

WHY WE SHOULD NOT DISCARD THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Thursday Bible Study

ACA Avadi Church

21 March 2024

Psalm 119:18 -

Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.

1 Corinthians 14:20 -

Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

READ TO UNDERSTAND

Ephesians 3:4 (T-5)

2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4by which, **when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ**)

1 Timothy 4:13

Till I come, **give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.**

WHY WE SHOULD NOT DISCARD THE OT?

The first word in the phrase Old Testament is wrongly understood as unimportant or insignificant to Christians.

- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus finishes a long series of parables by asking his disciples, "Have you understood all this?" They reply, "Yes."
- Then Jesus closes his teaching

Matthew 13:51-52 -

Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things new and old.*"

- Not all Christians have received the old as "treasure," however.
- Some outright reject the OT.
- Others simply ignore the OT unless it somehow illuminates a passage in the New Testament (NT).
- Some go about caricaturing the old covenant as a harsh, cold, legalistic arrangement that we should all be happy to be rid of.

Paul to the Ephesian Elders

Acts 20:25-27 -

25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Hebrews 8:13 -

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

- The old covenant worship—with temple, animal sacrifices, and earthly priests—is now fulfilled in Christ.
- But there are "moral" laws under the old covenant order—in particular, the Ten Commandments—that have abiding relevance.
- After all, the foundation for moral laws (God's own character) doesn't change.

WHY OLD TESTAMENT IS IMPORTANT FOR NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS?

1. THE OT MAKES UP THREE-FOURTHS (75.55 PERCENT) OF OUR BIBLE.

In the length of the Bible we can see that the OT matters to God.

The Old Testament was God's first special revelation, which set a foundation for the fulfilment we find in Jesus in the New Testament (NT).

2. THE OT CONTAINS THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD, HUMANS, AND THE GOSPEL.

- In the book of "Genesis" (from a Greek word meaning "origin," "source," "beginning"), the formation of the world, heaven, animals, and human beings are laid out in detailed order (Gen 1–2).
- It is the OT that details us about the origin of Marriage, Sin, Separation from God, Sacrifice, Suffering and Death
- Further, it is in Genesis where we read of the origin of diverse languages, nations, and cultures (Gen 10).
- It is also in this first OT book where the birth of human sin is disclosed and where readers are first introduced to the coming Messiah, the "first gospel" (Gen 3:15).
- It is indeed the OT—not the NT—where we learn of the first Jew, Abraham, the very father of the nation of Israel, and the unconditional covenant God made with him that guarantees blessings to the entire world (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1–21; cf. Gal 3:7–9).
- In fact, Paul would later identify this covenant as "the gospel preached beforehand" Galatians 3:8 -

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

The OT substantially influences our understanding of key biblical teachings.

- The OT teaches us about all five of the major **covenants** (Adamic-Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new).

- Only through the OT to rightly understand sacred space and the temple

Thus, without a knowledge of the OT, Christians are left in the dark regarding

- their own origin,
- identity (both biological and spiritual),
- promised inheritance as well as the reason for their need of redemption.
- Therefore, any Christian leader who willfully neglects the OT is willfully committing a derelict of pastoral duty.

3. THE NT IS RELIANT UPON THE OT

Scholars have estimated that the NT—a corpus of literature containing only twenty-seven books—directly quotes, echoes, or alludes to the First Testament close to 900 times.

PAUL'S EPISTLES WERE FILLED WITH OT SCRIPTURES

- Paul quotes from the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) 45 times.
- The prophets are quoted 53 times, with Isaiah taking the lead at 36 times.
- Psalms are quoted 23 times.
- And other books are cited 10 times.
- The Complete Jewish Bible version points out *183 Old Testament passages* that Paul quotes or paraphrases in his writings.
- This figure doesn't include his additional dozens of references to people, places and events in the Old Testament.
- **T**he *highest* number of quotes are found in Romans (with quotes or paraphrases of 84 Old Testament passages)
- Hebrews (which many scholars believe was written by Paul, with 83).
- Paul's other books, with the number of references to Old Testament passages, are as follows:
 - 1 Corinthians (26);
 - 2 Corinthians (18);
 - Galatians (14);
 - Ephesians (12);
 - Philippians (6);
 - Colossians (3);
 - 1 Thessalonians (1);
 - 2 Thessalonians (7);
 - 1 Timothy (4) and
 - 2 Timothy (9).
- Only Paul's two shortest epistles, Titus and Philemon, contain no quotes from the Old Testament.

- It's obvious from these figures that Paul used the Hebrew Scriptures to support his teaching. In fact, he constantly used the Old Testament as the *authority* for his teaching!

What did Paul expressly say about those same Scriptures?

- In **2 Timothy 3:16-17** he writes:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally 'God-breathed'], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

4. THE OT WAS THE ONLY BIBLE OF JESUS

Matt. 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.

- During His 40-day harassment from Satan, it was portions of the OT that Jesus quoted as a weapon in His defense (**Matt 4:1-11**).
- When asked what one must do to obtain eternal life, Jesus' response was to appeal directly to the OT (**Mark 10:19**).
- As He was being interrogated concerning the greatest of all God's commands, Jesus's only response was to quote from and synthesize the OT (**Matt 22:34-40**).
- While teaching on the thorny issue of divorce, Jesus appealed directly to the OT and confirmed the truth of *both* the creation account as well as the divine institution of marriage (**Matt 19:4-6**).
- Indeed, it was the OT to which Jesus appealed when proving that He was the promised Messiah as well as the very embodiment of Scripture's redemptive theme (**Luke 4:16-21; 24:25-27; John 5:39**).

Luke 24:44

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."

- When a Christian pastor, teacher, or author decides to dismiss the Old Testament as God's authoritative Word, he should know that he is in direct conflict with the preaching method of Jesus Himself.

5. THE OT WAS THE BIBLE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

2 Tim. 3:15

and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- The "Scripture" here, known to Timothy since childhood (2 Timothy 3:15), could only have been the Old Testament.
- In **Romans 3:2**, referring to the Old Testament, Paul says that the Jewish people "have been entrusted with *the very words of God*" (NIV).

- Referring to various incidents recorded in the Old Testament, he tells us in
- **1 Corinthians 10:11** that "all these things happened to them as examples, and **they were written for our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."
- In **Hebrews 3:7** he speaks of the Holy Spirit directly inspiring the words of the Old Testament.
- In **Hebrews 4:12**, referring to the Old Testament, he writes: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

6. IN OT JESUS IS CONCEALED. IN NT JESUS IS REVEALED

After his first encounter with Jesus, Philip announced to Nathaniel:

John 1:45

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

As Jesus himself said

John 5:39

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

John 5:46-47

46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

To the Disciples of Emmaus

Luke 24:25-27

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He [g]expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

7. WE MEET THE SAME GOD IN BOTH TESTAMENTS.

Note how the book of Hebrews begins

Hebrews 1:1-4

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of

His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

- The very God who spoke through the OT prophets speaks through Jesus.
- Now, you may ask, "But isn't the OT's God one of wrath and burden, whereas the God of the NT is about grace and freedom?"
- Let's consider some texts, first from the OT and then from the New.

Exodus 34:6

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

The OT then reasserts this truth numerous times in order to clarify why it is that God continued to pardon and preserve a wayward people:

2 Kings 13:22-23

22 And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence.

Nehemiah 9:30-31

Yet for many years You had patience with them, And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 31 Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; For You are God, gracious and merciful.

- **Thus God's grace fills the OT, just as it does the NT.**
- **Further, in the NT, Jesus speaks about hell more than anyone else.**

Matthew 10:28 -

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

ஆத்துமாவைக் கொல்ல வல்லவர்களாயிராமல், சரீரத்தை மாத்திரம் கொல்லுகிறவர்களுக்கு நீங்கள் பயப்படவேண்டாம்; ஆத்துமாவையும் சரீரத்தையும் நரகத்திலே அழிக்க வல்லவருக்கே பயப்படுங்கள்.

Matthew 18:6

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea"

Hebrews 10:26-29

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment,

and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Thus God is just as wrathful in the NT as he is in the OT.

We meet the same God in the Old Testament as we do in the New Testament.