



**I don't really need to pay attention to the Old Testament now that Jesus has come - do I? And besides, the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath and in the New Testament He's a God of mercy...**

The short answer to that question (which actually comes up quite often) is: WRONG ! Of course, a one-word answer probably needs to be fleshed out a bit more: Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong!

Ok. Now that you have the idea, (wrong!) here's why:

For starters, if we disregard the Old Testament, we give the impression that Jesus began a new religion. That would put Jesus in the same category as guys like Mohammed (Islam) and Joseph Smith (Mormanism). (Another idea that I hear a lot - mostly from the secular media - is that Jesus founded Christianity as a new religion 2000 years ago.)

Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus did not start a new religion. He simply came as fulfillment of the promises in the "old" religion described in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). In fact, at the beginning of His ministry He dispelled any such misconceptions by saying,

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; (a common way of referring to the Old Testament Scriptures) I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18] I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-19*

Jesus flat out tells us not to ignore the Old Testament Scriptures!

If we ignore the Old Testament we miss so many things God has revealed to us: For example, It is in the Old Testament (e.g. Genesis 1-2, Job 38-40 and Psalm 139) that we have spelled out in no uncertain terms that God created all that exists - and He didn't do it through the process of evolution.

What about the wrath/mercy thing? It is true that in the Old Testament we see examples of God's wrath because of unrepentant disobedience on the part of His people. But we also see countless examples of that in the New Testament too. Check out Matthew 26:41-45, Acts 5:1-11, Romans 1:18-33 and Rev. 21:8 for just a few of those examples. (People who say the NT shows only a God of mercy have apparently never read the New Testament)

It is also true that in the New Testament we see abundant evidence of the mercy of God. But we also see countless examples of that in the Old Testament. (Checkout Nehemiah 9:17-31 for a great summary)

If we say that the God of the Old Testament is different from the one in the New Testament we are giving one of two very wrong impressions:

Either 1) There are two gods (And if two, why not more?)

Or 2) God changes his character (If that's the case, how can you trust Him?)

If we ignore the Old Testament we will have a hard time making sense of much of the New Testament. For example, the last book of the New Testament, Revelation, is literally filled with symbolism that comes from the Old Testament Scriptures. There are many events (and people) in the Old Testament that point ahead to what Jesus would do and be. Reading the Old Testament gives us a much greater understanding of who Jesus really is and what He came to do.

The Jews for Jesus organization has been a great example for me of how being grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures helps in understanding the New Testament. The Jews for Jesus is a group of Jewish Christians dedicated to sharing the Good News with fellow Jews. They are well-grounded in Old Testament teachings and traditions. One comment I find myself making after reading their monthly newsletter "They really get it!" i.e. Their Old Testament background helps them understand Jesus so much better.

On April 2, a Jews for Jesus representative is going to be at Living Word to help us understand the New Testament significance of the major event in the Old Testament: The Passover. I'd really encourage everyone to come for that special evening. You'll find out how the Old Testament greatly deepens our understanding of Jesus.

To sum up: Why would we want to ignore something that helps us come to a greater understanding of God, creation and humanity. Why would we want to ignore something that helps us better understand Jesus and what He came to do? Why would we want to ignore something that Jesus and the New Testament writers quoted and referred to countless times? We wouldn't!

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

**Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)**