



Light from the Word

Relevance of the Old Testament

In a world that seems to change more rapidly every year, there are few constants. People change, the cultures change, patterns of life evolve and adapt – even to the point of changing social mores and customs. The good news is that God does not change! One of the great joys in knowing the Lord is the calm assurance of His unchanging nature. Although some may think that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament, His constancy is reflected throughout the Bible by many examples of His consistent message to creation. He has not changed, and He will not change.

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6)

From the beginning, God has demonstrated a constant and consistent love for His creation. In the New Testament, we continue to observe that God is love. He hasn't changed. We also read that Jesus was with God at the creation and that nothing was made without Him. We read that Jesus is the same today and yesterday and forever. Like the Father, He does not change.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

Understanding that God does not change, helps us understand that His Word has not changed either. The entire Bible is more than applicable to our lives; it is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable to us in many ways.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

When the Apostle Paul wrote this instruction to Timothy, the only scripture that existed was the Old Testament. We must conclude that the

Old Testament is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness – just as the New Testament is profitable for these things. In fact, a thorough reading of both reveals that, like the Father and the Son, the Word has not changed. Some key points of consistency include: the enduring commandment to love, the richness of God's mercy, and His desire that we walk humbly in His sight – circumcised in heart.

In response to Abraham's faith and as a sign of His covenant with Abraham, God commanded Abraham to circumcise all males. He further instructed the Jews through Moses that God's intent was to circumcise their heart. This circumcision of the heart indicates the Lord's desire that we who live by faith would cut off every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us – in order to love God with all our heart – and live.

“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” (Deuteronomy 30:6)

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

Jesus quoted often from the Old Testament and in doing so, further reveals the major themes of mercy and love. As He spoke with a lawyer who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, the lawyer answered, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.”* And Jesus confirmed this saying, *“Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:27-28)* In confirming this, Jesus validated the

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primary commandment that Moses gave to the Israelites after they escaped Egypt saying, *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)*

Jesus also confirms that the principle of loving one’s neighbor has not changed since the days in which it was communicated to the children of Israel. *“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of the people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18)*

Again the New Testament affirms the Old, reminding us to love even our enemies. *(Matthew 5:43-45)*

As the Lord continued speaking with the lawyer, He gave the parable of the Good Samaritan and asked him who was neighbor to the man who fell among thieves. The lawyer answered, *“He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, “Go, and do thou likewise.” (Luke 10:37)*

Mercy is another recurring theme that God taught from the beginning, demonstrated by His own actions, and reiterated through His prophets. He responded to Abraham’s pleas for mercy towards Sodom. He responded to Moses when he

pleaded for the children of Israel. He showed tremendous mercy towards those who repented of the sins they had committed – even those who were very evil such as King Ahab, and the people of Nineveh. Through His prophets, He reiterated that His desire for men is that we would live in mercy, justice and humility.

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8)

To receive God’s mercy has always required faith. Those who repented – even in Old Testament times had to believe in God in order to respond to Him. The New Testament teaches us that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. As in all the previous examples, we see the unchanging truth of the Word – whether given before Jesus came, given by Jesus, or communicated by the Apostles as they quoted the prophets.

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:4) ... and ... But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:11)

In an ever-changing world, it is comforting to know that the

Living God does not change and will not change.