



Ask, Father James:

Old Law vs. New Law: Which should we observe?

Many Christians are at a dilemma whether to throw out the Old Testament. Some even argue that Jesus in the New Testament brought grace and thus the laws of the Old Testament are obsolete. But did Jesus come to do away with the Old Testament? This very question is at the heart of Matthew 5:17-37. The Jews believed that the Old Testament laws were just a guide to help them arrive at the Promised land and since they have arrived, thus they are obsolete. Jesus states his position very clearly on this matter:

"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." (Matthew 5:17)

"The Law" here refers especially the Torah or Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. "The Prophets," (what we call the major and minor prophets) as well as the writings, i.e., Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles (what we call the historical books). Jesus' phrase "The Law and the Prophets" refers to the whole of the Old Testament Scripture. Jesus is saying to us; Divine laws, natural law, ancient truth and principles do not change and cannot be changed. They remain revealed truths from God. The source of law is greater than the receivers of the law and so, you cannot change it at will. This is why, in the Catholic church, we continue to read from both the Old Testament and the New Testament (The Bible).

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