesterday, today, and forever, it is inconceivable to believe that He came to do away with the very laws that He created to be obeyed by His people.

He said as much in Mathew 5:17: “Don’t suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning” (*Contemporary English Version*® Copyright © 1995 American Bible Society. All rights reserved.).

Contrary to Christ’s warning, but true to human nature (Romans 8:7), many do suppose He did away with His laws. He proves how wrong that is by the verses that follow. As examples, in verses 21-22, about murder, and verses 27-28, about adultery, He explains that a full understanding covers not just the physical acts but also the *thoughts* and *motivations* that lead to those actions.

In each of these instances, rather than abolishing the law, He expands it, making it more sweeping than it ever was in the Old Testament. No longer is physical obedience sufficient. Our Savior adds the higher standard of spiritual compliance.

Because Israel was a physical nation without access to the Holy Spirit, only physical obedience was possible. Since the first Christian Pentecost in Acts 2, we have access to God’s Spirit and a new heart

(Ezekiel 36:26-27). With that Spirit, *Yahweh Elohim*, Jesus Christ, now charges us to accomplish His full intent by walking in His statutes, keeping His judgments, and doing all this from a new spiritual heart.

Because Christ made plain the spiritual intent of the law He created as *Yahweh Elohim* in the Old Testament, Paul could later write that the law is spiritual (Romans 7:14) and that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).

For those who think and teach otherwise, Christ says to them:

» Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

» Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:22-23)

Contrary to Christ’s explicit warning, many do suppose and conjure up various reasons and explanations as to why the law is no longer in force. The unchanging Christ says to them what He said to the Jews of His day: “. . . making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do” (Mark 7:13).

Why do some push to do away with the law and commandments that we now see Christ created? Have we ever wondered what is so terrible about them? What is so bad about honoring one’s parents and not murdering, committing adultery, stealing, or lying that they must be done away? Is it because to justify rejecting one commandment a person must reject all?

The Sabbath

While most Christians would not outrightly reject nine of the Ten Commandments, there is one that most do—the Sabbath.

In Mark 2:28 and Luke 6:5, Christ says, “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” “Lord” here is from the Greek word *kurios*. Zodhiates defines *kurios* in this way: “Lord, master, owner, as the possessor, owner, master, e.g. of property.” Christ, as the Creator of the seventh-day Sabbath, is rightly claiming to be the owner of that Sabbath. Nowhere in the New Testament does He trade that day for another. A Catholic cardinal concurs:

But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify. (Gibbons, James Cardinal. *Faith of Our Fathers*. First published 1876)

Cardinal Gibbons is correct. No such scripture exists that shows the owner of the Sabbath, Christ, ever relinquished ownership over the day nor that the writers of the New Testament ever traded it for another day (nor could they, as they did not have the authority from God to do so).

Therefore, by what authority do some observe a Sunday “Sabbath”? Christ, His disciples, and the first-century Christians kept Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath. Who authorized a Sunday “Sabbath”? Who made this change? How did it occur?

History gives the when and who of the change from a Saturday to Sunday Sabbath (from <http://cgi.org/who-changed-the-sabbath-to-sunday/>):

» When Emperor Constantine I—a pagan sun-worshipper—came to power in AD 313, he legalized Christianity and made the first Sunday-keeping law. His infamous Sunday enforcement law of March 7, AD 321, reads as follows: “On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.” (*Codex Justinianus* 3.12.3, trans. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed. (New York, 1902), 3:380, note 1.)

» The Sunday law was officially confirmed by the Roman Papacy. The Council of Laodicea in AD 364 decreed, “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day [*sic*; Sunday is not the Lord’s day] they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ” (Strand, *op. cit.*, citing Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, 2 [Edinburgh, 1876] 316).

» Again, “The Catholic Church, . . . by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday” (*The Catholic Mirror*, official publication of James Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893).

» “Protestants do not realize that by observing Sunday, they accept the authority of the spokesperson of the Church, the Pope” (*Our Sunday Visitor*, February 5, 1950).

» “Sunday is our mark of authority. . . . [T]he church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact” (*Catholic Record of London*, Ontario Sept 1, 1923).

The law created by *Yahweh Elohim*, Jesus Christ, included a seventh-day or Saturday Sabbath. Neither Christ nor the apostles sanctioned the change to Sunday. Nearly three hundred years after them, the Church of Rome did. That church and her daughters, the Protestant churches, continue to bow to that church’s authority rather than that of Jesus Christ, *Yahweh Elohim*.

It is interesting that many in Christianity do not know who the God of the Old Testament is, even though the Bible teaches it plainly. It is also interesting to see how that blind spot has colored their view of God’s law and commandments, particularly the Sabbath. Finally, it is sobering to realize how that blind spot has led many to unwittingly accept papal authority—human authority—over the authority of the Creator God, the God of the Old Testament, Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

¹ In only a handful of verses in the entire Old Testament can we understand *Yahweh* to refer to another member of the God Family, God the Father (see Psalm 2:2, 7, 11; 110:1-2, 4; Isaiah 61:1).

Yahweh appears 6,807 times in Scripture, and all but these few refer to the Creator God who became Jesus Christ. In each of these exceptions, the Israelites understood them to refer to the Creator God interacting with a man (the type), but New Testament revelation shows that they can be understood as interaction between the Father and the Son (the antitype).