

# Q & A WITH DAVID SCHARF



The God of the Old Testament wiped out the world with a flood, sent plagues on the Egyptians, and commanded his people to kill the Canaanites. He revealed himself only to the Jews. In the New Testament, we are told that God is a God of love and that his followers were to go into all the world to tell others of his love. How can we say that the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament?

## TWO DIFFERENT GODS?

There is a caricature that the God of the Bible in the Old Testament was all law and fury and in the New Testament all gospel and warm fuzzies. As a result, some believe that God has grown softer on sin since Jesus came into the world.

That thought would be a hard sell for some in the New Testament. Try telling Ananias and Sapphira, both of whom fell dead at Peter's feet for their deception, that God is soft on sin (Acts 5:1-11). Or tell it to King Herod, who was struck down for his pride (Acts 12:21-23). The New Testament gives ample evidence of God's justice.

Also the Old Testament is not all law and fury. Some of the most beautiful gospel promises come from the Old Testament:

- "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).
- "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

Simply, we do not see two different Gods in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

## OUR GOD IS JUST

Our God does not change. James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

You may be asking, "Then why doesn't he judge sin today? Isn't he tolerating sin by not judging it?" The apostle Paul wrote to the congregation at

Rome who seemed to have the same question: "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed" (Romans 2:5). We risk looking at God's patient grace and confusing it for tolerance. The people in Noah's day did the same thing when Noah preached for 120 years about an impending flood, but no rain was seen. God is just.

## OUR GOD IS PATIENT

Then why doesn't he judge the sinner now in this life? The Bible gives the answer: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Can you see his grace? God is giving us time to repent. God is giving us time to turn away from our sin and turn toward our Savior, Jesus, who loves us and gave his life up for us. God is giving us time to come home.

It is like the father in the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32). Though we have run away, the Father sits on the porch, watching and waiting for us to return. This is the patient love of our loving Father in heaven.

In both the New Testament and the Old Testament, God has always been consistent. God is not soft on sin. He is serious about salvation.

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# God has not grown soft on sin

David G. Scharf

**GOD CERTAINLY SHOWED** himself to be holy and willing to punish sin and disobedience in the Old Testament. At the same time, he also desired the salvation of all, even those in the Old Testament. Consider Jonah, the prophet of the Lord, who was sent to the Assyrian city of Nineveh to call its people to repentance.

**GOD DOES NOT CHANGE**

James 1:17 tells us that God does not change like shifting shadows. He is consistent. His nature and truth do not change. 1 Peter 1:16 quotes Leviticus 19:2, saying, "Be holy, because I am holy." God's standards have not changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament!

For what reasons do people believe or want to believe the falsehood that God has grown softer on sin? \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE SILENCE OF GOD IS NOT INDIFFERENCE**

While God remains opposed to all sin, he is patient with us. However, we ought never confuse his patience with tolerance. Continuing in a sin when you know it is wrong is soul destroying! The writer to the Hebrews does not mince words when he says, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left" (10:26).

Read 2 Peter 3:8-13.

What would you say to people who think that God will not punish sin and they can continue to do what is wrong?

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**GOD'S ANSWER TO SIN**

Thank the Lord that he is the same yesterday, today, and always! Ever since the fall into sin, God made his plan known to send a Savior from sin. With consistent love, God protected the descendants of the Savior until the angel made that wonderful, world-changing announcement: "A Savior has been born to you!" This has always been who God is.

Read Exodus 34:6,7.

This is God's explanation of who he is. Pick out one attribute of God from the Exodus passage and cite one example of that attribute from the Old Testament and one example from the New Testament.

God's attribute: \_\_\_\_\_

Example from the Old Testament:

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Example from the New Testament:

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What does that attribute mean to you today? \_\_\_\_\_

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