

Lesson 8: *Place of the Old Testament*

The Old Testament is a book of history, law, poetry, wisdom and prophecy. Each of these categories lends instruction to the Christian today and yet it must be remembered that the law under which we live is found exclusively on the pages of the New Testament. What Moses said about divorce and remarriage and the Sabbath are not binding upon those who exist under the law of Christ. David's dance and stringed instruments in worship are not authoritative examples for worship today. The Old Testament has a place in our discipline today, but not as a binding code.

History, Poetry, Wisdom and Prophecy

Aside from the tenets of the law of Moses which bound nearly every facet of Hebrew life, the Old Testament is rife with historical lessons, praise in the form of the psalms and the song of Solomon, wisdom from the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and a trove of faith-building prophecies.

One can and should appeal to the historical records of the Old Testament, not as authority for this or a prohibition of that, but as an example of what becomes of those who heed or disregard God's will generally. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). What can we learn from the serpent's deception of Eve in the garden? What can be learned from Joseph in Egypt? What can be learned from King Josiah's reforms? The lessons are all there and truly those who do not know their history—the history of God's relations with man—are doomed to repeat the same mistakes of their patriarchs.

The apostle Paul calls on his brethren to recall the exodus pilgrims of Israel who "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them, God was not well pleased" (1 Cor. 10:4-5). He goes on to explain the precise reasons for God's displeasure and to illustrate how Christians of that, and any age, can similarly fall by making friendships with the world. "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).

Consider also the poetry of the psalms, which aids us in expressing our emotions in various situations. We learn how David and other eloquent men poured out their hearts to an attentive God.

The wisdom found in the proverbs and Ecclesiastes is timeless and touches upon our lives at every turn. The proverbs are largely not purely questions of law, but of wisdom.

The 17 major and minor prophets, along with their counterparts within the historical works, created a mountain of predictions about the coming Messiah and his church. These prophecies lend evidence to the validity of the claim today that Jesus is Lord and the Bible is true and inspired by God.

The Hebrew writer noted that Christ's priesthood necessitated a change in the law because no Jew could serve in the company of the Levites: "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law." The law of Moses was decommissioned (Heb. 8:7-13) and the law of Christ ascended to exclusive authority (James 4:12). Paul remarks on the removal of the law of commandments that separated Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:14-15) and which provided the discipline of Israel (Col. 2:14). Even the ten commandments were taken out of effect at the cross (2 Cor. 3:7-8), although nine of them (all save the Sabbath) are reiterated in the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

Most who appeal to the Old Testament for authority only want it for certain things, but such an appeal obligates one to keep the whole law (Gal. 5:3, James 2:10). Finding authority there for instrumental music in worship obligates such a one to sacrifice animals and keep the stringent Sabbath laws every Saturday.

1. How does Jesus illustrate the difference between Moses's law and his in Matthew 19:7-9?
2. Why were the things of the Old Testament written and preserved for us, who are not Hebrews?
3. What can we learn from the serpent's deception of Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:1-7)?
4. Why was God not pleased with the exodus pilgrims (1 Cor. 10:1-12)? Why should we care?
5. Consider Psalm 23. What is the benefit of the psalms in general?
6. Since the law of Moses has been taken out of effect, does this mean that the wisdom of the proverbs no longer applies or is useful?
7. What is the value of the prophecies (2 Peter 1:21)?
8. How could Christ be a priest under the law of Moses? Since he is recognized as a priest, what does this prove?
9. What do the following passages have to say about the duration of the law of Moses?
 - ◇ Ephesians 2:14-15:

 - ◇ Colossians 2:14:

 - ◇ 2 Corinthians 3:7-8:

 - ◇ Hebrews 8:7-13:
10. Why is it not permissible to appeal to the Old Testament for authority for instrumental music in worship, while rejecting its commands to sacrifice animals and keep the Sabbath?
11. Which of the ten commandments was not reiterated in the New Testament?