

God's Son was the best representation of His Father but He and His character were rejected. Jesus came to show the way (John 14:6) to His Father, to show His character. This He did at every point in His life. Near the end of His ministry, He said:

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4)

Notice: He had finished the work even before going to the cross.

Jesus "Went About Doing Good" (Acts 10:38)

When John the Baptist began to doubt the Messiah, he sent two disciples to question Him. Jesus replied:

"... tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." (Luke 7:22)

What About the Old Testament God of Wrath?

Admittedly, there are many stories, especially in the Old Testament, that, at first reading, don't make God look much like a God of love. However, we need to study carefully and take scripture as a whole (every word from the mouth of God; Matt 4:4).

In trying to work through apparent contradictions always keep Jesus' character in mind.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2)

When reading something that doesn't sound like a God of love, we should ask if what we are reading lines up with the image of God that Jesus portrayed

and, if not, we need to dig deeper into the Word to resolve any apparent contradictions.

In fact, in looking to Jesus we will not only understand His Word better but even our characters will be changed to become more like His.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)



In all our attempts to understand the gospel, we need to look through the lens of Jesus' revelation of His Father. That will be the method used in this series of tracts.

In the next tract, we will consider God's law and why He made laws for us. A critical question there will be did He make laws for our good or for His own? And what is the nature of those laws?

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Two Ways to Understand the Gospel



No. 1 - God is Love

Gospel means "good news" referring to God's plan to save us from our sinful condition and from this world of sin. Paul the apostle warned of the danger of another gospel that would deceive and draw people away from the original good news as the Word presents and as Jesus lived and taught.

We think perhaps of the danger of another gospel, a deceptive false gospel, in the last days but what if it has already been here for hundreds of years? Paul observed (so it must have been there in his day):

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel!" (Gal 1:6)

Perhaps it is the original and true gospel that is to be revealed again in the last days. We would be wise to consider carefully if what we believe is gospel truth.

There are two different - very different - ways to understand the Gospel. There is the traditional way as you might hear from the majority of Christian churches today. But was that how it was originally understood? The gospel, God's plan to save mankind, was given millennia ago, observed (more or less) during Bible times and taught by Jesus. Surely, what He taught was the true gospel. But, from the time of the apostles to now, we have had:

- almost two thousand years to forget and for traditions to develop
- the Dark Ages when Bible truth was purposely hidden
- Satan's continuous efforts to darken our understanding
- Translations and changes in language and culture that have obscured original meanings

So, is the gospel as commonly taught today the true gospel, the original gospel or could it be that the "another gospel" Paul referred to is already here?

This tract series looks at this question by allowing the Bible to explain itself. Understanding the truth of "the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1) requires that we start with a correct understanding of, naturally, God.

God is What?

What is God like? What is His character?



That character; what God is like, how He treats others etc. is involved in every aspect of the gospel. So where can we start to understand Him?

Scripture tells us about God. It actually defines Him like this:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is love.**" (1 John 4:8)

Is God Really Love?

There seem to be so many contradictions to the concept of God being love:

- God's wrath seemingly everywhere:
"And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land ..." (Deut 29:28)



- Direct threats and acts of God:
"See now that I, *even I, am* he, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: either *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand." (Deut 32:39)
- God's directions to Israel to kill etc:
"Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Sam 15:3)
- God needs blood before He can forgive:
"... without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." (Heb 9:22; various versions)

Many people believe God is angry and wrathful and perhaps out to get them because that is what they read in the Bible. God is love and yet He acts like that! Are we missing something? There are some clues in scripture itself that there is more going on to explain these contradictions. For example:

"... For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways higher than your ways**, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa 55:8-9)

We need to recognize possible problems with our understanding due to translation issues, changes in word meanings over time, idiomatic expressions, preconceived ideas etc. Every verse needs to account for these and be understood in terms of the Bible's whole message. Especially, when determining what God is like, we need to look to God's Son Who was sent to show His Father's character.

Jesus Came to Represent His Father

Jesus said He was showing what His Father is like:

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18)

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father ... Jesus saith unto him ... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ..." (John 14:8-9)

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ... I have manifested thy name ..." (John 17:4,6)

To manifest the Father's name (symbolic of character in that culture) was to make known His character. Jesus represented His Father to Israel and, through His word, to the world.

The parable of the householder (the Father) who built a vineyard (Israel) illustrates how the Father was trying to reach His people. After the rejection of His prophets, God's last attempt to reach His people, Israel, was:

"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." (Matt 21:37)