

RECONCILING THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT

- **There is a unity of scripture and consistency of God's nature in both testaments despite their differences.
- **The character, will, and purposes of God do not change from the Old to the New Testament.

When we come up against differences in the 2 testaments, we tend to make one of two choices:

1. God is an unreliable God who changes from Old to New testaments.
2. Scripture is inadequate and thus is an unreliable revelation of God.

What sort of picture or image does each word in the following pairs inspire:

Law	Old	Circumcision	Prophets	Passover
Gospel	New	Baptism	Apostles	Communion

Mount Sinai—Exodus 31 and The Mount of the Beatitudes—Matthew 5

***A recurring theme or idea is that God in the Old Testament appears angry and destructive, judgmental and impatient and, by contrast, God in the New Testament appears kind and gracious, merciful and forgiving.*

THIS IS NOT A MODERN PROBLEM!

*1900 years ago Marcion, a leader of the early orthodox Christian church in Asia Minor, was a vocal critic of the OT and argued that the OT God demanded obedience while the Father of Jesus desired only to be loved.

*His conclusion: the OT must be dismissed entirely by Christians and he created his own bible using only the Gospel of Luke and certain epistles of Paul—he was deemed a heretic and excommunicated from the church.

**When we come up against stories or teachings in Scripture that challenge us or make us feel uncomfortable, how do we respond?

Common responses when we are uncomfortable or offended by passages in the Bible:

1. Dismiss the passage by saying, “Well, that’s in the OT.”—meaning it’s outdated, no longer relevant.
2. Rather than wrestle with the passage, we discount it by saying it took place in a different day and place—the reasoning goes like this: The Bible was written long ago and far away and is simply a reflection of its time and place.

What do we lose when we pick and choose, dismiss and discount, and render irrelevant certain scriptures?

1. Jesus—2 greatest commandments come directly from the OT.
2. David’s testimony that the Lord is his shepherd, an image Jesus used—from the OT.
3. Instructions to care for the poor, the widows, the orphans—from the OT Mosaic law.
4. Call for justice—Amos
5. A portrait of genuine worship—Isaiah

6. God's intimate and unchanging love for Israel—Hosea
7. The promise of a new covenant and new hearts—Jeremiah
8. Everything Jesus taught related to all he knew from the Hebrew Scriptures—see Luke 4.
9. Preaching in the NT is based on OT verses and understandings (Acts 10, 13, 17-18, 22-23, 26)
10. The Hebrew Scriptures (OT) were not only authoritative for the Jews but for the early church.
11. The doctrine of justification by faith (how we are made right with God—not by circumcision or fulfilling all the laws but through God in Christ and our faith in Christ—comes directly from Genesis 15:6—“Abraham believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.” See Galatians 3:6 and Romans 4:3.

What God offers us in Christ is new, but it is not a departure from the old covenant—the God of the old covenant who offered justification by faith is the same God of the new covenant who offers salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

“CHARACTER OF GOD”—list characteristics of God found in the following Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 32:4
Malachi 3:6
Revelation 22:13

“UNITY OF SCRIPTURE”—how is scripture presented in the following verses:

Psalm 33:11
Proverbs 30:5
2 Timothy 3:16