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WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

Volume 103, Number 4

8900 Manchaca Road, Austin, TX 78748

April 2017

THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Clay Bond

Eternal, good, gracious, loving, merciful, wise, holy, immutable, just, righteous, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent are just a few of the attributes of God. When we speak of God's attributes we are talking about those characteristics that help us understand who God truly is. It is noteworthy that those biblical characters who were greatly used by God had a burning desire to know Him. David said,

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. (Ps. 27:4)

For David, knowing God was a priority and it should be the same for us. In the book of Daniel we learn that those who know God "shall be strong, and do exploits" (great things) (Dan. 11:32). Let me mention just a few attributes that can help us come to know God better.

The wisdom of God. While Job was enduring grievous afflictions that made no sense to him at all, he was willing to admit that with God "is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding" (Job 12:13). When wisdom is applied to God it describes His mental excellence in its greatest sense. Wisdom, which is an awareness and understanding of facts, is more comprehensive and far reaching than knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to adapt to those facts to bring about a desired end or purpose. The creation of this universe was an expression of God's wisdom (Psa. 104:24). God sending His Son to be the remedy for sin is an expression of His wisdom (1 Cor. 1:23-24; 1 Tim. 1:15; Col. 2:3). God's plan of redemption is yet another expression of His divine wisdom. Paul wrote

that God "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" in carrying out His eternal plan to save us (Eph. 1:8). He knows all the facts and he knows how to use them, not just to attain results, but to attain *perfect* results. God's wisdom has provided us a world in which to live, a redeeming Savior, and a spiritual body in which we can grow.

The goodness of God. Behind the vastness of this universe stands a God who cares about what He has made. God is not indifferent or absent but rather He is fully invested for the good of the universe because He is good. Even the ungrateful and the wicked benefit from the goodness of God and should be lead to repentance by it (Ps. 33:5, 145:9; Matt. 6:45; Rom. 2:4). While God is good to the unsaved His goodness is even greater

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the Old Testament? —Part 2

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Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

PRACTICAL WISDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Colossians 2:14 the apostle Paul said that Jesus nailed the Old Testament law to His cross. Christ is the end of the Old Testament law and is the mediator of a New Covenant, the New Testament (Rom. 10:4; Heb. 12:24). It is the doctrine of Christ that is our authority and the word that will judge us in the last day (Matt. 28:18; John. 12:48; Col. 3:17; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 John. 9-11). That being the case, why do we use the Old Testament at all? What is its purpose? Does it have any value for us? Why is it even included in our Bible? Thankfully, Paul answered that question for us a long time ago.

In regard to the Old Testament Paul wrote,

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Cor. 10:11)

He also wrote

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Rom. 15:4)

We would have a difficult time understanding God's will in the New Testament if we did not know and understand at least some of the Old Testament. Much of the New Testament consists of quotations and allusions from the Old Testament. There are many lessons and principles found in the Old Testament that teach us about God and help mold and shape us into the people that He would have us to be. Although we do not live under the Old Testament law, there can be no doubt that the Old Testament itself is very valuable to New Testament Christians.

The Old Testament is full of practical wisdom for

everyday living. In his first epistle to the young preacher Timothy, Paul said that the Old Testament scriptures were "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). From the Pentateuch to the Prophets, every page is overflowing with the wisdom of God.

We learn great things from the people of the Old Testament. Men and women like Noah, Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses and others whom the writer of Hebrews described as a "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) teach us what it means to live a life of humble service to Jehovah. They are living examples of the fact that "faith is the victory" (1 John 5:4), and their example encourages us to press onward. Daniel teaches us how to be courageous in the midst of adversity (Dan. 6). He reminds us that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17) and therefore our faith is steadfast and sure. David teaches us that even a man after God's own heart can sin, but that the greatness of a man is defined by how he deals with that sin (2 Sam. 11; Ps. 51). Joshua and Nehemiah both teach us what it means to be a great leader of God's people. The prophets provide a steadfast example of the reason and conviction needed to preach the preaching that God bids us (Jonah 3:2) and know that He stands with His faithful servants (Jer. 1:8). The Old Testament gives us a unique glimpse into both the good and the bad of the lives of a number of men and women—their beauty and their warts. By studying their lives we are able to understand how God expects His children to live in this world.

The Old Testament also teaches us about God and how we are to approach Him. We learn that God is holy and can have nothing to do with sin (Lev. 11:44-45; Hab. 1:13). In Leviticus, we learn about the devastating

CHRISTIAN WORKER

(UPS 109-700)

Third-Class Postage Paid at Manchaca, Texas

Published on a Non-Profit basis by the

Southwest church of Christ, 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

E-mail: office@swcofc.org

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Editorial Address: 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

Single Subscriptions ----- \$6.00 per year

In Clubs of five or more ----- \$5.50 per year

Per family on the Congregation Plan ----- \$5.00 yearly

In a bundle to a congregation or individual ----- \$0.75 each

Foreign (Air Mail postage) ----- \$17.00 per year

FREE online subscription at www.swcofc.org

impact of sin and the role of sacrifice in atonement. We also see the wisdom and love of God as His plan to save man from sin is revealed little by little throughout the Old Testament scriptures. The Old Testament teaches us how to approach God in prayer (e.g., Ps. 51, 86); how to respect and love the word of God (Ps. 119), how to be wise and bring Him honor (Prov. 1), and how important it is to obey Him with the right attitude and motive (1 Sam. 15:22; Mic. 6:8). It shows us what an obedient faith really looks like (Gen. 12:1-4; Rom. 4). It warns us of the dangers of looking backward (Gen. 19:26; Luke 17:31-32), and it vividly describes the vanity of pursuing true value apart from service to God (Ecclesiastes). Indeed the Old Testament is full of great divine truths, principles, and practical wisdom that are still very applicable today. Though we do not live under its law it is still of great value to us in our desire to please God. It truly does make us “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15).

CW

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

Steve Lloyd

This article attempts to answer the question “What would we know about our origin and the purpose for our lives without the Old Testament?” That is a great question! In this article, we will explore life’s “big questions” as they relate to the Old Testament.

First of all, let’s take a look at what is meant by “big questions.” Most writers agree that the “big questions” include the following: Who am I? Why am I here? What went wrong? What is the solution? How a person answers these questions will identify their worldview—their view of the world. The atheist, for example, will come up with radically different answers to these questions than the Christian. What does the Old Testament say about the “big questions” that we would not know otherwise?

I have argued elsewhere that the Bible can be read as a Story. That Story can be broken down into 6 Acts: Act 1 is the Story of Creation; Act 2 is the Story of the Fall; Act 3 is the Story of Israel; Act 4 is the Story of Jesus;

Act 5 is the Story of the Church; Act 6 is the Return of the King. The Old Testament contains the first 3 Acts.

Imagine jumping into the middle of one of Shakespeare’s plays and trying to make sense out of it. This is what it would be like to read the New Testament without the Old. You would only have the last 3 Acts to make sense out of the whole. We are fortunate that the New Testament has much to say about the “big questions,” but it is the “sum” of God’s word that constitutes the truth (Ps. 119:160). Our understanding of the truth concerning the “big questions” would be poorer without the Old Testament.

The New Testament often makes reference to a name or an event in the past, but you must go to the Old Testament for the details. This is known as an allusion. Allusions can be thought of as literary shorthand. The book of Jude contains a number of allusions. For example, Jude alludes to “the way of Cain,” “Balaam’s error,” and “Korah’s rebellion” (v 11). If you did not have access to the Old Testament, you would not fully comprehend what Jude was communicating to his reader. This little letter is filled to the brim with other allusions, and the same case could be made: if you did not have access to the Old Testament, the full meaning of the letter would be lost on the reader. Allusion as a literary device is handy, but it assumes something of the reader. It is handy if your reader knows the story or person you merely reference, but if the reader is unfamiliar, the message is likely to be lost. (E.D. Hirsch addressed this with reference to culture in his book, *Cultural Literacy*.)

One of the big questions is, “Who am I?” Paul, a disciple of Jesus, in a conversation with the disciples of Socrates, quotes their poets: “In him we live and move and have our being,” and “For we are indeed his offspring.” Paul then explains,

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. (Acts 17:28-29)

One of the many problems Paul addressed in Corinth related to appropriate headress for men and women. He writes, “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God...” (1 Corinthians 11:7). The whole text (11:1-16) is a knotty one to unravel, but man being made in the

image and glory of God is not knotty. It affirms the same thing Paul said to the Athenians in Acts 17.

So, the New Testament answers the question, “Who am I?” We are made in the image and glory of God, but the details of our making and the One in whose image we are made are discovered in the Old Testament, in Act 1.

These texts are, in a sense, like the allusions in Jude. To know the whole story, you must go to the Old Testament. New Testament references to the Old Testament are, as one author put it, “echoes” broadcasted first in the Old Testament, and referenced in the New.

The New Testament answers most, if not all, of the “big questions.” Why am I here? ...to glorify God (Eph. 1:3-14). What is the problem? ...sin (Rom. 3:23). What is the solution? ...the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17). But, in my opinion, we sacrifice too much if we think we can do without the Old Testament.

The Old Testament tells us the Story of our origin. The New Testament refers to the “beginning” time and time again, but it is to the Old Testament we must go for the details on which the New Testament often depends.

The Old Testament tells us the Story of the Fall (Gen. 3). The New Testament refers to it (John 8:44), interprets it (Rev. 12:9), and amplifies it (Rom. 5:12), but it is to the Old Testament we must go for the original Story—for the details.

The Old Testament chronicles the huge Story of Israel. The New Testament refers to it time and time again, but it is to the Old Testament we must go for the details.

If we were to eliminate the Old Testament from our Bibles, we would eliminate many of the essential details the New Testament depends on to communicate its message. This does not even take into consideration the exquisitely beautiful literary works of art contained therein.

CW



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THE MESSIAH'S RELATIONSHIP

TO THE LAW

Don Walker

One of the greatest obstacles when speaking to members of a denomination is getting them to understand the distinction between the two testaments. Prophecies such as Jeremiah 31:31-33 are either ignored or simply go unheeded. Jeremiah wrote,

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; And will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:31-33).

The Hebrew writer quoted from this passage letting his readers know that the New Testament had replaced the Old Testament. In Colossians 2 Paul was even more bold in the proclamation of the same truth. In verses 14-17 he taught that the Old Law had been nailed to the cross and principalities and powers had been spoiled and defeated, so they were to not allow anyone to judge them by the standard of the Old Law any longer. He also reminded them that the Old Law was a “shadow of things to come.”

With such clear teaching in the above referenced passages and in others, it is difficult to understand why anyone would go back and view the Old Testament as legislating for us today. Yet, there are still those who would formulate teaching and practices based upon the Old Testament teaching. It is an understatement to say that it has clouded the minds of many so that they are unable to draw proper conclusions concerning what should be practiced today and what should be understood concerning the great “mystery of God.” Though there are many examples that could be presented to show our point, we will focus on one that may not be as prevalent in our thoughts. We will consider how an improper view of the Old Testament and its place in God's plan effects men's thinking and understanding of what the Bible

says about Messiah.

One simply needs a cursory reading of the Gospel accounts to see that the Jews did not understand their own law concerning Messiah. In fact John proclaimed, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). The very One to Whom multiple witnesses testified¹ was finally rejected and murdered by the ones that should have been rejoicing at His coming. It is evident that Jesus came to “seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10) and yet much of the Jews rejected Jesus. Now the question is this: If the evidence was so abundant, why then did the Jew fail to recognize Jesus as the Christ when He appeared on the scene? Why did the Jews reject their Messiah and Savior? In general, we would answer the question by saying in the mind of the Jew, they did not need a savior. They were the seed of Abraham and they had been entrusted with Law of Moses. In their minds salvation for them was wrapped up in the Law of Moses. In perhaps a more specific approach we would see the answer being wrapped up in “context.”

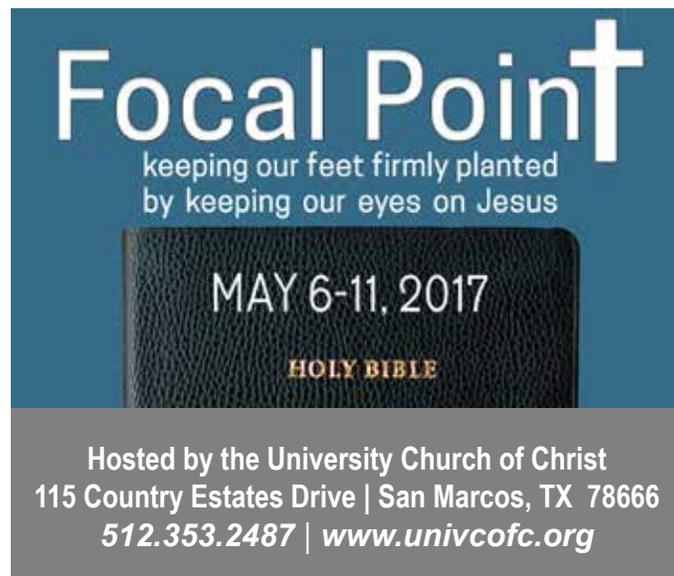
It is no secret to the average Bible student that the Jews idea of Messiah and His work was warped when compared to the inspired record. In fact, the Jew saw the Abrahamic blood line to be more significant than the Messiah Himself. They saw the Law of Moses, which had been given to the “seed of Abraham” as the power by which men would draw near to God and Messiah was just a small part of that Law. This is made clear when we consider that both John the baptist and Jesus addressed the fact that simply being descendants of Abraham did not establish them as God’s elect (See Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8; John 8:39). The Judaizing teachers in the first century are also proof the Jew did not understand the position of Messiah and the role of the Old Testament. Paul would let them know it was not “salvation by race,” but rather it was salvation by grace. He would also make it clear that it was not “seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

In the end, it was the Jew’s unwillingness to see that the Old Law was simply a part of God’s overall plan and they and their lineage were not the answer to man’s need that finally led to their demise. Had they

¹ In John 5:31-39 Jesus gives five witnesses that testify that His claims concerning His Deity and Messiahship were valid claims. Those five witnesses are John the baptist, the miracles that Jesus did, the Father, the Scriptures, and finally Moses, their law giver.

recognized that **everything** centered and focused on Messiah Jesus, then they would have been better equipped to receive and benefit from God’s great Mystery. It is paramount for men today to grasp the same truth and realize that the kingdom is here and will be delivered to the Father when Messiah returns and this world is dissolved and melted with a fervent heat. May we consider the import of this message as we all study our Bible more and more.

CW



PREACHING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Richard D. Melson

The question is raised, “If you are New Testament Christians who believe that the Old Testament is no longer binding then why study and preach from the Old Testament—what is the practical value?” It is evident from reading 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that both the Old and New Testaments will make one complete unto every good work. So, why would a gospel preacher *not* preach from the Old Testament?

It is said that the Old Testament is like a lost treasure to many. Should this be the case when in the 21st century there is almost universal access to the word of God (via the internet, the Bible available in every language, etc.)? Yet there is a deep and growing ignorance of the word of God almost everywhere.

The Bible consists of 66 books inspired by God—39 in the Old Testament and 26 in the New Testament. Therefore, the Old Testament makes up 59% of the

Bible. How can a man be a servant of God—a preacher of righteousness—and refuse to preach from the Old Testament? How can a preacher fulfill his charge to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), or “declare the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) and not preach from the Old Testament? Implied in the command of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 to “rightly divide” the word of God is to handle aright both Old and New Testaments!

To properly understand and preach the gospel of Christ a preacher needs knowledge of the Bible as a whole. Consider,

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope. (Rom. 15:4)

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Cor. 10:11-12)

The scriptures are God’s story about man – his genesis, fall, and end. One cannot understand the scheme of redemption without the Old Testament; God’s plan of man’s redemption, reconciliation, restoration is presented historically. Therefore, the Bible must be studied with respect to this fact.

A brief outline of the Old Testament might look like this:

- A. The OT was God’s testament / covenant with the Hebrews during the preparatory time of the redemptive process – Exod. 34:27-28
- B. The OT was temporary and designed to end. Jer. 31:31-34; Gal. 3:24-25
- C. The OT was designed to provide life – Gal. 3:19-22
- D. The OT has been fulfilled and taken out of the way – Luke 24:44-49; Col. 2:14
- E. The OT is important and valuable for our study – Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11

The Old Testament says that the Messiah is coming. God is working His plan for man’s redemption. The Old Testament helps to understand the “why” in many cases. Wayne Jackson has correctly observed

concerning the value of the Old Testament:

Does this mean that the Old Testament is of no value today? Of course not; far from it! The legacy of that body of literature is vast, wonderful, and abiding (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11). There is a divine link between the Old and the New Testaments. But does that mean that the Christian is under the former regime in this age, with its body of law to which he is obligated? It does not. Should one be teaching that Christians ought to be observing the commandments of the Torah today—from the greatest to the least? To so argue is to leave a distinctly erroneous impression.¹

The following simple outline is useful in beginning a study of the Bible and specifically the Old Testament.

The Purpose of the Scriptures:

1. The Bible relates to the need for human redemption. Genesis chapters 1-3 explains the need (cf. Rom. 5:12).
2. All accountable persons share this need for redemption.
 - a. Gentiles – Rom 1:18-32
 - b. Jews - Rom. 2:1-3, 20
 - c. Romans – Rom. 3:22-23; 1 John 1:8
3. The Bible shows that redemption is through Jesus the Christ.
 - a. Rom. 3:24
 - b. Eph. 1:7
 - c. Col. 1:14
4. The Old Testament points to the Christ
 - a. Luke 24:13-27
 - b. Acts 28:23
 - c. Luke 24:44ff
 - d. John 5:39, 46
 - e. Acts 26:22-23

The Value of Old Testament is evident in that “every

¹ Jackson, Wayne. “Is the Law of Moses (Torah) Still Binding?” Christian Courier. Accessed March 10, 2017. <https://www.christian-courier.com/articles/1355-is-the-law-of-moses-torah-still-binding>

word of God is pure” (Prov. 30:5), and in what the inspired servant David penned, “The law of Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:7).

Many erroneous doctrines have and continue to be put forth because of a failure to know and properly apply the word of God, especially the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is valuable because it is the scripture (Prov. 30:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). Because it is necessary to know who we are, who God is, who the real enemy is, and why we need a Savior. The Old Testament is valuable because God has said that it is! Brethren may we spend the time and effort in the proper study and application of God’s word. Preach the word which includes Genesis through Malachi!

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toward those who fear Him. David said,

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! (Psa. 31:19)

God promises His people, “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa. 84:11). His goodness can be seen in many ways: eternal life (Rom. 6:23), immediate access to His throne through Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:16), answering our prayers (1 Pet. 3:12), giving us His word which provides

everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and even His discipline is evidence of His goodness (Heb. 12:6-15). Many have a tendency to take God’s goodness for granted, but those who know Him personally praise Him and thank Him for His goodness (Ps. 100:4-5). If you are saved, give thanks to the Lord for he is good! If you are lost heed the exhortation of the Psalmist, “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Ps. 34:8).

The Grace of God. In Exodus 34:1-10 Moses ascended to Mt. Sinai to present himself before the Lord. The Lord spoke to Moses about Himself saying, “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” The Hebrew word “gracious” comes from a root word which means “to bend or stoop.” When God declared Himself to be gracious, He was explaining to Moses exactly what He is like and defining the very essence of His being. God is willing to reach down with affection to people who can never deserve it! He is willing to do good things freely and unconditionally. Because God is gracious He is willing to forgive guilty people of their sins and deliver them from the punishment they deserve when they are totally unworthy of such kindness. The New Testament proclaims the same truth declaring God to be “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10). When we acquaint ourselves with the God of all grace we will learn that God provides grace for salvation (2 Cor. 8:9; Titus 2:11), sanctification (Acts 20:32), service (1 Cor. 15:8-10), suffering (2 Cor. 12:9-10), and that God’s grace is available for our every need. It is a blessed thing for mankind to behold the “manifold” or “many colored” grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Someone once said, for every shade of human need God has a matching shade of divine grace. If we are blue with despondency, yellow with fear, encountering the blackness of pain, the redness of anger or the greenness of envy, God’s many-colored grace is sufficient to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

These are just a few of our magnificent God’s attributes. Let me encourage you to get to know God’s character by continuing to study His word, diligently looking for those unique characteristics of God that can help you better know Him and better serve Him. May it be your life’s ambition to know God!

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