

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Adult Bible Equipping Class
Anchorage Grace Church
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How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of wicked people, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers, rather Yahweh's law is his delight, and he meditates on His law day and night.

—Psalm 1:1–2

The Importance of the Old Testament

Preliminary Questions

- When was the last time you heard a **sermon** from the Old Testament?
- When was the last time you heard a **sermon series** from the Old Testament?
- When was the last time you heard a sermon from the Old Testament **based on a passage you weren't familiar with**?

Curious to observe and hard to understand is the relative neglect of the Old Testament by Christians in our day as Sunday after Sunday the average evangelical, Bible-believing church hears no message at all from the Hebrew Scriptures. Such Scriptures may be referred to with respect, or cited as proof in confirmation of New Testament teaching, but nearly all the expository messages are taken from the Greek Scriptures. . . . How can Christian pastors hope to feed their flock on a well-balanced spiritual diet if they completely neglect the thirty-nine books of Holy Scripture on which Christ and all the New Testament authors received their own spiritual nourishment?

—Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "A New Look at the Old Testament," *Decision* (August 1972), 5

Methods of Neglecting the Old Testament

- **New Testament-only teaching:** in some churches, the OT rarely gets significant pulpit time. Most or all sermon series are derived from NT passages and books.
- **Avoidance of unfamiliar texts:** in other churches, the OT is expounded from time to time, but the passages are familiar and overused, and the messages are contrived and tend to moralize the text rather than explain the text's original meaning.

Explanations for Neglecting the Old Testament

- **Lack of familiarity:** the relative size of the OT in comparison to the NT makes it more difficult for many Christians to gain familiarity. For some or perhaps many, the task of familiarizing oneself with so much content appears too daunting and many opt to stick with passages they know and understand, i.e., the NT.
- **Lack of understanding:** for some Christians, the OT seems too foreign to understand. They don't understand the practices and the culture, they don't see the relevance to today's world and, to put it plainly, just don't get the *point* of all these stories and prophecies.
- **Lack of appreciation:** for some believers, there is perhaps even an unconscious *bias* toward the NT. It may be unintentional and they may be completely ignorant of it, but it is simply assumed that the NT is superior to the OT.
- **Others?**

Reasons for Studying the Old Testament

1. The Old Testament is INSPIRED

- **2 Timothy 3:16–17:** “All Scripture is **God-breathed** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
 - “Scripture” is the standard term used by the NT authors in reference to the OT (Rom 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Cor 15:3–4; Gal 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Tim 5:18; Jas 2:8, 23; 4:5; 1 Pet 2:6; 1 Pet 1:20; 2 Pet 3:16).
 - In this context, it primarily refers to the OT scriptures (cf. 2 Tim 3:15).
 - 2 Peter 1:20–21 explains the process of “inspiration”:
 - Scripture did not originate with the human author (v. 20)
 - Rather, the Holy Spirit moved the human authors along (v. 21)
 - This does *not* mean God dictated everything to them! In some cases dictation occurred (the Ten Commandments), but in most cases the human author wrote under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit.

- What was produced were *divine/human writings*. Human in that they were written by real people with real backgrounds, social and cultural contexts, educations, personalities, and styles. Divine in that the Holy Spirit ensured that what was written by these human authors was **exactly** what God wanted to be written.
- **The character of God INFORMS the character of Scripture**
 - If God is true then Scripture is true
 - If God is trustworthy then Scripture is trustworthy
 - If God is without error then Scripture is without error
 - If God is authoritative then Scripture is authoritative
- **Matthew 4:4:** “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on **every word** that proceeds out of the mouth of God.””
 - It is because it comes from **God** that man must have and know Scripture
 - It is because it comes from **God** that the OT must be held equally in value and study with the NT

It is beyond doubt that Jesus highly esteemed the Old Testament and constantly submitted to it as to an authoritative revelation. He taught that the Scriptures bore a witness to him, just as he bore a witness to them. Because they are the words of God, Jesus assumed their complete reliability, in whole and to the smallest part.

—James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: Book I*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the USA, 1986), 45

2. The Old Testament is PROFITABLE

- **2 Timothy 3:16–17:** “All Scripture is God-breathed and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
 - How is Scripture profitable?
 - *Teaching* – Scripture is the source of all doctrine and truth
 - *Reproof* – Scripture identifies and condemns sin
 - *Correction* – Scripture corrects the sinning person and straightens their crooked path
 - *Training in righteousness* – Scripture guides and directs people in what it means to live righteously

- What is the result?
 - *Complete*: Scripture gives the believer competency, enabling them to meet all the demands of life.
 - *Fully Equipped*: Scripture furnishes the believer with everything they need to live righteously in life.
- **Inspiration and profitability go hand in hand**
 - If the Scripture is **inspired** then it is **profitable**
 - If the Scripture is **not** profitable then it is **not** inspired
- **What about the Mosaic Law? How is it profitable for me as a NT believer?**
 - The Old Covenant is **inferior** to the New (Heb 7:22; cf. Acts 13:39)
 - The Old Covenant **cannot** perfect anyone (Heb 7:11, 19; 9:9; 10:1)
 - The Old Covenant sacrifices are **outmoded** (Heb 7:18; 8:13)
 - The Old Covenant priesthood has **changed** (Heb 7:12, 14)

Purposes of the Law of Moses	
Purpose	Reference
The Law reveals sinfulness	Romans 3:19–20
The Law reveals sin’s hideous nature	Romans 7:7–13
The Law reveals the holiness of God	1 Peter 1:16
The Law restrains sin	1 Timothy 1:9
The Law guides to Christ, the Messiah	Galatians 3:23–24

- **2 Timothy 3:16–17**: “All Scripture is God-breathed and **profitable** for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **training in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Profitability of the Law of Moses	
Purpose	2 Timothy 3:16–17
The Law reveals sinfulness	<i>Reproof</i>
The Law reveals sin’s hideous nature	<i>Reproof</i>
The Law reveals the holiness of God	<i>Teaching/training</i>
The Law restrains sin	<i>Correction</i>
The Law guides to Christ, the Messiah	<i>Teaching</i>

- **Training in Righteousness is provided in the Mosaic Law:**
 - **Deuteronomy 22:8**: Although the specifics of this case law do not apply to pitched roofs in temperate climates, the principle of this legislation *teaches* us to love our “neighbors” by protecting them when they are in our homes. Our homes should not be unsafe, no matter the architecture of your home.

- **Leviticus 19:9–10:** Although the specifics of this case law do not apply to all field crops and the produce of orchards and vineyards today, the principle of this legislation *teaches* us to love our “neighbors” by providing for the poor and demonstrating compassion for those who are the vulnerable and destitute. Not being a farmer is no excuse to neglect those in need.
- **Doctrine is *taught* in the Mosaic Law:**
 - God is holy and righteous (Lev 11:45; Deut 32:4)
 - God is eternal and living (Deut 33:27; 5:26)
 - God is a person (Lev 26:12)
 - God is all-powerful and all-wise (Deut 10:17; Exod 31:3)
 - God is sovereign (Exod 34:9)
 - God is gracious and merciful (Exod 34:6–7)
 - Atonement and forgiveness come through substitutionary sacrifice (Lev 4:20)

3. The Old Testament is NECESSARY

- An accurate and effective understanding of the NT is dependent upon a knowledge of the OT

Effective New Testament preaching is virtually impossible without an appropriate balance of Old Testament preaching.

—Michael Duduit, “Introduction: The Church’s Need for Old Testament Preaching,”
in *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle: Preaching the Old Testament Faithfully*,
ed. By George L. Klein (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 11

- It is understandable why a Christian would be drawn to study the NT. After all, in it we find the completion and the filling up of the program of God.
- However, even the NT writers draw frequently from the OT both for their theology as well as to encourage and instruct the church:

NT Passage	OT Quotations or Allusions in the NT			
	# of Quotations/Allusions	# of Vss in Passage	% of Passage	Fraction of Vss
Matthew 5–7	39	111	35%	~1/3 vss
Romans 4	12	25	48%	~1/2 vss
Romans 9–11	64	90	71%	~5/7 vss
Hebrews	222	303	73%	3/4 vss
James	52	108	48%	~1/2 vss
Jude	16	24	67%	2/3 vss

Expositions in the Epistle to the Hebrews	
Hebrews Passage	Exposition Passage
1:1–2:4	Psalms, 2 Sam 7, & Deut 32
2:5–18	Psalm 8:4-6
3:1–4:13	Psalm 95:7–11
4:14–7:28	Psalm 110:4
8:1–10:18	Jeremiah 31:31–34
10:32–12:3	Habakkuk 2:3–4
12:4–13	Proverbs 3:11–12
12:18–19	Exodus 19–20

OT Allusions in the Epistle of Jude	
Jude	OT Allusions
Verse 5	Exodus; Numbers
Verse 6	Genesis 6:1–4
Jude 7	Genesis 19
Jude 11	Gen 4:3–8; Num 22–24; Num 16

- **The Church’s Existence**

The church is made up of believers in the Gospel message concerning Jesus Christ—a message that flows directly from the OT!

- **Unity of the Message**

The Church’s message is the same as that which was proclaimed by Moses and the prophets

- **Acts 26:6–7**

“And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by the Jews.”

- **Acts 26:22–23**

“So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating **nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place**; that the Christ was to suffer and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”

- **Acts 8:29–35**

Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: **“He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away; who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.”** The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and **beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.**

- **1 Corinthians 15:3–4**

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins **according to the Scriptures**, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day **according to the Scriptures.**

- **Universality of the Message**

The extension of the Gospel and of the membership of the church was founded upon OT revelation and preaching

- **Acts 15:14–17**

“Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. **With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,** ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.”

- **Acts 13:44–49**

The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first;

since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. **For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'**" When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Concluding Points

- If the Old Testament is **inspired**, then to neglect the Old Testament is to neglect the very words of God Himself.
- If the Old Testament is **profitable**, then without the Old Testament, the man of God cannot be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work
- If the OT is **necessary**, then without the Old Testament, the New Testament revelation becomes incomprehensible and its gospel becomes groundless.

In spite of . . . major hurdles, there are many reasons why pastors must preach from the Old Testament: (1) the Old Testament is part of the Christian canon, (2) it discloses the history of redemption leading to Christ, (3) it proclaims truths not found in the New Testament, (4) it helps us understand the New Testament, (5) it prevents misunderstanding the New Testament, and (6) it provides a fuller understanding of Christ.

--Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 25.