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# The Hidden Story of Jesus in the Old Testament

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**There are many figures that foreshadow Jesus in the Old Testament**—Adam, David, and Moses come to mind—but the basic story of Jesus itself is deeply embedded in it.

It can be found in the mysterious figure of Wisdom, who is personified in books like Proverbs, Job, Wisdom, and Sirach. In Proverbs 8:27-30, it is said that,

Wisdom was with God at the creation of the world:

When he established the heavens, there was I,

when he marked out the vault over the face of the deep;

When he made firm the skies above,

when he fixed fast the springs of the deep;

When he set for the sea its limit,  
so that the waters should not transgress his command;  
When he fixed the foundations of earth,  
then was I beside him as artisan.

Likewise, Wisdom 7:22 praises Wisdom as the ‘artisan of all’ and Proverbs 3:19 says it was by Wisdom that God ‘founded the earth.’ Job 28:27, Sirach 1:4, Sirach 24:9, Proverbs 8:22 all make it clear that Wisdom was a being that pre-existed the creation of all other things, which stands to reason because if Wisdom assisted God in the creation it logically had to come first.

Wisdom was in the beginning and, with God, made all things. Sound familiar?

It should. John 1:1-3 declares:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.

The more one looks, the more it seems Wisdom in the Old Testament increasingly resembles the gospel account of Christ. Here are just a few more examples:

- **Word of God:** Sirach 24:3 declares that Wisdom comes ‘from the mouth of the Most High’ and ‘covered the earth like a mist.’ This is imagery that is also applied to the Word of God in the prophet Isaiah. The Gospel of John tells us that Christ is the Word of God made flesh.
- **Reigns with God:** Sirach 24:4 declares, “In the heights of heaven I dwelt, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.” In Acts 7:55, Christ is envisioned in heaven reigning with God.
- **Heaven to the abyss:** In Sirach 24:5 Wisdom says, “The vault of heaven I compassed alone, and walked through the deep abyss. Who descends to the abyss and ascends to heaven in the New Testament other than Christ? As Ephesians 4:9 says, “What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth?”

▪ **Teaching rejected:** “You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom!” cries out Baruch 3:12. Wisdom is also rejected in Proverbs 1:23. Jesus’ teaching was rejected by the Jews (at least most of them before His death). As John 1:11 says, He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.”

▪ **Will pour out its spirit:** “Lo! I will pour out to you my spirit,” says Wisdom in Proverbs 1:23. In John 20:22, Jesus breathes out His spirit on the disciples.

▪ **Seeks to dwell with us:** Wisdom, Sirach 24:7 tell us, sought a ‘resting place’ among us. In Jesus, God’s creative Word, His wisdom, dwelled among us. (See John 1:14).

▪ **Calls out to us:** “Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the open squares she raises her voice,” says Proverbs 1:20. Is this not the very portrait of Christ we get in the gospels: God Incarnate calling out to us? Matthew 11:28 comes to mind, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

▪ **Bread and wine:** In Proverbs 9:5, Wisdom says, “Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed!” Does this not bring to mind the Eucharist?

As if these parallels were not convincing enough, the gospels are pretty clear in identifying Jesus with Wisdom. Jesus is identified with Wisdom in Matthew 11:19 and there seems to be broad consensus among scholars that the first 18 verses of the Gospel of John retell the Old Testament tale of Wisdom as the story of Jesus (you might have noticed that many of the above citations were from John).

This all may be very interesting, but why does it matter? That Wisdom’s story gels so closely with Jesus’ seems almost by design. Yet we have many books by different authors across many centuries. The fact that Jesus entire story is encoded so deeply in the fabric of the Old Testament should say something about God’s role as the ultimate author of Scripture. And that, in turn, should indicate to us that Jesus really is the One sent from God.

Also, in the Old Testament, it is by Wisdom that all things are created and brought to life. If Jesus is Wisdom, that means that the Creator of all things —of galaxies and super strings, of our very minds and souls, came to dwell among us, to restore us and lead us to the way of abundant life. Of course,

we should have already known this by virtue of the fact that Jesus is *God*. But sometimes we need to be reminded anew of such truths. Contemplating Jesus as Wisdom helps us to understand on a deeper level His real purpose in coming to us.

*A note on sources:* A special debt is owed to An Introduction to the New Testament, by Eugene Boring, and this blogger for helping the author to identify some of the critical connections between Wisdom and Jesus.