



**Question:** Why does God seem so violent in the Old Testament and Jesus so loving in the New Testament?

Many people have struggled with the apparent contradiction between the violence and vengeance of the Old Testament and the love and grace of the New Testament. To address this question appropriately, let's review a few Bible basics:

- The OT and NT are not separate “books.”
- The OT and the NT each focus on primarily different time frames of redemptive history. The OT is primarily about God and His covenant people, the nation of Israel. The NT is primarily about Jesus and the origin of the Church, the body of Christ.

The characterization that God in the OT is angry and violent but that Jesus in the NT is loving and peaceful **fits well with our polarized times.**

However, the idea that the OT God is opposite of the NT Jesus violates the clear teaching of Scripture and the nature of the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — God is three in ONE.

God the Father and Jesus the Son are one and the same — they don't have different personalities, they aren't in conflict or contradiction with each other. In fact, during Jesus' 3-year public ministry recorded in the NT, he never tried to separate or distinguish himself from the OT God. He never spoke against God's activity in the OT. Just the opposite actually occurred. Repeatedly, Jesus emphasized that he and “the Father” were one and the same. See John 1:8; John 5:19; John 5:22-23; John 10:30; John 10:37-38.

If OT God is righteous and forceful when dealing with sin, then we must expect that NT Jesus is the same. And if NT Jesus is loving and caring, so is OT God. Perhaps our greatest error has been to think of OT God and NT Jesus as two separate beings. Instead, we should be speaking of the “God of the Bible.”

The Bible reveals God as One who abhors evil and sinfulness, and He always will. The Bible also presents God as forgiving, merciful, and gracious, and He always will be.

The Old and New Testaments do not present one-sided, polar opposite depictions of the God of the Bible. Rather, the OT shows the full range of God's character, and the NT also shows the complete spectrum of God's attributes. In both Testaments, God the Father and Jesus the Son are revealed as compassionate, peace-loving, forgiving, patient, kind and judging. And they are also portrayed as being wrathful, powerful, and violent against evil and sin.

God's approach to those he loves and his approach to sin and evil do not change from the OT to the NT. Any dissimilarity between the OT and NT can't be attributed to difference in God Himself (who is immutable). Perhaps the reason we struggle with the full picture of God throughout the Bible is because our definition of love is too small.

We get in trouble when we just try to view God through only one lens or aspect of His character. We cannot view God's perfect love without also viewing His justice. And we can't view his justice without his love, mercy, and grace. God's sense of justice and his holiness are undervalued components of his love.

The cross is the primary example of the fullness of God's love AND the fullness of God's holiness and justice. Instead of God's wrath being poured out against us in the OT form of plagues, army invasion, or fire from heaven because of our sin, Christ suffered. See 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 Peter 3:18. Jesus, God the Son, took the punishment we deserved and in so doing satisfied God's holy and justifiable wrath against our sin and evil.

The thing that changed from the OT to the NT was not God's wrath (or God's love); it was our role in receiving it. God, in the greatest act of love and grace, took it on himself to protect us.

Together the OT and NT present one singular, compelling story. The overarching story of the Bible is God's relentless pursuit of reconciliation with a humanity that rebelled against and rejected him. It takes both the OT and the NT to fully explain the magnitude and magnificence of God's plan.