

# The relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament

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## Abstract

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## 1 The Old Testament

- written between  $\approx 1600$ bc (some other sources give 1400bc) and  $\approx 300$ bc
- mostly in Hebrew with some Aramaic
- various styles (chronicles, prophecies, poetry)
- tells the walk of a people with God, praises Him, tells prophecies, defines His requirements for His creature
- written in an hebraic society (Jewish traditions, laws, society)
- very specific world view to us: the emphasis is placed on symbols, not raw facts
- very much community-based society (the individual does not exist outside the group)
- great care taken to keep the text (professional scribes for making copies with "checksums", etc)
- differences between manuscripts: mostly on names and numbers

## 2 The New Testament

- written after Christ's ministry, on a short period of time
- written in everyday Greek
- telling about very specific events and analyzing them; end times prophecies
- written in a Jewish society that had been conquered by: Assyrians, Babylonians, etc They a couple of centuries of Greek influence (Alexander the great, then Seleucid), before the Roman conquest
- their society should be closer to us, the language is closer to us (a lot of NT Greek words have created our words)

### 3 One voice, two characters

- both part of a unique revelation (only taking the NT would be like reading only the last chapters of novels, because you care only about the outcome!)
- both walking hand in hand (cf references to the OT in the NT: 295 direct references, from 613 to 4105 allusions)
- the same God reveals Himself in the OT and the NT. Even if the OT is the foundation of the NT, the revelation is made of *both*. (reading both help to get a clearer picture of God)
- expression of an expected quality tailored to the society of the time (teaching love: first, "do not kill", then "love your neighbour")
- Old Testament:
  - revealing the character of God (cf food and purification, cf structure of the temple)
  - revealing the true nature of Man
- New Testament:
  - the promised sign of mercy brought by God (but mercy was already visible in the OT!)
  - the good news: the mercy promised by God is accessible to all, at all times
- OT symbols announce NT symbols, OT directs faith toward a different support, but the same faith saves (ie: the snake in the desert announces *and* serves the same process/purpose as Christ on the cross (compare Num 21:6-8 and Rom 4:3, Rom 9:30, Rom 10:10):
  - elevated (Ph 2:9)
  - trusting in the snake/Christ for salvation, by faith, saves (Rom 9:30 and Rom 10:10)
  - both are some signs of the covenant of God with Man (1Cor 11:25)
- OT symbols and requirements still here, but re-expressed in Christ (as well as types fulfilled several times):
  - the snake (Num 21:6-8)

- the salvation through a sacrifice ( Lv 4 )
- the lamb of God (Gen 22:13, linked through Isa 53)
- the mercy seat (Ex 25:17-22)
- the grace of God (Ex 33:17, Pr 3:34, toward David, etc Ez 18:23, De 7:7-8, Ex 33:19, Ex 34:6-7, Ps 32:1-5)
- the salvation by faith (Isa 66, plus see Abraham, David, etc)
- the purification (in Leviticus)
- the most holy access to God (in 1 King, Mt 27:41)
- etc
- the requirements of the Law are still in effect today (not a word has been removed, Mt 5:17-18)! But we can fulfill the Law (ie: be made righteous) through Christ (Rom 3:22). (cf comparison with a battle tank before the battle: it won't prevent the machine gun from firing, but once inside, you don't mind the machine gun!)
- the NT does not make the OT obsolete! (Christ tells us so (Mt 5:18)! And Christ shows us how fulfilling the Law look like ( Mt 5:17 ) )

## 4 Purpose of this multi-layer revelation

- Instead of two volumes, we should see it as 66 books! There is a gap of  $\approx$ 300-400 years in between, but the time laps between Genesis and Jeremiah is far greater! The NT is in the continuity of the OT as much as Isaiah is in the continuity of 1&2 Kings!
- step by step revelation/teaching
  - the "student" has a specific process to shape himself (even somebody who has never opened the Bible in his life, in our society, is under a strong, background influence of the values taught in the Torah).
  - going through both OT and NT enables the individual to go through the same process)
  - it should strengthen our faith (because this is not purely theoretical teaching, but also the collective walk of a people)
- progression of the revelation:

- initially, God and Man live together (Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden)
  - then direct encounters with men (cf Moses, Abraham...) who then transmit the message
  - then revelation through His shaping of a nation (using prophets to bring His will to Israel)
  - then direct encounter with Man (Christ, short period of time)
  - then by the Holy Spirit and the written Word
- the prophecies of the OT are signs of the past that are beneficial to our faith and edification.
  - OT=bare minimum requirements, NT=as God intended it to be (Mt 7:12)
    - you say to a kid not to hurt his brother... OT way: "do not hurt him!", NT way:"this is an expression of love, simply not hurting him is not enough!"
    - proportionate retaliation principle (an eye for an eye, etc): at the time of writing, this concept of proportionate response is *not* yet envisioned in the societies (the winner does whatever he wants to the loser, and he wants it all!). At the time of Nero, people start considering that retaliation must be proportionate (millenium after the OT principle spoken by God). At the same time, Christ teaches us that we should move closer to peace (ie: OT requirement was a minimum, you don't have to at least get an eye for an eye, but at *most* get an eye for an eye).
  - Think about your shadow:
    - it shares similarities with you
    - it has some differences with the real "you"
    - depending on where the light comes from, it reveals a different aspect of you
    - it lacks the depth of the real "you", it is not a complete picture of you
    - it is linked to you, but it is not you!

The OT commandments as well as their NT wording are like the shadows of the thought of God: they project an image (ie: reveal) of His

mind and heart. We should not look only at the shadow, but seek God who is making this shadow! When they are worded differently, they simply cast a different image of the same reality. We must obey the commandment as it is in the heart of God, not barely keeping its wording. The Pharisees are keeping the letter of the Law; Christ is pointing toward the heart writing the Law! (1Cor 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." - Heb 10:1 "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." - Col 2:16-17 )

- the best comentary on the OT: Christ! He is the on comming to explain us the true meaning of the OT (cf as a kid at the temple, explaining the Scriptures, cf teaching the Scriptures and debating with the pharisees, cf explaining the Scriptures after His resurection - Mt 22:29, Lk 24:27)
- the dictionary to understand the NT (and its symbols): the OT! (again, Lk 24:27)
- understanding the NT for what it is can not happen without the OT:
  - prophecies of the OT fulfilled in the NT (Isa 53, Ps 22, etc)
  - symbols of the OT, explained in the OT, reused and fulfilled in Christ in the NT (cf: the curtain torn apart)
  - why such and such happened that way?  $\Rightarrow$  because required by the OT (need for a holy sacrifice)
  - the Law re-explained  $\Rightarrow$  necessity to know how it was told and how it was lived (through the history of Israel)
  - basis for understanding sin, repentance and the price of salvation (the two sacrifices of OT: forgiveness for my sins, then adoration  $\Rightarrow$  Christ paid the price of the first one, my walk with God should provide the second ( Rom 12:1 )!)

## 5 Watch out! look for the context!

- referencing only a single verse is not enough: see Satan tempting Christ and citing verses! So, our reasoning must be based on a global understanding, ie both Old and New Testament!
- treating defeated ennemies:

- the surrounding cultures are very cruel: a defeat leader is blinded (piercing his eyes), shown around by the conqueror (in a cage), kept imprisoned before being ceremonially killed (strangulation, etc) at some point. Opponent civilians are often slaughtered (cf Caesar killing 40 000 civilians when taking a city in Gaul, cf Carthage), the cities are often totally destroyed, even by a retreating army to protect its retreat (cf Gaul). Prisoners are used as slaves (if kept alive). No "unnecessary" feelings: cf women and children at the siege of Alesia! cf, from the Red Cross: "From the caveman to biblical times, and for centuries thereafter, the winner in battle took from the loser not only his life, but also all of his available belongings, including women, children, domestic animals and personal property." Slaughter, rape, slavery, mutilations are part of war!
  - the command of wiping out a city or a nation has nothing surprising in this context: this is simply the way it goes at that time! But there are some protections: cf Deuteronomy 21:10-15
  - in Roman times, people started to consider a revolutionary idea: proportionate retaliation. Ie, an eye for an eye, centuries after the Bible had called for it!
  - in this context, this is clear that "an eye for an eye" does not mean that you must at least get an eye for an eye, but AT *most*. By giving this law, God is limiting the violence of the people, not calling for more violence. Centuries later, when people are less "hard hearted" (cf Mt 19:8), rephrase it to bring us closer to the true meaning: Mt 5:39.
  - so this is *not* a contradiction with the Prince of peace that Christ is! These a multiple layers for the same truth: God is love!
- the context is king:
    - the verse must make sense with its preceding and following verses (and keep in mind that chapters divisions are more or less arbitrary)
    - the verse must make sense within the whole Bible! There is no "such and such is obsolete today"
    - in doing so, understand the historical context of the verse, in order to know the meaning of the verse and not only its wording (plus, translations could be misleading on some details)

## 6 Conclusion

Knowing the verses is not enough: understanding the real intent (ie: from the heart of God and not as a legalistic, narrow point of view) must be sought. This can be done only by looking at the details (how the original words have been translated), at the historical context (when, in which kind of society) and within the globality of the Scriptures. If two verses seem to contradict each other, this is a sure sign that we are missing something and that our understanding is wrong! When Christ tells us to love our neighbour, if we tend to reply "yes, but I have the right to do so and so to him", we are acting like the pharisees and *not* according God's heart!

We are the foreigners invited into the covenant (by faith, we are made Abraham children). This is then our responsibility to learn the language, the customs, etc of the nation that is receiving us!



## A Biblical references

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### A.1 The Old Testament

### A.2 The New Testament

### A.3 One voice two characters

**Num 21:6–8** Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.

**Rom 4:3** For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

**Rom 9:30** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

**Rom 10:10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

**Ph 2:9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

**Rom 9:30** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

**Rom 10:10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

**1Cor 11:25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

**Num 21:6–8** Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came

to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.

**Gen 22:13** And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

**Ex 25:17–22** You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

**Ex 33:17** And the Lord said to Moses, This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.

**Pr 3:34** Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

**Ez 18:23** Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

**De 7:7–8** It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

**Ex 33:19** And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name The Lord. And I will be gracious

to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

**Ex 34:6–7** The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

**Ps 32:1–5** Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

**Mt 27:41** So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,

**Mt 5:17–18** Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

**Rom 3:22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

**Mt 5:18** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

**Mt 5:17** Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

#### **A.4 Purpose of this multi-layer revelation**

**Mt 7:12** So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

**1Cor 13:12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

**Heb 10:1** For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

**Col 2:16–17** Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

**Mt 22:29** But Jesus answered them, You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

**Lk 24:27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

**Lk 24:27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

**Rom 12:1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

## **A.5 Watch out! look for the context!**

**De 21:10–15** When you go out to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to take her to be your wife, and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails. And she shall take off the clothes in which she was captured and shall remain in your house and lament her father and her mother a full month. After that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. But if you no longer delight in her, you shall let her go where she wants. But you shall not sell her for money, nor shall you treat her as a slave, since you have humiliated her. If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved,

**Mt 19:8** He said to them, Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

**Mt 5:39** But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.