

Introduction There are many Christians who hardly ever read the Old Testament and some parts feel foreign to us today. You also sometimes hear people say, the God of the Old Testament seems harsher and more intent on Justice while the God in the New seems far kinder. In truth, this is often said by those who haven't read it all, as justice and mercy are found in both. The Bible is one book where God slowly reveals more and more about himself Malachi 3:6. Also our perception of God can change, just as children growing up our understanding of how strict our parents were when we were young, may change over time. The Old Testament makes up 75% of our Bible, and lays the foundation for our understanding of the teachings in the New.



Questions

How much do you read in the Old Testament? Have you read every book?

Jesus and the Old Testament

1. Jesus totally knew, and used the whole of the Old Testament Luke 24:25-27, 44-45. He is recorded in the gospels as quoting from the O.T. 78 times, quoting directly from 15 different OT books. Often Jesus would respond to people by saying, 'It is written...'. Jesus used the OT as he resisted temptation. Growing up he would have memorised much of the scriptures. St Augustine said 'the New Testament is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New Testament revealed'. Jesus made clear he had come to fulfil the O.T. Matthew 5 :17-19

2. Jesus is prophesied in the Old many times, some say up to 300. It has been said that the O.T. has a 'scarlet thread' running through it, where you can see Jesus running through all of the books. People in NT times were well versed in the OT and could see this. John 1:45. Jesus went through some examples on the road to Emmaus with two disciples.

3. Jesus appears in the Old Testament Who walked in the Garden of Eden, Father, Son or Spirit? Who did Isaiah see in the temple Isaiah 6? John 12:41. Who was the fourth man in the fiery furnace? Daniel 3:25. Appearances of God/Jesus in the OT are called "theophanies" (from the Greek: theos = "God" + phaino = "appear") or "Christophanies." So these words mean "appearances of God" and "appearances of Christ." If this is correct, that Jesus walked on Earth before his 33 years ministry, then the OT has even more significance.

Ten Prophecies	Where	Fulfilled
Conceived in virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26+
Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matt 1:22
Forerunner (John. B)	Malachi 3:1	Matt 11:10+
Called a Nazarene	Isaiah 11:1	Matt 2:23
He would heal	Isaiah 61:1-2	Luke 4:18+
Enter on donkey	Zech 11:12	Matt 21:4
Silent in trial	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4+
Killed with criminals	Isaiah 53:12	Matt 27:38
Hands /feet pierced	Psalms 22:16	John 20:25
Buried in rich tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matt 27:57+
Would rise from dead	Psalms 16:10	Matt 28:2+

Why should we read the Old Testament?

1. God inspired it. 2 Timothy 3:16.
2. It is a source of encouragement and hope. Romans 15:4. e.g. Look at the story of Joseph, Job, or read Psalms
3. It gives us warnings. 1 Corinthians 10:6 We can learn from others failings.
4. We learn about God, what he is like, his character. Mercy shown over & over e.g. David deserved death. Ps 119:27
5. It contains prophecies, about Jesus as we have seen, but beyond Jesus too. Isaiah 65:17
6. You cannot fully understand the New, writers assumed prior knowledge of it in their readers. e.g Hebrews
7. The OT gives us pictures of truths about Jesus, that help us grasp the meaning more fully. Genesis 22
8. We need to see the full 'Big Picture' to understand the 'whole counsel of God' Acts 20:27
9. It gives us an accurate historical setting for the NT, Christianity didn't emerge from a vacuum
10. Lots of good stories, amazing bits, fascinating insights. Things of awe, and beauty. It can touch & move our soul.



Some things in the Old Testament seen unfair or cruel to us

Many non believers say this, often to justify their rejection of God, e.g. "I cannot worship a God who..". Those that take that position might point to the flood, when God judged the World for the 'violence and evil' Genesis 6:5-6 & 11. However they forget that God in his mercy, provided a means of escape for those who trusted God 7:7. If someone rejected a means of escape from a building on fire, would the rescuer be to blame? Others could point to God destroying the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 18:20-33 however there were not even ten good people in the cities v32. The key issue is, does God have the right to judge evil? God in the story is described not as angry, but as sorrowful.



When the Israelites crossed over into the promised land, he told them to drive out the Canaanites. The Canaanites were far from innocent! God was patient with them as they continued in their sin. Among the Canaanite tribes when Joshua invaded were the Amorites, whose sin was prophesied to Abraham. Abraham received the prophecy that the sin of the Amorites had not reached its full measure Genesis 15:16. When Joshua entered the land of Canaan, the Amorites' sin had reached its full measure and it was time for just judgment. Leviticus 18:2-30.

Do non believers want a God who is more like Father Christmas, without the naughty list? God is 100% holy. Why should He ever be expected to put up with any sin whatsoever from His creation? Instead of being amazed that He periodically calls for judgment in the Old Testament, we should be amazed that he ever shows mercy and patience. Does God need to show his justice to act as a warning to humans, of the consequences of their actions?

When the two testaments are read as they were intended, they reveal the same holy God who is rich in mercy, but who will not let sin go unpunished.

Questions

Let's play, which books of the Bible are the least read. Our survey says...

Should we obey OT laws and regulations?

The Jews were given 613 laws by God including the 10 Commandments. So how should we regard these laws, do we need to follow them? Since the 1970's more Christians have become interested in the Jewish roots of Christianity, with some even becoming Torah observant. They argue that Jesus was an observant Jew, and some festivals should still be kept Exodus 12 :14. However the laws were given to one race, at one time, who were to become a nation state. The laws covered many aspects of life (Moral, Civil, Ceremonial), and set them apart from other nations. We as gentiles are not part of that covenant. It became a big issue in the early church. A Council in Jerusalem discussed what should non Jews should be expected to do, as regards the law. Acts 15:5-29. The New Testament writers had to stress, we cannot please God by law keeping Galatians 3:1-3, 24-25, (The word here is *paidagogos* which referred to a tutor that taught boys until they reached manhood) Romans 3:21-22.



So, why should we be interested in the laws?

A. There is a pattern in the Old Testament, every time the people were given laws, they broke them. Exodus 20:2-3, then 32:2-4. So the laws show us how sinful the human heart is. Later prophets said to live right, God would need to change our hearts. Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34. Jesus took things a step further, he said laws are about acts we do, but he said our attitudes need to be right too. Matthew 5:21-22.

B. They reveal what is important to God. So they show us his heart. The laws show us firstly, that holiness is of utmost importance to God. Leviticus 19:2. It also shows the importance of justice Leviticus 19:15, treating people respectfully Leviticus 19:18, maintaining hygiene and good health. Remarkably, before knowledge of germs etc, God tells his people to wash, e.g. after dealing with gastro enteritis Leviticus 15:11. It was only in the 19th century that the need to wash hands was discovered. The laws covered disposal of human waste Deut 23:13. A dirty wooden kitchen vessel could be washed, but unglazed pottery smashed Leviticus 15:12 As wood has antibacterial qualities.

C. Above all, it shows us that God had a plan to restore people to himself.

Questions

Any comments or questions

Next time - Love