

# The Law and the Prophets

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There are times when Christians have inadvertently drawn a false comparison between Jesus and the God of the Old Testament. The thinking behind it is that God in the Old Testament was a vengeful and merciless God in demanding great things from his people, whereas Jesus in the New Testament is meek and mild, full of grace. The God of the Old Testament is all about obedience to his laws, whereas Jesus is about the law of “love”.

However, as we shall come to see soon, we cannot separate Jesus and the Old Testament in this way. They are inexplicably linked together. The God of the Old Testament is the same God that is operating in the New. The law and the prophets that God gives to the Israelites find their culmination in the person of Jesus Christ.

## Launch

- 1) How much of the Old Testament have you read? Will you be able to summarise it?

## THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

**Read Matthew 5:17-20**

- 2) What has Jesus come to do with regards to the Law and the Prophets? (v17)
  - a. What do you think the Law and the Prophets refer to? (cf. Luke 24:44)
  - b. What does “fulfill” mean?
  - c. What does it imply about the Law and the Prophets if it was meant to be “fulfilled”? (cf. Rom 3:21)
- 3) How long does Jesus say the Law and the Prophets will be “in effect”? (v18)
  - a. What do you think that means? (cf. Question 2b)
- 4) What are the two groups of people that Jesus references in v19? What will they be called?



- 5) What standard of righteousness does Jesus say we need to enter the kingdom of heaven? (v20)
  - a. Do you think this comes as a surprise to his disciples?
  - b. How hard/easy do you think it will be to achieve that standard of righteousness?
- 6) How can we obtain that level of righteousness? (cf. Rom. 3:21-24, 1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 5:21)
- 7) How does your attitude to the Law and the Prophets compare to Jesus' attitude?
  - a. What are some parts of God's word are you tempted to set aside?
- 8) What are some practical things that you can do for you to get to know the Law and the Prophets better?
- 9) What difference should it make in our lives when we know that our righteousness comes from faith in Christ alone?

## Conclusion

The Law and the Prophets testify to the coming and work of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21). That is why Jesus can say that he did not come to abolish the law, but instead he came to fulfil it. That implies that the Law and the Prophets in of themselves are not complete, and they look forward to a day when someone will bring it to realization and fruition. In that way, it testifies to Jesus Christ himself, as he is the only one who is able to fully obey the law perfectly.

The standards that God set through his law is so high that even the Pharisees and the teachers of the law fail to achieve it. That would have come as a shock to Jesus' listeners in his day because the Pharisees and the teachers of the law are seen as the morally righteous ones compared to others. Jesus turns that on its head and challenges their assumption. No one is able to live up to that standard, except Christ himself. That is why we have faith in Christ alone. It is through that faith that we receive the alien righteousness of Christ and subsequently enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is not by our righteousness, but Christ's righteousness imputed (counted) as ours.