

# Bite Size Bible Study

## Seeing God #161

By Pastor Lee

The Hebraic picture of God and the Bible is always helpful for our understanding. But it can make an enormous difference in our relationship with Him

Our Western cultural has its heritage roots in Greek philosophy, which at times overshadows the biblical picture of God. The ancient Greeks had a dualistic worldview of God. This dualism is the belief that physical reality is worthless and evil; and that goodness and perfection is found only in the spiritual world. They believed that if the supreme god is perfect then he must be beyond the heavens, uninvolved in the material world in any way.

We inherit from them the idea that God is far away and uninterested in humanity. He may have created the universe, but He has no involvement in it now. We hear that idea from some Christians, even though the Bible shows that God was intimately involved in the life of Israel, walked on earth as Christ, and still is present now in the Holy Spirit. We also inherit from this dualistic idea that our lives on earth are of no consequence, and that we only should care about the life to come. But the Bible paints a different picture, one that our salvation and redemption of our life here on earth extends into eternity.

In the second century AD, dualism gave rise to the heresy of Marcion, who believed that Christians should reject the God of the Old Testament as evil, violent and a lesser God than Jesus. After all, the God of the Old Testament had created the corrupt material world, so He must be evil too. Marcion wanted to remove the entire Old Testament from the Bible, as well as much of the New Testament besides Luke and Paul. He considered the Old Testament to be inferior to the New, and its Jewish God angry and unloving. He focused only on teaching about Jesus, devoid of His Jewish context, ignoring that fact that Jesus was a Jew from the line of David. Although the church denounced Marcion as a heretic, the philosophy behind his ideas still has influence many church cultures of today.

We all have bumped up against some of the Marcion ideas in our pursuit of God. We would all probably agree intellectually that God the Father is wise, loving and merciful, but when we read the Old Testament passages we might question our understanding of the Father.

Didn't the Father choose a nation of complainers, then burden them with meaningless regulations, and punish them harshly for their sins? This line of reasoning has a negative effect on our desire to learn about God and form a close loving relationship with Him.

In some churches, even today, there seems to be lack of love for their heavenly Father. People pray only to Jesus, or sing songs praising Christ exclusively, or talk longingly about seeing Jesus in Heaven, but never mention the Father, the one that Jesus loved and came to glorify.

*After Yeshua had said these things, he looked up toward heaven and said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, so that the Son may glorify you — just as you gave him authority over all mankind, so that he might give eternal life to all those whom you have given him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the one true God, and him whom you sent, Yeshua the Messiah." John 17:1-3 CJB*

When every sermon or Bible study comes from the New Testament, it ignores nearly 80% of the scriptures, the only part Jesus studied and taught from.

Some churches believe that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. This brings a whole new set of issues. Is He a product of dualism — being evil in the Old Testament then reforming and becoming loving in the New Testament? See how the Greek dualism can influence our perspective of a loving Triune God. It is an interesting schizophrenia that allows us to speak lovingly of Jesus and angrily of his Father, and yet worship them as one God. Knowing that Jesus is the very likeness of his Father should answer any doubt we have about the goodness of our Father in Heaven

Westerners want theology laid out in a systematic way, with clear creeds and statements of truth. Instead, we find in the Jewish scriptures; stories, rules, and long lists of names that are foreign to us. For thousands of years, the Jews (including Jesus) have revered this text and memorized it, meditated on it and applied it to their daily lives. They have found some excellent answers for many of the hardest questions we have to answer.

Instead of asking the question of "why did God do this or that", maybe a better question would be "what good purpose did a loving God have in giving this law?". When we see it that way, we find very meaningful commands and actions of God. When we see only legalistic foolishness, we miss the great gift coming from God.

When we read and see the Bible from this viewpoint, we find that from Genesis to Revelation, it tells of the Good News of God's loving participation in each of our lives.

For more on this subject refer to "Seeing God from a New Perspective" by Lois Tverberg at [En-Gedi.com](http://En-Gedi.com)

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