

08-07-01 PM - GOOD NEWS WEEK - Is the God of the Old Testament the God of the New Testament?

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[0 : 00] to see you here and I hope you're not too cold. I'm not sure whether others are coming. I think one or two might still come but I think we should more or less make a start. I've been asked to speak about is the God in the Old Testament the same as the God in the New Testament and I'm sure there are lots of questions that you may have about this issue so I want to give plenty of time at the end for questions but I thought I'd say some things and then have questions at the end and then there's afternoon tea in the hall as I'm sure most of you know already. So we might make a start and I might say a prayer and then we'll get going. Dear God we thank you that you are our God and we pray this afternoon that you'll help us to understand you better, to understand more of what you're like, more of what you want us to be like and more of what you're on about for this universe. Amen.

Why do we not edit out some of the stories of the Old Testament especially those where the killing of innocent women and children is portrayed as the will of God? As a Christian I find it both offensive and confusing to be reading this alongside the message of Jesus to love our neighbour. So wrote C. Williams of Brighton in this month's monthly Anglican newspaper. Some of you may have already read the letters page and seen her letter there and I'm sure she's not alone in thinking the thoughts of that letter. Why don't we leave some bits of the Old Testament out? Why don't we leave out the bits where people are killed and it seems to be unfair or it's gory or it's immoral and all those sorts of things. Quite often you hear bits of the Bible read and it seems to me it's that sometimes the readings will stop before the really difficult bits. One of the Psalms talks about in one version, happy are those who bash the baby's heads against the rocks and often that verse is left out when Psalm 137 is read. Many people think there's a serious disjunction between the Old and the New Testaments and especially in their portrayal of God. In the Old Testament there are stories where a man drops dead because he touches the Ark of God in 2 Samuel 6. Lot's wife was famously turned into a pillar of salt just because she turned her head as they were fleeing from Sodom and

Gomorrah in Genesis chapter 19. There were 42 children who were mauled by a bear because they were disrespectful of their parents in 2 Kings chapter 2. A king called Agag, great name I reckon, was hewed to pieces in 1 Samuel 15. And then in Deuteronomy 7 the people of God are commanded to show no pity and have no mercy on the inhabitants of the land that they're about to go in and conquer.

That's just a handful of excerpts if you like of bits of the Old Testament that people think portrays a God as a rather bloodthirsty and vindictive sort of God, a bit harsh, a bit unfair, a bit cruel almost. And so on the one hand you get a caricature if you like or a portrayal of God in the Old Testament where God is bloodthirsty, he's angry, he's full of wrath, he's a particularist God, that is he's only really concerned with the Jewish people, the people descended from Abraham. He doesn't really seem to show a lot of concern for other nations and other people. He can be seen as an immoral God, wanting to kill innocent people, women and children especially, and some sort of misdemeanours and wrongdoings seem to get brushed under the carpet, whereas other times he seems to come down like a ton of bricks on that sort of behaviour. Seems to be an unloving God, not a particularly warm, friendly sort of God. Or God is sometimes seen as a very jealous God.

[3 : 32] He doesn't want to see anybody turn to anything else apart from himself and he'll obliterate them if they do. And certainly God in the Old Testament is a God who is seen to be or portrayed as awesome and holy. You can't get too close to him or you'll shrivel up in the sort of fire of his holiness.

So Moses when he came to a holy mountain had to take his shoes off and be very careful. One of the prophets saw a vision of God in the temple and he fell down prostrate before him. That sort of terrifying God almost, a great big ogre like God. Well that's one way of thinking about God from the Old Testament and on the other hand there are those who say well it's completely different in the New Testament. God there is loving, he's warm, he's generous, he's forgiving, he's merciful, he keeps on forgiving, he's always got time for us, he's always attentive to our needs, he's there for everyone, he's not just fussed about the Jews, he's actually fussed about every person who's ever lived and he's living whatever nation in colour of skin and so on. That's a very different God some people think from the God of the Old Testament. And so it's a legitimate question to ask, do the two go together?

Have we actually got two books, Old Testament and New Testament that really do not belong together and really should be, find the end of Malachi and the beginning of Matthew in the Bible and just sort of tear it in part and say I've now got two books rather than one. Well I want to say a number of things by way of response to that sort of picture and the first thing I want to say is that throughout the whole Bible God is on about all people. He's not just a particularist God who's only fussed about and cares for and loves the Jewish people and in particular I'm addressing here our wrong thinking about the Old Testament because it's quite clear in the New Testament that God is on about everybody.

But in the Old Testament the reason why God chose the Jewish people or more precisely why God chose Abraham and then Abraham's descendants who later became called the Jews is for the sake of the world.

That is he chose one group of people so that they would be in a relationship with him and live such holy lives that they would be like a light in a world of relative darkness that would actually attract people from other nations like moths coming towards the light. That's the reason why God chose Abraham and made promises to him. It's why then he had a special favour if you like for the Jewish people or the Israelite people as they're called when they came into a land he settled them in the land and gave them lots of good things and was forgiving and merciful. The whole point of it is not just because he wants to be in good terms with them and them alone and have disregard for other nations it's because he wants through them to attract all the people of the world to himself. And you see that what right at the beginning when God first speaks to Abraham he says I'm going to bless you and make your name great and those who bless you I will bless and those who curse you I'll curse. That is God is on about a relationship with Abraham so that through Abraham all the nations of the world will be blessed. So we shouldn't ever think that God is only ever fussed about the Israelites or the Jewish people in the Old

[6 : 45] Testament. Even though the the whole content is very much focused on the Israelite people and their history and so on it is always God's dealing with them for the sake of the world. That's also seen in that the promises made to Abraham come out of the whole world failing God in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. So when God suddenly speaks to Abraham and out of the blue so to speak it is in the light of and the context of a world that has gone astray and so God is now choosing one man and then his descendants in order to rectify the problems that the world has created in Genesis 1 or precisely Genesis 3 to Genesis 11. That explains a little bit about why the Israelite people had such odd laws why they had to adopt so many odd religious practices food laws customs clothes and so on.

They were to be different from the world not just to live the same normal lives that the rest of the world lived the same practices the same standards of morality they were to be very different so that other nations would see the difference and marvel at what a nation is this what God must they have because they've got such righteous laws is one of the ways it's expressed in the Old Testament. So even originally there was an understanding that people might come and actually come to worship the God of Israel that was God's design and the reason why it failed mostly is not because of God but because the people of God failed to do what God wanted as a light. But later on in the Old Testament in the latter part of it when Israel has consistently failed to live up to what God wants it to be the prophets of the Old Testament who are looking into the future about what God is on about they keep describing pictures of Israel or Jerusalem the capital of Israel as the center of the world or a high mountain sometimes figurative sort of language and the nation streaming in to worship God.

You find that especially in the prophet Isaiah and the prophet Zechariah but in other places as well. So again we see this picture of God not just on about the Jews but on about the whole world and even though his people keep failing him the prophets say God hasn't given up on that plan and so they're looking further into the future to see all the people of the world coming into God and worshipping God.

That of course is consistent with what we find in the New Testament as well. There it's much more obvious that God is on about the whole world. He tells Jesus after rising from the dead tells his disciples and other followers of his to go into all the world and speak the gospel, teach people the gospel, baptise people of every nation and then at the end of the Bible you get a picture of heaven where there are people of every tribe and tongue and every nation gathered around the throne of heaven worshipping God.

Now that's been a consistent theme from beginning to end of the Bible. God is the creator of everything and all people. People failed so in order to bring them back to himself he chose Abraham and Abraham's descendants.

[9 : 42] They failed to do that job of being a light to attract others. So in the end one descendant of Abraham does the job and that's Jesus the son of Abraham. And by his life and death and resurrection God enables people of every tongue and race to come back to him through the gospel.

And then that leads on to the picture at the very end of the Bible of the nations gathered around the throne of God worshipping him. So that's one issue addressed, I hope. That is the idea that in the Old Testament God's only fussed about one nation and in the New Testament he's fussed about all the others.

That's not the case. It's a consistent concern from beginning to end. Related to that concern is that we find in the Old Testament people of God were called to be holy.

The word holy means at its root level separate. So to be holy was to be separate from the world but separate to God, belonging to God.

And that holiness was to be expressed by a geographical separation from the world. So that Israel was given a land defined by the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River more or less and desert to the south and river to the north.

[10 : 52] And they were to live in that land, holy lives that would become a beacon and not be polluted by sin and failure and the sins and failures and idolatry of other nations as well.

So for the people of God in the Old Testament their land becomes a particular focus. It has a focus more in the Old Testament than in the New, though we'll come to that in a minute.

But in order for the people of God to be geographically distinct, then the people who lived in the land before them need to be removed from the land. And this is where we get to one of the really difficult parts of the Old Testament where we think that God seems to be a bit bloodthirsty and cruel is the eviction of those people from the land.

But eviction is even saying it in a nice way. By and large it is their killing, their destruction so that the people of God can go in and settle in the land free from cohabiting with people of other nations.

That leads to a third point which will address that. And that is that in both the Old and the New Testament God punishes wrongdoers. Now in the Old Testament that often occurs through the agency of his people.

[12 : 02] That is the people of God do the punishing or the killing in a sense on God's behalf. So when the people of Israel come into the land, they are the ones who fight against the inhabitants of the land, defeat them and settle in the land.

Sometimes that punishment of wrongdoers comes through a plague or a pestilence that God directly sends himself. Sometimes it even comes through an army of another country and sometimes even fighting against God's own people when they've been wrong.

So again it's not just God favouring his own people to be blind to others but sometimes even using other armies to fight against his own people. Now we need to make a comment here about this killing of other people.

Never are they portrayed as being innocent. We shouldn't think that God is being very cruel when he sends the people of Israel into the promised land and says I want you to kill off all these innocent people.

Their wrongdoing is just the fact that they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. They're good people but I don't want them in this land, you get rid of them. That's not the case at all. It is clear in many places in fact that all those nations were in God's eyes wrongdoers or we might say evil or

sinners or wicked or unrighteous people.

[13 : 13] Way back before the actual event of crossing over the river Jordan into the land occurred, God had said to Abraham you're not going to get the land yet because the sins of those people are yet to be complete.

That is God was actually giving them time and then when they'd gone so far down their sinful ways then would come the punishment. So God yes he was favouring his people in one sense by putting them into a land that they didn't deserve but he wasn't killing off innocent people in the process. They were people who were guilty of dishonouring God. They worshipped other gods. They worshipped idols and all of those religious practices of the ancient Near East had associated immorality with it.

For example if you want to get your gods favour you go up to one of the temples or shrines and you engage in some sort of sexual act with a temple prostitute, male or female, it didn't seem to matter. And that was one way that you might induce your gods to produce rain or crops or children or some sort of benefit or blessing for you. That is it's idolatry because it's the worship of wrong gods, non-gods but it's idolatry that always has accompanied with it immorality.

[14 : 22] Indeed for some of those nations they'd even practice child sacrifice as part of their religious regime and so on. Now in the New Testament God is the same. He punishes wrongdoers, he punishes idolaters and immoral people.

The Bible is very clear that such people will not be allowed into heaven. It's there in the very end of the Bible in Revelation 21 and 22. But in the New Testament with just a few exceptions perhaps the means of God's punishing wrongdoers is different from that in the Old.

Now there are some pestilences and so on in the New and so on. But in the Old Testament the people of Israel function to some extent as the agent of God's punishment on wrongdoers. But in the New Testament the people of God don't have that role. Never are we encouraged to go out and fight to kill idolaters or immoral people. It doesn't mean that God has changed his mind about them.

It doesn't mean that God's more lenient towards them. Because in the New Testament you get on the lips of Jesus many times and also by Paul and other preachers and in the book of Revelation a very clear understanding that come the day of judgment when Jesus returns it will be woe for any idolater or immoral person or some evil doer.

[15 : 38] And what will happen then will be in a sense no different from what Israel did against those nations in earlier in history. It's just the timing that's different. And it's Jesus who will execute judgment then not the people of God as a whole.

Sometimes I think we forget that picture of God judging at the end of history. We think well here in the Old Testament there's lots of pictures of God judging. We don't see so much of it in the New. But actually there are threats of judgment on Jesus' lips time and time again. But so often we somehow block them out when we read things that Jesus says. And we try I think we end up with a distorted view of love which I'll come to also a bit later on. Let me say one way in which the people of God do exercise some judgment in the New Testament and that is by excommunication from the church.

I feel like the people of God as a nation in the Old Testament is a parallel for the church in the New. And in the Old Testament if somebody of Israel committed a gross sin they would be put to death. In the New Testament if somebody commits a gross sin and is unrepentant then they are to be excommunicated from the church.

Kicked out and handed over to Satan is one expression Paul uses in 1 Corinthians. Now that I think is the parallel. That is final judgment is held over for Jesus' return but it is still the same sort of act of judgment in kicking someone out.

[16 : 53] Now churches around the world hardly ever practice excommunication anymore. The heresy or immorality at all. I sometimes think that that's wrong although of course the practice of excommunication does become a dangerous one as well.

So consistent in both testaments old and new God is the judge and the punisher of wrongdoers. In the Old Testament that's often come about through wars that God's people fight.

In the New Testament by and large it's held over for the end when Jesus returns. Let me say too that God is holy on both accounts. His holiness will not tolerate sin in Old or New Testament.

It isn't that God has lowered or softened his standards in the New at all. It's just that he withholds his time of judgment and the reason we're told that he does that is to give time for people to repent. That's clear in a number of places in the New Testament. In Jesus' words to Peter chapter 3 Romans as well. In Romans 2. We should also of course bear in mind some of the very harsh words that Jesus said.

[17 : 52] To one sinner Jesus says in Matthew 18 it would be like a millstone tied around his neck. It would be better that he never was born. They're very harsh words of judgment.

It's not that Jesus is suddenly obliterating them then and there. When he says woe to you Pharisees they are very strong words of judgment. So we shouldn't think that judgment is a theme that disappears in the New but is more prominent in the Old.

I actually think they're consistently prominent in both. Finally on this theme that God punishes wrongdoers there is a glimpse or two in the New Testament of some sort of immediate judgment of God.

The most famous I guess is the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 where two people lie about what they've done with their money. What they've done with their money is not necessarily wrong.

It's the fact that they've lied about what they've done with it in effect and they drop down dead. A number of people have problems with that. I was preaching on that passage a few years ago and unbeknownst not here but elsewhere and unbeknownst to me another clergyman was in the congregation and he took great offense at my interpretation.

[18 : 56] He said it was coincidental heart attacks he said. God could never allow that sort of thing to happen. Well I think that that's misreading the passage. It's very clear that it's God who's judging those people for their great sin.

And it becomes a warning for the rest of the church in Acts chapter 5 not to take God lightly either. I want to make another point and that is on the nature of sin. And one of the reasons why I make this point I think is that we somehow think in the Old Testament God is a bit ferocious and harsh.

And I think one reason why we tend to think that is because we view sin differently from how God views sin. We tend to think of sin as being gross acts of immorality or cheating or dishonesty.

And true that's sin. But sin is anything that doesn't love God with all our heart soul and strength and anything that doesn't love our neighbor as ourself. And that applies in both Old and New Testaments.

The first of those two great commands as Jesus called them is loving God with all your heart soul mind and strength. So therefore a very serious sin is when we don't honor God as God. When we don't glorify God as God.

[19 : 56] When somehow we glorify or honor something else as God. That is idolatry. Now that is a basic sin in the Old Testament. But often we see those people who seem to just be normal people, normal nations.

But they've got another religion. And we think well God should tolerate that somehow. We fail to see that that is highly offensive to God. They've dethroned God from being God. And they've put up their own idols or statues or their own conceptions of God.

That is indeed the breaking of the first two commandments. In the ten commandments of the Old Testament. That sin is a serious affront to God. So they are very guilty people in God's eyes.

My point here is to say that because we often think of sin as being purely social. That is dishonesty, immorality between people. We fail to see the most serious sin in some respects.

Of idolatry, graven images, not worshipping God as God. As taking the Lord's name in vain and so on. But there is a primary direction of sin that is between God and us. And we often forget about that when we just think about human relationships.

[20 : 59] In the Old Testament we often see that the people who are being killed are guilty of idolatry and the worship of other gods. The next point I want to make is that God never delights in the death of a sinner.

You never see God licking his lips or rubbing his hands together with glee. Because people are being killed in the Old Testament or punished for their sin. And the same in the New. I think we understand that God is grieved when people sin.

But he's righteous and holy. They deserve to die. Sin always deserves death. That's clear in the Old Testament. God made that statement to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden very early on.

If you eat of this fruit you'll die. That is if you sin you die. It's Paul's statement in Romans 6. The wages of sin is death. So sin deserves death. But God never delights in the death of a sinner. Ever. The next point I want to make is taking the other angle. What I've tried to do I suppose in the last couple of points is say that where we get often a picture of the Old Testament God being an ogre and a ferocious judge and punisher.

[21 : 58] I've tried to balance that by showing that that's the same in the New. But the other way in which we see the Old and the New disjointed is that we see God as being full of mercy and grace and love in the New.

What I want to do now is show that the same applies in the Old. In the Old Testament God is merciful. That is he forgives sin. Oh yes he does punish it and sometimes without warning. Sometimes that happens in the New Testament with Ananias and Sapphira for example. But nonetheless God is merciful. If he were not merciful then nobody would ever live. But in the Old Testament we see God's mercy in a number of ways.

We see it in the sacrificial system. We might think this is a fairly odd and bloody sort of way of carrying on your religion. That is you come and kill an animal and offer it and sprinkle blood around and all that sort of thing.

It would be a bit gory and smelly. But nonetheless it is a means by which God says to his people I will be merciful to you. I will forgive your sin. And yes it is gory because sin deserves death.

[22 : 57] And that is why animals are killed as a substitute if you like for us dying for our sin. So in a sense it has to be gory and it has to be costly in order to show the seriousness of sin.

But the sacrificial system tells us that God is merciful and forgiving. We also see God's mercy in that he forgives people when they pray. When Israel sinned and made an idol Moses prayed for the people on Mount Sinai praying that God would forgive them.

And he did. There was no sacrifice on that occasion. Later on King David committed adultery. He prayed the words of Psalm 51 and God forgave him. Again there is no record of a sacrifice I think on that occasion.

We are told after that incident with Moses' prayer that God is slow to anger and merciful. The Psalms say the same sort of thing. God is merciful abounding in love and mercy and so on.

He is merciful to his people in the Old Testament by keeping them alive even when they sin. And indeed even when he does punish them he always spares a remnant so that they will continue and his promises stay alive.

[24 : 01] Sometimes in the Old Testament some of the things that God does that seem a bit harsh are ways of correction for his people. A discipline if you like which itself is merciful.

Any parent who has children know that they will discipline their child. That is there is an element of punishment but it is a punishment with the aim of correction to discipline the child so that they do not do what they have done again.

The same with God. In Amos 1 of the Prophets chapter 4 a number of natural disasters we might say have come on the nation. And Amos says these were disciplinary or warning signs to you to correct your ways.

You did not heed them though. And so further punishments coming. The same occurs in a number of places both Old and New Testaments. Now those things I have said about the mercy of God are just a few in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it all culminates in Jesus' death.

And yes I think it is fair to say in the New Testament there is a bigger picture of God as merciful. But that is because the real heart of God's mercy is Jesus' death on the cross. And the sacrificial system and the prayers and the mercy of God and his slowness to anger in the Old Testament are all if you like foreshadowing Jesus' death on the cross.

[25 : 10] That is where they are pointing to. The heart of God's mercy. Related to this is the next point that God is a God of what we call grace in both Testaments. Now grace is a word that the Bible especially the New Testament uses.

It does not mean that you are graceful like a ballerina. But it means God's generosity in giving you something that you do not deserve. Now the word occurs a number of times in the New Testament. For those at Holy Trinity we are preaching through Romans.

And we are about to in a few weeks time get to where the word grace begins to occur several times. It occurs in many other letters even more so in one sense than Romans. And God's grace is seen in the fact that he establishes a relationship with Christians in the New Testament that they do not

deserve.

We are saved by grace and it is not your own doing Paul says in Ephesians 2. We know the hymn amazing grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. That is I don't deserve to be saved by God but he saves me nonetheless.

That's grace. But the same occurs in the Old Testament. The people of Israel are God's people not because they deserve it. Not because they've done anything good or they're powerful or they're big or they're righteous. Indeed the Old Testament makes it clear they're none of those things.

[26 : 17] God saves his people in the Old Testament even when they don't deserve it. That's grace. You see it at the beginning of the Ten Commandments. Before God says don't do this and don't do that.

God says to the people of Israel. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of slavery out of Egypt. You shall have none other gods before me. That is I have saved you already. You don't deserve it.

That's grace. Now then live a right life in response. The same pattern is there in both Testaments. Anyone who's a person of God in the Old Testament is saved by grace.

Anyone who is in the New Testament is also saved by grace. It is undeserved in both Testaments. I also want to say I'll come back to that point in a minute. I just want to say one brief thing about the nature of love.

This is another reason why we often think of the two Testaments as being a bit disjointed because we don't understand what love is. Our world doesn't understand what love is. Love, our world thinks, is saying yes to everyone for everything.

[27 : 15] So if somebody does something wrong, it doesn't matter. We love them so we turn a blind eye to it. It doesn't matter what immorality they do or what religion they are or what God they worship.

If you are to love somebody, you affirm them and build them up in what they're doing. That's what our world thinks. That's actually not love. Love seeks what is best for people and what is best for people is a relationship with the true God and a relationship that is expressed in holy living. So love will correct wrongdoing and wrong thinking. That's real love. And that's the way God loves. So God's love in both the New Testament and the Old Testament is a firm love, a severe love we might say at times.

That is, he doesn't just turn a blind eye and say yes, yes, yes, you're doing okay, you're doing fine. But it's a love that says I forgive you, I'm not going to throw a stone at you, but go and sin no more. As Jesus said to the woman who was caught in adultery, that is, yes, I say yes to you. I don't condemn you as a person. But nonetheless, I say to you, go and sin no more. That is, love and holiness go together. Where we confuse it is we think that love is just an open-hearted, warm-hearted yes to everything.

[28 : 24] That's not love at all. That's like being a doormat, in effect, to be walked over. So what we find in the Old and the New is a God who does love, but love is not inconsistent with punishment for wrongdoing, with anger at wrongdoing, with holiness either.

We see, and that leads on to the next point, that the Old Testament is different from the New. It's perhaps in one sense not quite as clear as the New. I think a helpful way of seeing how the two relate is that the Old Testament is like a sketch diagram of the New, a foreshadowing of it, if you like, or a model for what is the great reality.

It's an image I've used before. As you know, we're doing some building extensions in the next few months. And we've presented a model, a three-dimensional balsa wood model. That model is not the reality, of course, but it helps us see what the reality will be like.

Now, the Old Testament is like the model pointing to the reality. In all its detail, it's a bit fuzzy, but it gives us a fairly good idea. Let me give you some ways in which this image works.

In the Old Testament, the land is meant to be a model or sketch diagram or prototype of heaven.

That is a place where it's inhabited only by God's people who live holy lives, and it's a place of light and attraction to God.

[29 : 39] Heaven will be like that perfectly. The land in the Old Testament was never perfectly like that. It was just a foreshadowing of it. Heaven, of course, is not just a physical land. It is still physical, but it's a spiritual land as well.

That is, it's a bigger reality than even the Old Testament land could foreshadow. The sacrificial system in the Old Testament, that was also a prototype of Jesus' death. So the killing of animals was as a sign of God dealing with sin, punishing sin, but yet showing mercy to the person who offered the sacrifice and was repentant.

In the New Testament, it's Jesus' death on the cross that actually does that for us. It's Jesus' death that takes our sins and brings us forgiveness and shows even more clearly the mercy of God, and on the same time, the holiness of God in actually dealing with sin and not just sort of wiping it under the carpet as well.

So the sacrificial system is like a prototype of the bigger reality, which is Jesus' death. In the Old Testament, there are priests who mediate between the people and God. They are, again, a prototype of Jesus, the great high priest, and our mediator in heaven between us and God.

In the Old Testament, they had kings for quite a period. Not all of them were good. In fact, most of them, with only very few exceptions, were bad. But that kingship, or the monarchy, was again a prototype of Jesus who'd be the great king, the perfect king, as we see in the New Testament.

[30 : 57] In the Old Testament, the people of God were saved from slavery in Egypt, brought through the waters of the Red Sea to the wilderness and across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. That's a prototype of salvation, not from slavery to Egyptians, but from slavery to sin.

That God will free us from sin and bring us into the Promised Land. So the Exodus event, as it's called, bringing out of Egypt, Exodus from Egypt, is a prototype or sketch diagram model of, again, Jesus' death, which accomplishes our liberation from slavery to sin and being brought to the Promised Land.

So I hope that's one helpful way of seeing it. And so in some senses, the anger of God in punishing sinners in the Old Testament is a prototype of how he'll do it on Final Judgment Day, which the New Testament also looks forward to.

One more point, and then time for questions. It's also helpful to see the Old and the New at one level as having a line of continuity, that is, consistency between them. For example, God's character is consistent.

He is holy and he's loving and merciful. He judges sinners. He doesn't like sin. But on the other hand, there are also connections that are discontinuous from Old to New Testament. For example, the means by which God judges.

[32 : 07] In the Old Testament, sometimes plagues and so on, but often Israel's army defeating other people and executions and so on. But in the New Testament, the discontinuity is seen in that Jesus will judge on the final day.

In the Old Testament, the place of blessing is the land, but in the New Testament, it's heaven. The continuity lies in the fact that God wants his people in his place and under his rule. The discontinuity is sort of how that place is described.

Geographical land in the Old, a heavenly land in the New. In the Old Testament, you get warfare being used for judgment, but you don't get that for God's people in the New, partly because God's people are no longer a nation.

There's continuity in where there's still a people of God and we're still called to live holy lives, but in the Old Testament, it's a nation, and that's discontinuous with what the church is in the New Testament. We're not a nation anymore.

And one final example is that in the Old Testament, Israel was to live a concentrated geographical life that would be so good and holy and righteous that it would be like a light that attracts people from all around the world to come to God, as I said before.

[33 : 09] That is what we might call centripetal motion, that is motion towards the center. But in the New Testament, Jesus doesn't say to us, I want you all to gather in holy huddles and try and attract other people in, but he said to his disciples after the resurrection, go into all the world.

So there the motion is centrifugal, that is to go to the extremities of the earth to convert people.

God's purpose is still the same. That's the continuity. He wants the world to come to him. In the Old Testament, the means by which was to try and attract, but in the New Testament, primarily, it is for Christians to go and be scattered in the world of salt and light.

So there's a continuity, but there are also discontinuities. Now, I've said enough. It's time for your questions. I've tried to show that in the Old Testament, God is just as holy and judging and full of righteous anger against sin and so on as he is in the New.

I've tried to show that God in the Old Testament is just as loving and merciful as he is in the New. And I've tried to give you a few models by which to see the Old and the New relating by way of a prototype for the ultimate reality, but also as a means of continuity with accompanying discontinuity as well.

Well, let me stop there. I've spoken for long enough, and now it's your turn for questions. Helen. Yeah, that's right. And they stopped in about 70 AD, by and large, which is when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.

[34 : 33] So that's after Jesus' death, and in fact, after Paul's death as well, probably, in Rome. So without a temple, the Jews can't sacrifice. But even before then, there were Jews who lived in other countries around about, and they might only sacrifice rarely when they made pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

So in the New Testament, you get the picture of Jesus going up to Jerusalem for the feasts, and on the day of Pentecost, people from all sorts of different languages were there. They heard the disciples speaking in different languages.

They'd come from other nations to make sacrifices at a special feast. But without the temple, there are none at all, and so no Jews make sacrifices anymore. They think that that's because without a temple, God has said to them, well, the sacrifices are sort of put to one side for now.

When a temple comes again, then sacrifices will come back in. Any more questions? Yes, I certainly think the heart of what Christians believe is found in the New rather than the Old.

But I think the New without the Old is like a tree without roots, really, and not knowing where it's all come from. That is, we understand more about Jesus from reading the Old Testament because it shows where he's come from.

[35 : 43] There are other things that we lose if we chop off the Old. There are some emphases in the Old that are underplayed in the New because they're there so clearly in the Old. We also, I think, lose the sense of God's faithfulness if we chop off the Old.

The New Testament probably quotes the Old Testament on virtually every page, and by and large, the references are to show that God is faithful to what he said he'd do hundreds of years before.

If you chop that off, then you lose the sense of God being faithful in sending Jesus and all the things associated with Jesus coming. That is, it's almost like a new event just out of the blue.

But it's not. It's actually a long-awaited event. And that's a very important thing because the faithfulness of God, if we're going to understand that, we actually need to see that he promised something which was later fulfilled.

If all we see is the event of fulfillment, and we get told, oh, it was promised but now it's fulfilled, we actually lose it because we've got to understand that he did promise it a long time ago. So there are just a handful of ways in which we must, I think, still grapple with the Old Testament.