

# Jesus' Coming Radically Changes All Things

Wow, what a treasure chest the Old Testament (OT) is! We discover so many *first things*. The beginnings of God's big-story. How God designed us. Whose we are. God's original...and unchanging...intent for His people. God's archenemy who brought evil and pain and death into this world by deceiving Eve, then Adam. The seeds of God's plan to rescue, redeem and restore. Plus many more.

Without the OT, God's New Testament (NT) adventure with His people loses its context, makes less sense and its beauty is diminished. The shades of color are less bright. The melody haunts us because we sense something essential is missing in the OT chorus.

*The NT brings God's story to its conclusion, fulfilling the OT in the process. The NT soars over the OT like a majestic eagle soars over the land. Like Mount Everest skies over the Kansas plains.*

## **Hyperbole? Overstatement? A bit over-the-top?**

It may sound like that, if we do not grasp both the preparatory importance of the OT and the transcendent change Jesus brought about with His First Coming. For me as I look carefully at Scripture, this perspective of the transcendence of Jesus is Reality. You decide, although please never lose the essential light the OT shines on the NT. Let's go through a few passages together to gain perspective.

In the OT, God designed us in Genesis 1 and 2 to embark on a journey of adventure together *with Him*. This invitation to be intimate allies leads into battle against His archenemy and his henchmen. This battle includes risk and conflict, hardships and joy. Read the OT illustration of Abram (Abraham) going into battle with his trained *family* to fight the alliance of kings to free his nephew Lot (Genesis 14:12-20). As we battle together with God as intimate allies, we discover who we are and deepen connection like on any good team. God's call on His people since Genesis 3 has always been to free captives and train up former captives as *Family* for ongoing spiritual *Kingdom* warfare.

The OT is the story of how very normal people like us walked with God in growing intimacy in His grand adventure. The OT honestly documents both their successes and failures. These powerful examples stir us who willingly live out His present invitation to set captives free

in our God-given “*garden plots.*” A “*garden plot*” is God’s Assignment where He sovereignly places us at work, in the neighborhood, at recreation, so we can cultivate the hearts of these people for bounty, like in a garden.

Yet specific responses of God in the OT bring craven fear to some Christians. Be careful! If you know Jesus by faith, the ***Old*** Testament is ***not*** your covenant. You are now under the ***New*** covenant. For NT believers, the OT is now a rich resource to look over the shoulders of a few of these men and woman of faith who have gone before us (Hebrews 11:1-40). They provide examples and warnings to help us to run our unique race with endurance as we are *together on mission*.

The clear message in the NT takes this all to a radically different level. We are now permanently outfitted with our “jedi swords,” powerful spiritual weapons different than the world (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Paul uses the OT example of Moses coming down from the mountaintop after God gave him the Ten Commandments. From basking in His presence, God’s glory shone on his face, so brilliant that the people could not look at him. This example underscores “*how much more glorious*” the NT is compared to the OT with the coming of Jesus. Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-11 yourself as I briefly summarize it. Only active learning transforms our minds.

1. ***If*** the ministry that brought death came with glory (OT ministry), ***then*** the ministry of the Spirit (NT ministry) is “***even more glorious***” (7-8).
2. ***If*** the ministry that condemns men is glorious (OT ministry), “***how much more glorious***” is the ministry that brings righteousness (NT ministry, 9-10).
3. ***If*** what was fading away came with glory (OT ministry), “***how much greater***” is the glory that lasts forever (NT ministry, 11).

*Is this clear?*

What an astounding change between the OT and the NT if words mean anything. As wonderful as the OT is, Paul under the inspiration of the Spirit calls the OT ministry death, condemnation and fading. The NT ministry is of the Spirit, brings righteousness and lasts.

***How can this be?*** The writer to the Hebrews adds weight.

***Read Hebrews 1:1-3*** and note your observations from Scripture. God has always been communicating His heart. In the past, God spoke

through prophets in every possible way. By contrast in these “*last days*” (that have lasted over 2,000 years!), the Father has spoken to us by His Son. The Son of God, both fully God and fully man through the *incarnation* (oh mystery!) is the heir of all things. All of creation was made by His Son. The Son is the radiance of His Father’s glory. He is the exact representation of God’s Being. Do you understand what you just read? When we see Jesus, we see God Himself. What a dramatic change from the OT where anyone who sees God dies.

He also sustains all things by His powerful word. After providing everything necessary for this radical New Covenant (that’s what testament means, covenant), our Lord Jesus Christ sat at the place of honor and power and rule on the throne at the right hand of the Father.

In short, *only* Jesus is eminently qualified to bring a radically new and more intimate way for God to relate with mankind since the Fall in Genesis 3. And that’s exactly what He did in order to fulfill God’s original Eden-intent in Genesis 1-2...and go beyond.

The *entire book of Hebrews* also supports this revolutionary view of the NT. This book was written to Hebrew Christians scattered around the world who were beginning to compromise their radical relationship with Jesus. The Roman Empire had begun to persecute Christians, but not Jews.

These believers wanted to slide back under the OT covenant and hide as “secret Christians” under the disguise of the Jewish religious practices. No wonder so many strong warning passages in Hebrews! The writer systematically paints a breathtaking portrait of the superiority over the OT of the Person, the ministry, and the life of Jesus Christ, the only one who is worth such costly, all-in allegiance.

We *can* get too much religion. We *cannot* ever get too much of Jesus. Here is an outline of this literary masterpiece. The writer systematically demonstrates how Jesus is so far superior to all the important people and elements in the OT. ***Jesus Christ our Lord is:***

- ***Greater*** than the OT prophets (1:1-3).
- ***Greater*** than the angels (1:4-2:18).
- ***Greater*** than Moses (3:1-19).
- ***Greater*** than Joshua (4:1-13).
- ***Greater*** than Aaron as High Priest (4:14-5:10)

***Jesus Christ our Lord...***

- Provides a *better* soil for fruitful growth (5:11-6:20a).
- Makes available a *better* priesthood (6:20b-8:6).
- Mediates a *better* covenant (8:6-13).
- Furnishes a *better* tabernacle (9:1-11).
- Offers a *better* sacrifice (9:12-10:18).

Because of the *superiority* of the Person of Jesus Christ (1:1-5:10) and the ministry of Jesus Christ (5:11-10:18), only Jesus Christ brings us such a *superior* quality of life. His resurrected life in us releases *hope* to persevere (10:19-39), provides *faith* even in trials (11:1-12:3), and calls to *love* regardless of cost (12:4-13:17). Why would any sane person dabble in *Jesus+* when Jesus *alone* is the only way to abundant life?

In *Hebrews 4:1-11*, the writer promises God's people a Sabbath rest. These Christians had not yet entered, or they would certainly not be pursuing *Jesus+* OT religious practices. He urges them to "*make every effort to enter that rest*" in Jesus Christ. The Christian adventure is simple, not complex. Yet hard work, and not easy. When we do enter, we rest from our "*own work*" since Jesus is now better able to do His transforming work in and through us.

In *Galatians 3:26-4:7*, Paul sheds more light on the radical difference between the OT and the NT. He wrote this first of his NT letters to those who were won to Christ on his first missionary journey in Galatia, modern day Turkey. Paul wrote so passionately because his spiritual children were about to return to the bondage of the OT law after being freed in Christ (4:21).

In 4:1-7, Paul argues that in the OT, they were treated as small children, even though they were heirs. Like a young child who is heir to vast riches, in the OT they were in a sense in slavery because they were subject to the "guardian" of OT law until the set time their Father gave them access to their inheritance. The OT law was good and fulfilled its purpose well. It's purpose though was to expose our need so God's people would come to Jesus *alone* (Romans 7:12-13). God did not design the Law to give life, but to condemn. Our trust in keeping laws and practices never can make us right, neither in the OT nor now.

Our Father's set time for full heirship is already here, through the first coming of Jesus (4:4). So, now we are no longer slaves under the OT law and regulations, but free as heirs with all the promises released

through Jesus (4:7 + 5:1 + 5:13-14). The coming of Jesus Christ radically superseded the OT relationship so we are now sons with full access to our inheritance (3:26-29), even joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

***What a radical difference!***

No wonder the Bible beginning with Matthew is called the “**New** Testament” or covenant. We are in a radically different relationship with the Father through our faith in Jesus Christ. The coming of Jesus as King radically and permanently changed our privileges and how we relate with the Father (Mark 1:15-16). Please don’t ever lessen or diminish this radical difference, and also don’t depreciate the OT.

Jesus **IS** the new.

He did not come to make the old new, but to bring the new, something that never before existed. Jesus walked in this world as God had always intended humanity to live. In His Son, Jesus, the Father now had a man walking on earth, exercising His spiritual authority as intended since Genesis 1:26-28 (“*And let them rule...*”). And Jesus re-launched His original and unchanging plan for power-sharing as His seventy-two exercised His delegated authority in this world (Luke 11:1-20).

Look at Jesus’ parable of the futility of patching old cloth with new cloth of a different makeup. This not only fails to make the old new, but also rips the old material, ruining both (Mark 2:21). Similarly, if we try to pour the “new wine” of Jesus into the old wineskin of the OT Law and practices, the inflexible old wineskin will rupture from the effervescent life in the new wine, ruining both (Mark 2:22). Jesus deliberately violated the manmade religious practices the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews practiced (re, Sabbath practices, Mark 2:23-28; 3:4; 7:5-13), yet never violated even the smallest letter or stroke of God’s OT Scripture (Matthew 5:17-18).

Jesus is the stronger who attacked, overcame and bound the strongman, Satan and his henchmen. ***Why?*** Since Jesus is the stronger (Luke 11:21-22), He plundered the devil’s possessions. Jesus freed people (Luke 4:18-19) who the devil had held captive (Hebrews 2:14-15) because Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8b).

With His first coming, Jesus prepared the way so that His ***Kingdom*** army now encounters one person after another, freeing each of the captives through evangelism and DiscipleMaking. They are then trained

up as God's children in the **Family** of God and prepared for battle through life-on-life DiscipleMaking. The Father did not send Jesus merely to patch up the old. Jesus came to inaugurate the new to fulfill all His OT promises and His intention for Adam/Eve and the nation of Israel, all of whom failed. Jesus came to take His original Eden-intent for humanity and bring His purpose to its ultimate culmination.

The word *incarnation* commonly describes this First Coming of Jesus. The second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, became fully man without ceasing to be God, oh mystery (John 1:1+1:14+1:18). What was your initial response when you previously heard the words "Trinity" and "incarnation"? Puzzlement! Confusion! Impossible to understand! Impractical! Theological lint! Or perhaps accurate, but having little essential connection with daily lives.

### ***Far from it!***

The only complete revelation of life is through a life. God must come as man to bring His eternal life all the way to us. Theologians use the word *incarnation*, that is, God becoming fully man ("*infleshing*") without ceasing to be God. Jesus came to earth as the unique Son of His Father. He is fully God, unlike us, yet also fully man, like us, oh mystery.

Why is the *incarnation* essential, the Son of God, leaving heaven to become man? In short, Jesus wanted to share His life with us so He could hang out with us. He enjoys us! No other option existed but to come personally. And He didn't come alone. Jesus brought His relationship with his Father to us. Marvel as you read John 1:1-18.

1. In the *incarnation*, God clearly displayed that the One God in the OT has always existed as plurality, one God in three persons, called Trinity (John 1:1). Jesus is the "*Word*," who was with God and is God before time.
2. In the *incarnation*, Jesus became flesh and blood to become the perfect sacrifice for our sins and to restore us to the Father's heart (1:4-5+1:9-13). Jesus brought the same life as God inbreathed into humanity at creation, God's very own life (Genesis 2:7). This life is the light of all men, having the power to dispel darkness. In the First-Adam all die; Jesus, the Last-Adam, brought life as a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:22+45; also Romans 5:14b-20). Calculate the high value that

God places on humanity by weighing the value of His payment to redeem us, the painful death of His unique Son.

3. In the *incarnation*, Jesus comes as the Model Man, the Second Man (1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:47), the first real human since Adam's Fall in Genesis 3. The life of Jesus in the Gospels reveals God's creation intent for humanity, living a life like Jesus.
4. In the *incarnation*, Jesus "explained" who God is (John 1:18). Jesus is the "*radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*" (Hebrews 1:3). If we have really seen Jesus as He truly is, we have seen the Father (John 14:9). Fully God; fully man; restoring man back to God's Eden-intent and bringing it beyond.

*Do you need more?*

If so, read your New Testament closely with an open, inquiry heart and with this radical change front and center. You will discover more on your own, enough for a lifetime. You are a "*joint-heir*" with Christ, co-heirs of all Jesus possesses (Romans 8:17).

Be careful of anyone coming and selling the sizzle of the "*next new thing*" coming in the future. They diminish the superiority of Jesus, even if in ignorance or without malice.

The "*New Thing*" *has* already come, fulfilling OT prophecies. He has a face and a name. **Jesus!** Jesus genuinely made all things new, yet not finally. We live in "*the already but not yet*" of this Trinitarian life. We are co-heirs with Christ and also still in-process. We live in the *time* between the inauguration of this change and the *time* of the culmination when Jesus comes a second time. Learn to live in this creative tension.

Don't buy in to either "desert" on either side of this powerful, life-given stream of God's bounty, either those who call us to less or promises us more than God does.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20).

*Do you understand your Christian faith this way?*

If so, God's call is something larger than our self-life, an epic adventure with our Family-of-Three, Father, Son and Spirit. God

designed us to be actively involved with Him in something grander and vaster than us, something worth springing out of bed to actively participate in *together with Him*.