

Jesus as Moral Teacher: Where does this leave us?

SIX: A couple of examples (1):

Underlying Heart in the Midst of Justice/Judgment—the ‘Self-Conflicted God’

Hos 11.1-11	But since my people refuse to return to me, they will return to Egypt and will be forced to serve Assyria. War will swirl through their cities; their enemies will crash through their gates. They will destroy them, trapping them in their own evil plans. For my people are determined to desert me. They call me the Most High, but they don't truly honor me. "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah or demolish you like Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not unleash my fierce anger. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy. For someday the people will follow me.
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"The menacing tone of the oracle switches in v. 8, presenting a rare glimpse of God on the verge of destroying the son Ammi, yet balking at the prospect. According to deuteronomic law, both parents could condemn a stubborn, rebellious son before the elders of the city, whereupon he would be stoned to death (Deut 21:18–21). This legal background illuminates the theological intent of v. 8, where God is about to hand over the son to be stoned. God cannot deal with the son in the same way God treated Admah and Zeboiim, two cities destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut 29:23). Yahweh's abhorrence of the son's death penalty gives way to a growing compassion. Ultimately, the mother/father God makes a decision: "I will not execute my fierce anger;/ I will not again destroy Ephraim" (11:9a). Although the parent has the legal right to have the son killed, compassion for and bonding with the child prevent God from doing so. God transcends human legal institutions, which enforce the death sentence for disobedient sons, proclaiming "for I am God and no mortal,/ the Holy One in your midst,/ and I will not come in wrath" (11:9b)	NIB
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SIX: A couple of examples (2):

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Jer 48.29-33	We have all heard of the pride of Moab, for his pride is very great. We know of his lofty pride, his arrogance, and his haughty heart. I know about his insolence,” says the LORD, “but his boasts are empty— as empty as his deeds. So now I wail for Moab; yes, I will mourn for Moab. My heart is broken for the men of Kir-hareseth. “You people of Sibmah, rich in vineyards, I will weep for you even more than I did for Jazer. Your spreading vines once reached as far as the Dead Sea, but the destroyer has stripped you bare! He has harvested your grapes and summer fruits. Joy and gladness are gone from fruitful Moab. The presses yield no wine. No one treads the grapes with shouts of joy. There is shouting, yes, but not of joy.
"God expressed His concern for Moab as He mourned for Kir Hareseth (cf. Isa. 16:7, 11), another of her chief cities. Borrowing from Isaiah 16:9, Jeremiah indicated that God would weep along with the city of Jazer for the vines of Sibmah which had been destroyed."	
"Because of the impending judgment, the Lord through his prophet expresses his compassion and sorrow for his creatures , the Moabites"	
BKC, EBC	

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SIX: A couple of examples (3):

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The "Self-conflicted" God? (intra-Triune intercession)

Rom 8.26,27,34 and Hebr 7.25; for Peter in Luke 22.31	<p>And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers* in harmony with God's own will...Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. ...</p> <p>Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf...</p> <p>Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. 32 But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."</p>
"Barth observes that God " makes himself our advocate with himself , that he utters for us that ineffable groaning, so that he will surely hear what we ourselves could not have told him, so that he will accept what he himself has to offer"	EBC

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SIX: A couple of examples (4):

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Deut 5.29	The LORD heard the request you made to me. And he said, ‘I have heard what the people said to you, and they are right. Oh, that they would always have hearts like this, that they might fear me and obey all my commands! If they did, they and their descendants would prosper forever. Go and tell them, “Return to your tents.” But you stand here with me so I can give you all my commands, decrees, and regulations. You must teach them to the people so they can obey them in the land I am giving them as their possession.’ ”
"With an outburst of emotion , the Lord added, “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” The best interests of his people are deep in the heart of God. This view of divine compassion shows how the Lord’s love focuses on what is best for his people. Here is no vindictive god in contrast to a loving NT Lord. No, this glimpse into the heart of God is in harmony with the most compassionate depictions of Christ in the NT.	
EBC	

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SIX: A couple of examples (5,6):

Sending lying spirits (1 Kings 22)

But telling the target that they are lying...? [lol]

Elisha and the child-killing bears (2 Kings 2)

- The 'kids' are Elisha's age or OLDER
- They are from the elite class, middle-managers in the rival cult and/or mercenary force guarding the pagan temple.
- 50 of them roaming the woods, at just the 'right time'??
- Meeting a (similar) fate as the prophet of the Lord who disobeyed previously [except no record of deaths]
- "Baldness" accusation was not against his physical appearance!
- Violence against YHWH's prophets rampant

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SEVEN: Where to Go from Here... Roads already traveled by others

Some of the ones I have personally wrestled with / worked through / found grace and truth in:

(just a sample of titles from the Thinktank, relevant to the OT):

1. How could a God of Love order the massacre/annihilation of the Canaanites?
2. How can God allow 'natural' evil to occur?
3. God apparently set humanity up for failure in the Garden, so doesn't this show Him to be cruel, schizoid, or psychotic?
4. But isn't "Penal Substitution" actually illegal (if not immoral)??
5. God is Wrathful, Vengeful, Jealous, and Angry every day--and you want me to have a relationship with Him?!
6. Shouldn't the butchering of the Amalekite children be considered war crimes?
7. What about God's cruelty against the Midianites?
8. Was God being evil when He killed all the firstborn in Egypt?
9. Why didn't God stop the process before it started, if He knew of the massive amounts of suffering that would befall many of His creatures??

And We End Up Back Here Again – But Wiser

In obedience, trust, and loyalty to Jesus, we must face the ‘atrocities’ passages, since Jesus has taught us and clearly demonstrated to us that they are in fact NOT the ‘work of Satan’ operating under the name of YHWH.

But rather that they are – somehow and in important aspects -- manifestations of the character and values of the Father/Son/Spirit, and faithfully contain teachings from the God of grace, patience, justice, loyalty, compassion, and eventual deliverance from all evil-doers, both human and angelic.

And we know we can Rest assured...

That if OUR hearts—as being shaped by the love of God’s work in our lives, into the image of HIS HEART—are troubled by passages in His word, then SO MUCH MORE was His heart troubled.

Moral failures have dulled our hearts—we don’t experience life at the intense level of His untainted and undiminished emotional core.

He will grieve with us—and BEYOND US—because He is love ...

So, trust Him and look for His goodness and wisdom in even THESE passages – and He will lead good hearts to the truth, the good, and the glorious.