

THE WORD

Jesus and the Scriptures

By Jon Jacobs, 2007

One of the amazing aspects of Christ's life was His purposeful association with the Old Testament. All that Jesus ever did or said was set against an Old Testament backdrop. Jesus lived in light of existing revelation. It is virtually impossible to understand much of the gospels without a great deal of Old Testament insight. The gospel record presupposes an understanding of Old Testament substance.

Throughout history there have been some who have suggested a discontinuity between the Old Testament and the gospel accounts of Christ. Early in church history Marcion the Heretic attempted to sever the New Testament Christ from the Old Testament record. Marcion was considered the most influential heretic of the 2nd century and evidence of his teachings appears early on in places like Rome, North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Cyprus. Marcion distinguished between the promised Old Testament Messiah and the New Testament Messiah that actually came. He said that Jesus was Messiah but not the one the Old Testament promised. Marcion said that Jesus actually rejected the Old Testament and the God of the Old Testament. Contrary to Marcion and his kind, maybe the single greatest case for Old Testament authority is the role that it played in the life of Jesus Christ.

It is important for an understanding of the words and works of Christ to consider the ways in which He engaged Himself with the Old Testament. First of all, Jesus Christ constantly quoted from the Old Testament. His sermons and dialogs were permeated with Old Testament passages. Jesus quotes from the books of Moses, the prophets and the psalms. Interestingly, we find the Lord quoting Old Testament passages, with authority, at many of the most crucial moments of His life. During the temptation in the wilderness, defending marriage and resurrection with the Sadducees, cleansing the Temple and explaining the cross, are all examples of the way Jesus used the Old Testament.

Jesus not only quoted the Old Testament with authority but He also defended it. Jesus declared "Truly, truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Mt. 5:18). Jesus was affirming that the Old Testament was eternally binding and true.

Finally, Jesus saw His life as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He began His public ministry by standing up in a synagogue in Nazareth and reading from Isaiah 61. Jesus expounded by saying that He was the fulfillment of that Old Testament prophecy. Jesus said "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Throughout His ministry, Jesus used the Old Testament as an explanation of Himself, His words and His action. Towards the end of Luke's gospel we find an interesting verse which says "then beginning with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:27). Jesus saw His life as the execution of all that God had promised. He was the realization of the entire substance of the Old Testament.