



Did God change between the Old and New Testaments?

November 2018 'Faithful Questions' Seminar
Deacon Ken Crawford



NO!

(God doesn't change!)

Session overview

- Unchangeable nature of God
- 'Guess what Testament' game
- Jews believe in a loving and forgiving God
- What did Christ do then?
- Ceremonial, Judicial and Moral Law
- Growing child analogy
- Developing understanding of God



Catechism Quote

*Over the centuries, Israel's faith was able to manifest and **deepen** realization of the riches contained in the revelation of the divine name. God is unique; there are no other gods besides him. He transcends the world and history. He made heaven and earth: "They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. . . .but you are the same, and your years have no end." In God "there is **no variation** or shadow due to change." God is "HE WHO IS", from everlasting to everlasting, and as such remains ever faithful to himself and to his promises.*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 212)



The unchanging God

- **God never changes**
- **God can never be convinced to change His mind**
- **He exists outside the bounds of time. Change is something that only exists within the bounds of time**
- **The passages where it appears that God changes His mind are our way of understanding how God thinks.**
 - **We would change our mind in those situations, thus that's how God thinks from the very beginning.**



The unchanging God - Example

- **23 Then Abraham drew near and said: “Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”**
- **24 Suppose there were fifty righteous people in the city; would you really sweep away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people within it?**
- **25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike! Far be it from you! Should not the judge of all the world do what is just?”g**
- **26 The LORD replied: If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.**
- **27 Abraham spoke up again: “See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am only dust and ashes!h**
- **28 What if there are five less than fifty righteous people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?” I will not destroy it, he answered, if I find forty-five there.**



The unchanging God - Example

- **29** But Abraham persisted, saying, “What if only forty are found there?” He replied: I will refrain from doing it for the sake of the forty.
- **30** Then he said, “Do not let my Lord be angry if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?” He replied: I will refrain from doing it if I can find thirty there.
- **31** Abraham went on, “Since I have thus presumed to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?” I will not destroy it, he answered, for the sake of the twenty.
- **32** But he persisted: “Please, do not let my Lord be angry if I speak up this last time. What if ten are found there?” For the sake of the ten, he replied, I will not destroy it.
- **33** The LORD departed as soon as he had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham returned home.
- **(Genesis 18:23 – 23)**



The unchanging God

- **Ways Genesis 18 can be understood**
 - **The passage is a teaching passage for Abraham**
 - **God knew there were not 10 righteous people there all along**
 - **The passage speaks to why other unrighteous towns were not destroyed**



Guess what Testament

- For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.
- **New: John 3:16**
- The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.
- **Old: Exodus 34:6-7**
- Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
- **Old: Micah 7:18-19**
- Know, then, that the LORD, your God, is God: the faithful God who keeps covenant mercy to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments
- **Old: Deuteronomy 7:9**



Guess what Testament

- Now I will shortly pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you; judge you according to your ways and bring on you all your abominations.
- **Old: Ezekiel 7:8**
- But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.
- **New: Romans 2:5**
- Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- **New: Ephesians 5:6**
- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.
- **New: John 3:36**



Jewish faith believes in loving and forgiving God

- We've already established God's love
- Atonement
- **1 : reparation for an offense or injury : SATISFACTION**
 - He wanted to find a way to make atonement for his sins.
- **2 : the reconciliation of God and humankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ**
- Jews will often use the word atonement where Christians would use forgiveness



What did Christ do?

- Further re-enforced the nature of God's love for us
- Did a profound act of atonement for all people across all time
- Broadened the covenant between God and the Jewish people to now apply to the whole world
- Put an end to the Ceremonial and Judicial Mosaic law for Christians



Ceremonial, Judicial and Moral Law

- **Ceremonial:** How Jews were to worship.
 - Circumcision, Temple worship, Sabbath rules, Kosher rules
- **Judicial:** How the Jews were to administer justice
 - Tithing, specific punishments for violations of any of the law (stoning, etc.)
- **Moral:** The moral principles God taught through divine revelation
- Christ's new covenant releases us from the specific Ceremonial and Judicial Mosaic law
- But the moral teachings of God can never be abolished or ignored.



Growing Child Analogy

- Rules parents give a child evolve as they grow
 - 0 – 2 years old: Never cross the street
 - 2 – 8 years old: Hold my hand as you cross the street
 - 8 – 12 years old: Look both ways before you cross the street
 - 13 – 15 years old: Please be careful when you're out on the street
 - 16+ years old: If you wreck the car you're in BIG TROUBLE!
- **Similarly, God's rules for his followers have evolved as we've grown in spiritual maturity**
- **Also, the surrounding community's affect how insular the society must be**



Our understanding develops

- **Even though God does not change, we better understand him over time**
- **This occurred throughout Jewish history**
- **The coming of Christ was a continuation of that**
- **The development of doctrine with the Catholic Church continues to this day**





Examples of Christian development

- **Trinitarian Theology**
- **Marian Theology**
- **Strict prohibition of slavery**
- **Sacramental Theology**
- **Papal Infallibility (and generally the nature of authority)**

Examples of Jewish development

- **Material blessing -> spiritual blessing**
- **Afterlife**
- **God's blessings outside of Jewish people**



Conclusion

- God has always been a loving and forgiving God
- Our understanding of God has grown over time
- God's rules have changed as we've matured
- Jews share much more in common with us than we often think
 - God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle. ... Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues. ... The Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.
 - *(Vatican II document – Nostra Aetate)*



Next month

- 3rd Tuesday – December 18th
- 7:30 PM in the Morris Hall
 - As always
- Topic
 - Was Jesus actually born in December?



Materials

- <http://deaconken.org>
- Slides available on blog
- Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date.

