

The controversy: Is God angry or loving in the Bible

Controversy?

There are two looming thoughts when it comes to God and his state of mind: is he loving or angry? I can envision dark brooding clouds forming over the horizon as the wrath of God is approaching. On the other side I see Jesus standing with bunnies in a field loving everything. Jesus reminds me of God strolling through Eden in the morning more than the brooding spirit over the oceans. We have “Thou shall not” compared to “Love thy enemy.” Who is this person called God and is this controversial?

I guess I look at this subject within two things. One is the sons of Arron in Leviticus 10. They came in and offered unholy fire to the Lord. What is that? Well if you read on further, Moses has a little talk with Aaron his brother. It appears that time after time the boys had entered Gods “Tent of meeting” drunk. Moses makes a great point in Leviticus 10:10 about being a priest **“You must distinguish between what is sacred and what is common, between what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean.”**

The second thing is that God is Holy. To be in the presence of God requires that we too be clean, honest, and ready for service to the Lord. Numbers 4:15 says **“When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die.”** Is it controversial that God is Holy? Why are sinners like ourselves required to be Holy before God? The controversy might lay in the Word “Holy.”

In Acts 5 there is a story about two people who lied about what they would give to the Lord. God strikes them down for their deceiving ways. Is God all about striking people to death? 1 John 4:8 says **“God is love.”** We seem to envision God as one or the other. Can a God be both

angry and loving? God is indeed holy. He asks us to respect that. Being drunk in his holy temple might be bad. Another view might be found in John 3:16. It says Gods loves the world but used his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. The point is that he died so that we don't die for the unholy things we do. That seems to be in a place between love and anger. What do you believe?

Maybe?

Maybe God is Love in the Old Testament. I love it in Genesis 2 where God makes man but realizes the man is lonely. Maybe God sees that this man cannot really relate to a powerful God. God says Man should not be alone. So he sets out to create a helper or partner for him. God creates a ton of creatures but they were not quite the right fit. God then builds a woman from the man to be kind of like him but different. A loving God makes a helper, angry gods don't do that. Interestingly enough God did not kill these two when they disobeyed him in the garden.

In Numbers 20, the people complained that God had led them out of slavery to die in the desert. It seems strange that they were angry about that. In Exodus 2 it says God heard their cry over being slaves. Maybe God should get angry with his silly children or people. I suppose God could have killed them in the desert if he wanted to. Yet, he asked Moses to tap a rock and water came out. God also provided Manna (bread from heaven). Yet the people began to whine and complain. Does a loving or angry God provide?

I like Malachi 3. It falls right near the end of the Old books. God makes a cool statement. **“Mal 3:8-10 “Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, “How are we robbing you?” In your tithes and offerings! 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing**

blessing.” This fits so well with the first part I wrote about last week in “Controversy.” God explains his heart and the struggles he has with his created people. Maybe God has a right to be angry at times.

I look at God this way. He is all about love. I think any goodness in this world comes through him. Everything God touches can be good. In Genesis 1 God ended creating by saying it is “Very Good.” God does not make junk. I bought a car that I loved. Years later it let me down at the wrong time and I was forced to replace it. I was mad that it broke, but I still have love for that car. Is God in that frame of mind with us? We are loved; although, at times, we let him down at the wrong time. He gets angry but he still loves us. God hopes for the best but maybe he doesn’t always receive that from us. What do you believe?

Yes?

In 2 Samuel 6 King David is returning the Ark of God to Jerusalem. On the way they are singing and dancing somewhat naked. The Ark is being brought home in an oxen cart. At one point Uzzah sees that the cart might tip over so he reaches out and touches the Ark to steady it. That seems so smart, responsible, and caring for God’s ark. However, God struck him down for touching it. Does that seem like a loving God? Didn’t Uzzah do a good thing? Things are not always as they seem.

You see, God is a holy God. Within holiness is respect and reverence for the thing that is holy. Throughout time we have tried to respect and honor traditions and sacred things. Much of who God is lands within the holy, traditional, and sacred. Moses is asked to remove his sandals near God’s presence in Exodus 3. Joshua was asked to do the same thing in Joshua 5. The things of God are sacred and holy. Uzzah might be a good man but he touched holy sacred stuff with

unholy hands. The Sons of Aaron did holy traditional sacred acts within the Tent of God. Yet, they did those things with unholy hearts. There is always more to a story.

God should be allowed to be angry when he is disrespected. I don't know anyone who does not feel the same way when it happens to them. For a moment we all get angry. God does not always kill those who disrespect him, but at times he snaps. The problem with Uzzah and King David was the heart. They were partying and having a great old time. It's like they saved God from peril. In the mean time they did not respect the things of God in the traditional way. The Ark was built to be carried. It was built not to be touched. They had poles that slid through the sides of it to lift it. God's ark was not meant to be on a dirty dusty unreliable cart. Also this Holy thing was to go before the people.

Yes God can get angry. We tend to see him as "Only" angry in the Old Testament. He does get angry in the New Testament but it shows up in similar and different forms. In Acts 5 God strikes down Ananias and Sapphira because they lied about their giving. It seems harsh to do that but again it comes back to their hearts. Jesus cries over Jerusalem and is distraught and sweats drops of blood. Jesus gets on a donkey and rides in to Jerusalem like a King. He sees his holy Temple being used in an unholy way and freaks out. Later he is hungry and withers a fig tree in anger. I see God or Jesus as frustrated with creation at times. Yes we could call that anger, what do you believe?

No?

No, God is not angry but frustrated. I know they say God knows everything. I do believe that, but has God experienced everything. There is something different about living in someone else's shoes. I firmly think that God learned something he knew but needed to confirm. That sounds silly or confusing but let me explain. God is holy and cannot stand the thought or

presence of the unholy. So how then can he be with us and near us? It seems like the ultimate paradox. God came down in the form of Jesus to experience us for the first time. He could touch us and feel our lives first hand. What I think God learned is that being human and holy at the same time is very frustrating.

So why do I say “No” God is not angry but frustrated. Well if he came down and it’s all true then Jesus did have a brother James. James wrote a letter that became the book of James in the Bible. The first chapter tells me that James knew how God feels about sin. Jesus freaked out in the temple in frustration. God time after time pleaded with the Israelites to come back to him in the Old Testament. I could give you plenty of examples. What James 1 says to me is that God knows how humanity and sin work. James just might have experienced that frustration through his brother Jesus.

So many people say that God will get you for doing or saying bad things. We are not blessed if we were bad just like the Santa story. Is God really like that? Does he go around checking on us and punishing us for sin? Imagine God punishing 6 billion people daily. God is in the love and holy business. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 **“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”** That is the real God in a nut shell. Frustrated with creation at times yes, but not perpetually angry with us. God is indeed first and foremost love.

Think about what is called the remnant. Throughout the Bible God always has a remnant of people that carry on loving him. He could at any point wipe us out and start over, yet he does not. This remnant is there in many forms. Sometimes it’s people hidden like Joash was in 2 kings 13. At other times it was the word of God hidden in 2 kings 22. Jesus passed Christianity on through 12 men. Imagine keeping a remnant in the form of tax collectors and fishermen. God is

in the spreading love business. Being angry can come but only after his love is rejected. Aren't we all like that? What do you believe?