

The sermon

Intro

This morning we're remembering the coming of Christ as we look forward to his return.

Every Advent season, we celebrate Jesus' coming. I think it's a great idea to look at the reasons Jesus himself gives for his coming.

Something that jumped out to me as a newer Christian were those times in the gospels when Jesus said, "I came for this reason...I came so that...I came to."

Jesus gives a bunch of reasons. So this year, once again, I'm doing the theme *Why Jesus Came*.

Let's look to Jesus himself to understand why he came.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Point 1: Jesus didn't come to abolish the Old Testament Scriptures (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.
– 5:17

Jesus feels the need to clarify what his mission isn't.

Maybe he's saying this because of charges brought against him by the scribes and Pharisees. Some thought Jesus is anti-law, anti-Scripture, anti-God.

Later the Pharisees took issue when Jesus' disciples picked grain on the Sabbath (Matt 12:2) and when Jesus healed a man's hand on the Sabbath (Matt 12:10, 14). Jesus says I didn't come to oppose God's word.

Jesus could also be saying this to prevent his followers from jumping to wrong conclusions.

If healing's okay on the Sabbath, maybe we don't need the Old Testament. Maybe all we need is Jesus' teachings. Liberal theologians claim the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. Jesus says this isn't the case. The Old Testament stands.

What's meant by "the law or the Prophets"?

"law or the Prophets" means the whole Old Testament. Meaning Jesus didn't come to abolish the Old Testament.

What's meant by "abolish"?

"abolish" means to do away with, annul, make invalid. Jesus didn't come to get rid of the Old Testament.

What does this mean?

1. God hasn't changed.

The God we read about in the Old Testament is the God we're singing about this morning.

Jesus didn't come to redefine God.

2. God's moral will hasn't changed.

Jesus didn't come to redefine sin. Jesus didn't come to redefine righteousness.

Jesus didn't come to correct the Old Testament. But he did correct mistaken understandings of the scribes and Pharisees.

3. God's redemptive plan revealed in the 39 Old Testament books hasn't changed.

Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, Paul. They all agree. They're all pointing to the same promises.

Jesus didn't come to introduce a plan B. Jesus didn't come to scrap the Old Testament and write a new story.

4. The whole Old Testament remains profitable for your spiritual development.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture" would have included all of the 39 books of the Old Testament.

Meaning all 39 books of the Old Testament are helpful to our souls. Helpful in instructing us who God is. Helpful for correcting sin. Helpful for training us in righteousness.

Jesus didn't come to eliminate the help the Old Testament provides.

More thoughts from Paul

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. – Romans 15:4

Paul assumes Christians find encouragement from the Old Testament. When we read the Psalms and see how David moved from despair to confidence in God in the most horrific of circumstances, we're encouraged that God can do the same in us. Paul assumes Christians find hope in the Old Testament. Hope like eternal life (Dan 12:2-3) and an everlasting kingdom (Dan 7:27). Hope meaning confident, waiting expectation, not wishful thinking about something that may or may not happen. I hope it doesn't snow today. When God gives a promise it's a done deal, not wishful thinking. We're waiting for our hope to be realized.

Jesus didn't come to crush our hope by cancelling the Old Testament.

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. – 1 Corinthians 10:11

What Paul was talking about here was Israel's failure (e.g., complaining, sexual immorality) recorded in Numbers where, in the wilderness after God rescued them from Egyptian captivity, Israel sinned against God and experienced diverse judgments.

Paul's saying these accounts of Israel's failure were recorded for our benefit. So that we wouldn't imitate their pattern and subject ourselves to God's judgment like they did.

Jesus didn't come to wipe out the warning stories we find in the Old Testament.

Jesus is clear. He didn't come to abolish the Old Testament.

Practical question: do I share Jesus' attitude towards the Old Testament?

So what did Jesus come to do?

Point 2: Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures (5:17-18)

I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 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. – 5:17-18

“*them*” = the Law and the Prophets = the whole Old Testament.

Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament. Jesus clarifies what he means in 5:18.

“*until heaven and earth pass away*”

There will come a time when this earth and the current heaven “*pass away*” = come to an end. 2 Peter 3:10 speaks of a day when “*the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved.*” Romans 8:21 speaks of a time when “*the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption.*” Revelation 21:1 speaks of a time when “*the first heaven and first earth had passed away.*” At this time, “*a new heaven and a new earth*” arrive (Rev 21).

So the earth as we know it will come to an end when Jesus comes a 2nd time. Our earth will be made new because “*bondage to corruption*” will be lifted. “*corruption*” = the rotting, decaying, dissolving, decomposing of organic matter. The word’s used of our “*perishable*” bodies in 1 Corinthians 15:42, 50. In the new Jerusalem, we and the creation itself will not rot, decay, dissolve, decompose. The curse (Rom 8:20) will be lifted.

“*not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law*”

An iota is the smallest Greek letter and a dot is smallest stroke of the pen used to differentiate letters. Meaning every detail, even the smallest, will be fulfilled by Jesus.

“*until all is accomplished*”

When “*heaven and earth pass away*” all will have been accomplished. All of what? All that’s written in the Law and the Prophets. Meaning every last detail foretold in the Old Testament will happen. All will be accomplished by Jesus.

“*but to fulfill them*”

Note this. The Old Testament is a unified revelation from God that finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

All the pieces fit together. All the pieces fit together in Jesus.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." – **Luke 24:44**

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms, the whole Old Testament, they all spoke about Jesus! The Old Testament isn’t a collection of random stories slapped together. It’s one unified story about one person, Jesus, who accomplishes the restoration of God’s fallen creation.

“*fulfill*” = the doing, the carrying out, the accomplishing, the completion of all that was said about Jesus in the Old Testament.

Jesus didn’t come to scrap the Old Testament. Jesus came to carry out the Old Testament!

How does Jesus fulfill the Old Testament?

1. Jesus fulfills patterns.

Now when they had departed [from Bethlehem], behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and

remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." – Matthew 2:13-15

Matthew sees Jesus' return from Egypt as fulfillment of Hosea 11:1. History repeated itself when Jesus came out of Egypt. Like Israel came out of Egypt, so did Jesus.

There's a God intended correspondence between Israel's escape from Egypt and Jesus' return from Egypt. The Exodus prophetically foreshadowed Jesus. Jesus fulfills the pattern.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things, – John 19:23-24

Events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion, according to John, fulfilled Psalm 22, written by David.

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet- ¹⁷ I can count all my bones- they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. – Psalm 22:16-18

This wasn't David revealing the future. This was David expressing his anguish.

David expressed his anguish in figurative terms: "*they have pierced my hands and feet.*" We don't have records in David's life where this was literally the case. What David said his anguish was like we find literally fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus. David's experience prophetically foreshadowed Jesus' experience.

Likewise the Passover lamb foreshadowed Jesus (1 Cor 5:7). The Old Covenant sacrifices were shadows of Jesus' once-for-all substitutionary atonement (Heb 7:27; 8:5; 10:1, 10, 14).

2. Jesus fulfills promises.

In fact, Jesus fulfills every promise in the Old Testament.

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. – 2 Corinthians 1:19-20

Earlier, Brandon read one of these promises found in Isaiah 9.

And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles- ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." – Matthew 4:13-16

When Jesus went to Capernaum light entered darkness. Why did Jesus go to Capernaum? To fulfill Isaiah's words.

Jesus fulfilled Scripture by dying on the cross.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. – Isaiah 53:4-6

Jesus came to suffer and die as a substitute in our place. Taking the weight of our sins upon himself.

We went astray. We deserve wrath. Instead, because Jesus took the punishment for us, we get relief from our griefs and sorrows. We get peace. We get healing.

We're not treated as we deserve because Jesus got what he didn't deserve: the cross. Jesus came to fulfill Scripture by taking our sins upon himself.

Application

What's the BIG IDEA here?

At the beginning, God's creation was very good. But "*sin came into the world...and death through sin*" (Rom 5:12). So we have sin: anger, envy, greed, hatred, selfishness, abusive speech, fraud, lying, oppression, violence. So we have suffering: betrayal, hurtful words, slander, relational discord, international conflicts, physical pain, incurable diseases, death.

How has God chosen to rescue us from this curse? Through, and only through, Jesus Christ. Our hope in the present is empowering grace, heart change, and God working all things for our good. Our hope in the future is Jesus returning to welcome us into a kingdom without sin and death.

Whatever your struggle is today, Jesus is the answer. For example, lying. Jesus relieves the shame lying causes. Jesus dwells inside us giving us enablement to fight deceit. If we're worn out by being lied to, Jesus is the one who will usher in a world without lying. Whatever your struggle. Whatever your torment. Jesus is the answer.

Practical question: is my hope found in Jesus? Or is my hope placed in something or someone else?

Conclusion (5:19-20)

Jesus concludes by making a deduction about why he came.

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

– 5:19

The gist is because Jesus is 100% in favor of the Old Testament, we ought to share his assessment. Those who are least and great are both "*in the kingdom of heaven*" so they're both believers. What we have here are two groups of genuine disciples: some obey for the most part while relaxing obedience in more minor matters ("*least of these commandments*") while others are scrupulous to obey the Old Testament.

Jesus is encouraging us to take the whole Old Testament seriously! Every last iota and dot.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. – 5:20

Here Jesus speaks of people who will be excluded ("*you will never enter*") from the kingdom of heaven. The scribes and the Pharisees will be excluded. Why wasn't their righteousness sufficient?

Jesus proceeds to critique their interaction with the Old Testament in 5:21-48. The gist? They cared only about external obedience, but didn't give heed to matters of the heart. They cleverly misinterpreted the Old Testament to justify their sin.

In the end it was the scribes and Pharisees who had a low view of the Old Testament, not Jesus.

Maybe you have questions about the kingdom of heaven? Maybe you have questions whether you will be admitted?

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Matthew 5:17-20 (Why Jesus Came: To Fulfill the Ancient Promises)

Pastor Eric Dubois

As for the kingdom of heaven, it's the renewed earth, the new heaven and new earth where sin and suffering and death are permanently banished. Next week we'll go over the kingdom of heaven in great detail.

For now, John 3:16 is sufficient.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. – John 3:16

To enter the kingdom is to be given eternal life and rescued from a location called hell.

Who enters the kingdom? Those who believe. Those who humble themselves by confessing their sins. Those who ask God for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death, not their own merit. Is this you? Tell us if you believe.

Christian, share Jesus' attitude about the Old Testament. Rejoice because hope finds its fulfillment in Jesus.