

The God Of The Old Testament - Part 3

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Not only do we learn of the existence of God in the Old Testament, we also learn much about Him. While nature reveals God's power, might, and existence, it doesn't tell mankind who He is. What is He like? That's where the Old Testament can be of help.

The Torah, or Pentateuch as Christians call it, establishes a holy God. Mankind was created to mirror the image of God but when humanity's every thought was evil, God wiped out all humanity via flood. Only eight souls remained because they were righteous. From the beginning, we see God's judgment on sin and salvation for the righteous. In calling out a nation to Himself, God told Abraham, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." (Gen. 17:1-2.) Do not these words fill us with awe of God's holiness? And with this announcement, God separated a people to Himself and when the time was right, he called this nation, now great in number, out of Egypt to speak with them personally.

But God maintained His holiness. While God was on Mt. Sinai, no one was allowed to touch the mountain. In the tabernacle, God would dwell in the most holy place but no one could go in there and the veil separated the people from God. Besides, the whole place had to be sprinkled with the blood of an innocent victim because sinful human beings were just near the presence of God. God dwells in terrible, awesome holiness.

Despite the sinfulness of God's people, The Lord was always faithful to the covenants He made. He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and eventually into the promised land. In the books of history (Joshua-Esther) we see the people constantly worshipping idols and involved in every sinful thing. God would punish and then deliver to preserve the nation. This went on until, just as He had promised centuries prior, the people were carried off into captivity. God said He would judge them. He had to judge them yet even in the threats of utter destruction, God always promised deliverance and salvation. The nation would be preserved for something great was coming.

The wisdom literature (Job – Ecclesiastes) shows us a God that is not to be questioned when we face trials. We must have faith in God's care and deliverance. The Psalms show a God worthy of being prayed to, sung to, and worshipped. Proverbs tells us that real wisdom begins with a fear of the Lord. Ecclesiastes reminds us that worldly possessions are of no eternal worth so, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Eccl. 12:13-14.)

The Prophets teach us about a God who is holy (Isaiah uses "the holy One of Israel" over 30 times) and deals with sin in His time. He is slow to anger but when sin persists, He will respond in judgment. But for all His talk about judgment, God doesn't wait for long until He also talks about deliverance. God is hurt every time He must bring judgment on sin yet He is so full of love and mercy, deliverance and forgiveness will be the end result. That is, if people will turn to Him. All through the Old Testament, God wanted the people to "do justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" by faith. See, Micah 6:8. There are a number of examples of people doing just that like, Noah, Abraham, David, Moses and others. God blessed them. Sadly, many more did not and paid a price. The holiness of God is on full display throughout the Old Testament yet it is this God that invited people to give Him their hearts. That theme will come to its fulness in the New Testament.