



The Good News

April 23rd, 2017

Volume 17, Issue 17

The Purposes of the Old Testament Today

By Michael McCleary

There are many who wonder why God saw fit to have the Old Testament preserved for us, given that it's the New Testament that specifically teaches us how to be saved. Some even go so far as to attempt to bind certain aspects of the Old Testament, such as the Ten Commandments, thinking that they must still be observed today (Note: 9 of the 10 are commanded in the New Testament and should be followed as a result). There may be moments when you are asked if you believe in the Ten Commandments. How should you respond? To be prepared for this, we will briefly (and, perhaps, simplistically) discuss the primary purposes of the inclusion of the Old Testament in the Bible.

The Old Testament teaches us about God's power and love: From the account of Creation in **Genesis** to the plagues upon Egypt, the parting of the sea, and the giving of the Law in **Exodus**, we are given a glimpse of God's almighty power. Time and time again, these, and other, instances are quoted by God and other righteous writers (think **Psalms**) as evidence of God's power and might. While His power is clearly seen in the New Testament, not the least of examples being the raising of Jesus from the dead, the additional information from the Old Testament establishes a pattern of behavior from God which shows His power and might, as well as His love for His creation and concern for man's well-being. Over and over again we find how that God loved His people and desired for them to be faithful to Him. Unfortunately, as He predicted, they were not faithful and thus God punished them for their sinful ways. Yet, all the while, He proved His love by providing prophets and deliverers, judges and kings who would take care of His people, if only for a time until they would, once again, turn away. The Old Testament provides us with information about God's character, and how that He is always consistent and "*changeth not*" (**Malachi 3:6**).

The Old Testament teaches us about the danger of sin through the examples of those who turned away: We find in **I Cor. 10:5-11**, Paul discusses those who wandered in the wilderness. Concerning them, he says in **vs. 6**, "*Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*" Paul goes on in **vs. 7-10** to describe many of the sins of which the Israelites were guilty. And then in **vs. 11** Paul says, regarding the punishment for their sins, "*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.*" We find that, in addition to showing the consistency of God's power and love, the Old Testament also shows us how consistent God is in demanding punishment for sin. This is a powerful and impor-

tant characteristic of our God, especially as it pertains to the reason why the perfect and blameless Lamb of God was required to serve as a propitiation for us, to suffer for sins in our stead. The Old Testament teaches us just how terrible and horrible sin truly is.

The Old Testament teaches us that God had a plan for salvation from the beginning: The Old Testament includes prophecy after prophecy regarding God's plan to bring about a New Covenant through His "Anointed One" (See **Psalms 2**). It shows that God knew ahead of time that man would need a Savior, and He planned for His Son to come and die all along. In **Romans 15:3-4**, Paul says, "*For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.'* For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Paul, in a context of describing how Christ came with a purpose to serve the Father, describes how the Old Testament teaches us patience and hope in knowing that God had planned for salvation all along, as evidenced by prophecy.

The Old Testament makes us "wise unto salvation": While the Old Testament alone cannot bring us to salvation, Paul tells Timothy that "*...from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" (**II Tim. 3:15**). What this means is that, between teaching us about the character of God's power and love, His judgment toward sin and justification of the righteous, and the prophecies regarding the coming Messiah, the Old Testament can bring us to Christ. After that, as Paul says, it requires "*faith which is in Christ Jesus*" to actually obtain salvation. Paul says in **Galatians 3:24-25**, "*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*" This is made clearly evident in **Acts 8:30ff** when Phillip came across the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading a prophecy in Isaiah but did not understand it. We are told in **vs. 35**, "*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*"

There are plenty of other reasons that can be referenced regarding the necessity of the Old Testament, not the least of which is that it gives us a history which helps put the accounts of the New Testament into perspective. But the next time someone asks what good the Old Testament is today, we have four reasons we can cite as to why the Old Testament is not only useful but absolutely crucial and necessary for us as Christians.