

Mark Rutland: Why We Must Accept the Whole Counsel of God

In the course of a university lecture on, of all things, the nature of revival, I recounted some of the negative and positive results of the Welsh revival. I mentioned that despite some excesses and mistakes, 100,000 unbelievers were converted in one year, missionaries were sent around the world and the local society was deeply impacted for good. As one example, I offered the corroborating statistic that arrests for public drunkenness dropped by more than 50% in the first few weeks of the revival.

One student immediately raised her hand and angrily announced: "I haven't heard anything about this. Why isn't this on the news? Is the liberal press refusing to report this?"

I hardly knew what to say. I felt embarrassed for her and I did not want to add to the awkwardness by making her feel foolish. I needn't have worried. "I'm sorry," I said. "I may not have made it clear. This happened in 1904 and 1905. I just assumed..."

"Well, good lands!" she cut me off. "Why are we talking about this at all? We don't care about a revival that happened in 1904! That's not why we attended this. Tell us about revival right now. Anything that happened in 1904 is irrelevant to us."

To be faithful and generous to her classmates, I'm not sure she spoke for all of them, though none of them rose to contradict her. They seemed instead to be waiting to see if I had an answer to what she obviously felt, and perhaps some of them felt as well, was the end of my credibility. I mean, 1904? Really?

I suggested to her that if a revival in Wales a mere 120 years ago was irrelevant, the Upper Room must have absolutely no meaning at all since it happened more than two thousand years ago. She reluctantly conceded the point, but only partially, claiming, "Well, the Bible is different." Indeed, it is.

Such dismissive chronocentrism as hers is unfortunate, to be sure. Some, however—and this is infinitely worse—make much the same argument about the Old Testament. They have a sort of "that was then, this is now" attitude toward Genesis through Malachi. They point out that the people in those books were ancient pre-Christian Jews who lived thousands of years ago. Why should our understanding of who Jesus is in life today have to be set against such an irrelevant backdrop? These people cannot seem to see, however, that the predictable extrapolation of this reasoning will be disastrous. A New Testament without the weight of an Old Testament seems to be what some are suggesting. The problem is that may lead inexorably to a non-biblical but highly contemporary Christianity free of the weight of that pesky, irrelevant New Testament. In other words, if we carve out the Old Testament, then why not the New Testament as well?

Unfortunately, even those not quite ready to jettison the entire Old Testament want to at least lighten its load by dropping some of it in favor of parts that seem more relevant. They say—or at least think—"What can Leviticus or Deuteronomy mean to us today?" They are often particularly dismissive of the prophets. Others are in favor of keeping the prophets but want to choose their prophets carefully—and often politically. These folks quote only the prophets whose messages are in agreement with what they believe or that will buttress their political arguments.

Clearly, throwing out the New Testament would destroy the foundation of our Christian faith. But picking and choosing from the Old Testament limits our testimony as well. We must see the relevance of both the Old and the New Testaments and

accept the whole counsel of God in order to have a complete understanding of His ways and His working in our lives today.
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Excerpted from Chapter 1 of Of Kings and Prophets by Mark Rutland (Charisma House, 2021). Purchase a copy of this book by Mark Rutland at .

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