

Who Is God?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon explores the true nature of God as revealed in the Old Testament, emphasizing His love, patience, and emotional connection with His people.

Scripture: Exodus 32:10, Nehemiah 9:16, Hebrews 10:31

Topics: "Gods Nature", "Old Testament"

Description

Anton Bosch delves into the question of what God is truly like, emphasizing the importance of understanding God's nature beyond misconceptions and assumptions. He highlights how many people form distorted views of God based on flawed human experiences and second-hand information, particularly regarding the Old Testament. Through a deep study of the prophetic books, Bosch reveals that they primarily showcase God as a patient, loving, and just Father who continuously pleads with His people to return to Him despite their rebellion and idolatry over centuries.

Transcript

What is God like? This question should be one of the most prominent questions at the forefront of every believer's mind. Yet, so few actually ask the question and simply assume that the impressions they have gained from various sources are correct. In fact, it seems to me that most people have a perverted view of what is God really like.

Some of us form our impressions of the Father based on the idiosyncrasies of our human fathers. Some earthly fathers are cruel and legalistic and others are wimps who try to buy the favor of their children with gifts and no rules. Jesus said that even the best of human fathers are "evil" in comparison to our Heavenly Father (Matthew 7:11). Any attempt to see God in a man will result in a distorted view of what He is really like.

Some have heard second-hand reports that the God revealed in the Old Testament is a God of wrath, judgment and endless laws. Most of these impressions are based on second and even third-hand accounts of the nature of God as revealed in the Old Testament. Very few have actually read the Old Testament to discover the true nature of God for themselves. The prophets (Isaiah through Malachi) have to be the least read part of the Bible and I doubt that many Christians have actually read through these books thoughtfully. Yet it is precisely these books that focus on revealing the heart of God.

I must admit that I have been taking a long hard look at these books for the first time in my life. Yes, I have read them before, but more out of a sense of getting through them as quickly as possible so I could get to the "the parts that really matter". But as we have been studying these books in our Bible study over the past months, I have had to ask some searching questions as to the meaning and purpose of these books. They must have value for us that goes beyond the intermittent pet verse and the occasional prophecy, pointing at Jesus or the end of the world. Surely they must be more than just messages to Israel and Judah two and a half thousand years ago.

What I discovered is that these books primarily reveal the Father! (Now I'm sure most of you will respond with remarks about how obvious that is and I am sure most of you knew that all along. Some of my learned colleagues will probably remark on my lack of education etc.). But, in spite of how obvious this may seem, I doubt that many have really understood how important these books are to a proper understanding of the heart of God.

The Prophets are not primarily theological books that have to be understood and interpreted with the mind like many of Paul's letters. They are also not historical records like other parts of the Old Testament and the first five books of the New Testament that are interesting to read because of the stories they contain. The Prophets are books of the heart that reveal the emotions of a patient, loving, longsuffering and just Father Who pleads with His people to love Him.

By the time the last of these books was written (Malachi), a thousand years had passed from the time Israel first replaced the Lord with the Golden Calf. Between the first of these books (Obadiah) and the last, is a period of four hundred years. During all that time, Israel insisted on worshipping idols instead of the True God. Yet, for a thousand years the Lord pleads with His people to serve Him and He assures them of His love for them. Every one of the prophets (including the ones like Elijah and Elisha who do not have books named after them), plead with the people to return to God.

For a thousand years God pleaded with the people and yet they continually rejected Him and did the most terrible things to one another. In spite of this, the Lord did not destroy them and always promised that there would be a remnant. Yes, He sent enemies, famines, pestilence but also deliverance, health and blessing - all to persuade and convince Israel to love and serve Him. But it was all of it in vain. Instead of Israel getting better at their relationship with God, they become worse and worse and from Moses and David the graph of Israel's spirituality points downhill, except for the occasional spike of revival.

Against this background the prophets show us a God who feels the pain of rejection, the hurt of an adulterous wife and the disappointment of rebellious children. He pleads with them to love Him, to forsake their illicit gods and to obey the laws that were designed to protect them. Way back, when He brought them out of Egypt, He was tempted to destroy them all and to make a new nation out of Moses. (Exodus 32:10) Yet He patiently pleads with them for another thousand years and in spite of everything he tried, ends with a handful who truly love and serve Him. How can anyone say that the Old Testament does not reveal a loving, gracious and patient Father Who's nature is perfectly consistent with the God Who so loved the World that He gave His only begotten son.

Yes, He did judge and chasten His people but it was never out of frustration or hate, but always because He loved them and did not want to see them go astray. It is indeed a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God when He does finally get angry (Hebrews 10:31). But God is not "an angry god". Somehow the title of Jonathan Edward's famous sermon: "Sinners in the hands of an angry God" has been distorted

and many refer to God as "an angry god". God is a loving, longsuffering and gracious God. Only after extreme provocation does He become angry and when His anger is kindled, it is very serious and it is indeed a fearsome matter. But that is not the primary characteristic of God as He revealed Himself through the prophets.

Nehemiah recalled all of the Lord's goodness to Israel "But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them." (Nehemiah 9:16-17, NKJV)

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