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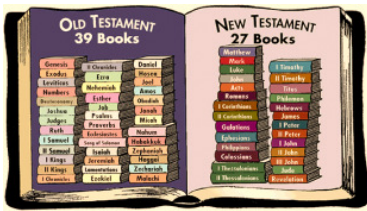


Does the Same God Rule in the Old and New Testament? (Part II)

Isaiah 45:7: (KJV) *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*

OR...

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



A few weeks ago, we began an important discussion regarding God and His treatment of humanity in the Old and New Testaments. There are many who say that the warlike and nationalistic activities of the God of the Old Testament cannot possibly be the same as the God of mercy, love and salvation of the New Testament. So, how do we explain the obvious shift in focus? Stay with us! *(Please refer to Part I of this subject matter from our previous program.)*

Let's do a quick recap from Part I of this program: Why and how did God deal with mankind in the Old Testament?

- There was the test of obedience and the consequence of dying and mankind as a race lost God's favor. *God's response to this would be to label sin and its consequence at every turn through justice. This would be for the ultimate good and reconciliation of His creation.*
- This meant a "humanity can make up their own rules as they go" approach instead of a "God commands and we obey" approach. This is Satan's approach and we see both men and some angels follow it. *God allows this, as it ultimately labels sin. This was the first step in creating a plan of ultimate good.*
- This is the basis and origin of the types of cruelty and inhumane treatment we see recorded in the Old Testament. *God did not exempt anyone or anything from any part of this treatment. Harsh treatment did not originate with God, rather, He allowed all to be subject to the dark path created by mankind and results of the "make it up as you go" approach.*
- Within the context of this death sentence, there would be very few who would choose to follow righteousness and thereby maintain some favor of God. *God let man choose!*
- Noah, a righteous man in a polluted world, saved humanity and kept the thread of God's favor intact. Humanity would still for the most part seek its own ways and rules. *God did not stand in the way of the fallen human will. God destroyed what needed to be destroyed. God's intention is for resurrection and reconciliation.*
- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are three individuals through whom a specific promise of favor had been given which held worldwide implications. *Even these faithful men were allowed to be subject to walking the darkening path that sinful man was developing. He blessed them within the context they were in.*
- The twelve tribes of Israel are an entire nation given God's favor and through that favor a Law for the people is given to maintain that favor. This is marked by a miraculous deliverance from the darkness of slavery. *This was a new beginning full of promise!*
- Israel, true to the course of humanity, defies God and often walks the "make it up as you go" pathway. They suffer all of the injustice and cruelty of other nations except they have a Law that labels the darkening path for what it is.

Does the New Testament follow in this same path, or is it an entirely different story from the Old Testament? **Isaiah 6:8-11:** This is Jesus speaking through Isaiah, but why does he not want people to understand the message?

Is there a connection between how the Old Testament ends and the New Testament begins?

We see thus far that the strict justice approach did not in any way finish the work of reconciling the physical creation of man to God. On the other hand, it only served to identify sin and how far the sinful race of man was from God. More would need to be done - much more - for this was just the beginning, the foundation of the work of God towards His creation.

How does the Old Testament end? Malachi 4 is the last chapter of the Old Testament: Malachi 4:1-6: Note the very last reference in the Old Testament is to Elijah and his mission. Now when we go to the New Testament, what is the first event found there? **This gives us a sense that the Old and New are positively connected: Luke 1:11-17: So, the spirit and power of Elijah returns in the form of John the Baptist and are plainly introduced by the angel Gabriel. **Four-hundred years later, the story from book one picks up with the very first event of book two!** John pictured Elijah in exactly the same way Malachi talked about.**

Some Christian denominations “add” several books between the Old and New Testaments. We can assume the “additional” books do not belong, because although there is a 400-year planned gap, the story that ended with Malachi and starts with Luke simply continues with the anticipated coming of Messiah.

God allowed our destructive pathway and the cruelty in the Old Testament because we, as a race, chose the wrong ruler. Man chose Satan over God. This creates an everlasting lesson that will allow us to learn from our mistakes. God allows the consequences of our actions to unfold.

As he is closing his prophecy, Malachi speaks of two heroes: Elijah, whose work is continued in the New Testament by John the Baptist, and Moses. He has just told of the coming day of the Lord and now he says to remember what the Law of Moses stands for.

Here is what Moses said about his own role:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19: (ASV) ¹⁸I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. ¹⁹And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

Moses referenced another prophet who would, like Moses, be the deliverer, the leader of the people and the bearer of God’s Law. This prophet would unmistakably be Jesus. How do we know this? Who delivered the children out of Egypt? Moses. Who was the leader of the people? Moses. Who was the bearer of the Law? Moses. Jesus was also the deliverer, the leader and fulfiller of the Law. The Old Testament ends talking about Elijah (representing John the Baptist) and Moses (representing Jesus).

One era (Old Testament) ended and a new one (New Testament) was about to begin. Two of the most influential characters - Elijah and Moses - are now shown to be representations of the work of John the Baptist and Jesus. God’s plan was not yet finished!

The Old and New Testaments are unequivocally connected! The Old Testament shows us that it is the foundation for the New Testament and just the beginning of the story.

So, why do the death toll and the violence practically cease in the New Testament?

What about those who would take our first theme text of this program and say that the God of the Old Testament is the author of evil? Isaiah 45:7: (KJV) *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, **and create evil**: I the LORD do all these things.*

(Source McGee Bible Commentary) “And create evil”—the word evil does not mean wickedness in this instance, but rather “sorrow, difficulties, or tragedies”—those things which are the fruit of evil, the fruit of sin. This is the Old Testament way of saying, “The wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23 - *If you indulge in sin, there will be a payday for it!* God makes peace but gives consequences to violation. That is not “creating evil,” rather it is Him being a God of justice.

Here is another apparent contradiction - did God send an evil spirit? 1 Samuel 16:14: The more favored by God, the more responsible one must be. Saul was favored above all, becoming a king where God did not want one, yet God blessed Saul in spite of the foolish choice of the people. All Saul had to do was rule in a godly manner. He even had Samuel the prophet to help him with that. When Saul rejected God’s way, God rejected Saul, and just like in the Garden of Eden, God permits Satan’s influence to become Saul’s chief guide. *God sent an evil spirit* = God allowed Saul’s actions to reap the consequences of a lack of godliness following after Satan’s ways.

Here is the beginning of the New Testament with a new approach for the nation of Israel: Luke 3:3-16: This is John the Baptist preaching to the people to come to righteousness. This is

a message and warning to the nation of Israel, but he is not giving the message nationally, he is giving the message individually. He is also warning them that if they don't respond, God can raise up a new nation, new individuals, in their place. He was not addressing the leaders, but rather the individual people, stressing repentance because Jesus was coming. The people hear these dire consequences and respond with practical questions - the practical answers are all individually driven. Here is where we think Christianity begins to make the greatest mistake in recent history: **Christianity no longer is applied on a national standpoint, but rather the Gospel was introduced on an individual basis.**

Each individual was given a practical application of how to truly repent in his or her personal life. The people looking for repentance were tax collectors and soldiers - the same people that the Pharisees wanted nothing to do with! John was showing us an individual response, not a national response. Christianity is a **different kind of call** than being a favored nation like Israel. The Gospel is now an **individual call** to be a follower of Jesus and receive a heavenly reward. John's message: "I am paving the road for the one who will bring true change!" There is a paradigm shift about to occur from the Old Testament times. It is no longer about a nation or national interaction with other nations - it is now about a called-out people. But why? And does this mean that Israel's time as a favored people had expired?

**If it is no longer about a national approach,
then doesn't that indicate God changed His mind?**

NO! Consider **the central promise of all Scripture** and its application:

Abraham is given the promise which is restated to him in additional Scriptures as well:

Genesis 22:15-18: (NASB) ¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the **stars of the heavens** and as the **sand which is on the seashore**; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

Isaac is next given the promise because of Abraham: Genesis 26:3-5: Interesting...Isaac represents Jesus in that he was to be sacrificed. The stars are the focus of the promise and Isaac is a picture of Christ. What reward are the true followers of Jesus promised? Heaven! The stars are...in heaven!

Jacob is then given the promise because of Abraham: Genesis 28:12-14: Only the dust of the earth is the focus here - no stars this time. Why does God in repeating the promise to Isaac talk only about the stars in heaven, but when he repeats the promise to Jacob speaks only of the dust of the earth? Jacob is the father of the nation of Israel. The Law was built upon the nation. Here in the promise Jacob as a representation of Abraham is the earthly part of God's plan - His reconciliation process. Through this earthly nation, all the families of the earth will be blessed. The promise given to Jacob reflects the Old Testament work and the promise given to Isaac reflects the New Testament work. The dust is the focus of the promise and Jacob is a picture of Israel. What reward is promised to the faithful of Israel before Christ? An earthly reward! The dust is...on earth!

Now the New Testament builds upon the foundation of the Old Testament application:

Galatians 3:6-9: This provides a recap of the Old Testament promise. Galatians 3:27-29: The call to Christianity is the call to inherit the promise - the call to inherit the ability and privilege to bless all the families of the earth! Christianity is given that call and promise just as Israel as a nation was given that same promise. So, God is not *changing*; He is *building* - building something BIG! James 1:17-18: God allowed Gentiles to be part of the plan. The Law provided the foundation but the New Testament built upon it.

If Jesus came to fulfill the Law then why did he seem to *change* the Law?

Isn't Jesus taking God's stated Law for His people and turning it on its ear? Matthew 5:38-39: **Not only Jesus, but his followers too!** 1 John 3:15

This is how it *used* to work: Deuteronomy 21:21: Did Jesus pick and choose the way he wanted the Law to apply? Galatians 3:10-12: So, the Law was specific in its condemnation and no one could live up to it. Okay, but if everyone is cursed under the Law because no one can

meet its perfect standards, then doesn't that deflate the promise previously given of blessing? It is impossible to bless if they can't do it anyway. How do we put this in perspective? Keep reading...Galatians 3:16-18: So, the promise did not need the Law - the promise stood on its own merit. God is its sole provider. The Law was a way for people to understand the *value* of the promise.

Galatians 3:19-22: (NASB) ¹⁹*Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made... (So, the Law was to “pass the baton” to the seed of the promise)* ²¹*Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.* ²²*But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (The Law's purpose is clearly defined.)*

The Law was not able to bring about eternal life, but it “labeled” sin.

We see a major error taught in what Christianity is supposed to accomplish. Israel was the chosen nation of God - this was a *national* approach. In the New Testament when we see John the Baptist beginning the call to those who would have an opportunity in Christianity, it was done *individually* and not nationally. The New Testament repeatedly talks to the individual: *Take up your cross and follow me; Give your life as a living sacrifice*. It stresses individual activities and an individual following. The reward promised has nothing to do with being a nation, but rather, it promises an individual heavenly reward that will help to bless all the families of the earth.

The mistake Christianity has made, in our opinion, is that it has taken the nationalism of the Old Testament and tried to bring it to the New Testament where it doesn't belong.

Christianity ought not to be a political force in the running of nations. That is not the purpose of what Jesus brought to us. Instead, it was to follow after him. He said *if my kingdom were of this world*, he would fight. He would conquer. The fact that his kingdom is not of this world means we are called to a higher kingdom. Our political allegiance ought to be in heaven and not to politically run a country. Christianity - in its purest, truest sense - does not belong in politics. We do agree, however, with running a country according to Christian principles, but Christianity should not be running the country. We need to be very careful in our involvement in this world. The Apostle Paul talked about being an ambassador for Christ. Ambassadors are not citizens of the nation in which they reside; rather, they are representing another nation. We are to be representing heaven here on earth. We ought not to put our hands into the political affairs of mankind. Should we lead the way by living the right way and be an example? Yes. The mistake is taking the nationalism of the Old Testament and trying to apply it now. Galatians 3:23-26: The Law came *after* the promise just as the nation came *after* and from the individual. Once the seed (Jesus) arrived, having come through the Law AND through the individual (the lineage of Abraham), God's planned reconciliation was able to progress to a whole new level. **Old Testament Law + New Testament Promise = Perfect Harmony**. Each is a different step in the unfolding of the plan of God. God had the solution for sin in place even before sin began. He was willing to allow misery temporarily so that the experience could bring something much greater and eternal.

The Old and New Testaments are connected as a whole, with a very specific purpose in mind. Where there is a God of justice, wisdom, power and love, there is a plan that ultimately treats everyone with equal justice and equal opportunity for life. It is just a matter of time and timing - we need to consider *God's* timing!

See Ecclesiastes 3:8 and Acts 17:31, John 12:24, Matthew 13:30, Job 13:15, Isaiah 61:1-3, and Micah 4:3-4.

**So, does the same God rule in the Old and New Testament?
 For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
 Think about it...!**