

DO WE NEED THE OLD TESTAMENT?

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There are a lot of church-goers who avoid the Old Testament. To be fair ... they probably don't know much about it ... but they're "aware" of stories of slavery ... wars ... wiping out the cities of Canaan "every man, woman and child" ... rape ... violence ... assassination — plus lots of stuff about burnt offerings and blood sacrifices. That's what they think.

Who wants to read that? "I'll stick with the New Testament".

You may have heard Richard Dawkins (atheist) view:

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak; a vindictive, blood-thirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochist, capriciously malevolent bully".

That's the view of many atheists ... and some agnostics — but also shared by some church-goers. Of course ... they don't read their Bibles anyway — even the New Testament — but that's what they "believe". (According to one survey — about 1 in 5 church-goers in the USA never read the Bible). They are almost embarrassed by the Old Testament and its God.

Yet ... compare that to Jesus' view of the God of the Old Testament:

Matthew 6:25-32

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will He not much more** clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. **For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

Don't worry. We have a Heavenly Father ... who is a Much More God.

Matthew 7:7-11

7 "**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

8 "**For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

9 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

Jesus' description is somewhat different to that of Richard Dawkins! Yet many church-goers share Dawkins' views ... at least to some extent ... hence they have a tendency to often avoid the Old Testament. They see the God of the Old Testament as harsh ... wrathful ... legalistic ... "Thank Heavens He's been replaced by Jesus ... meek and mild".

Hopefully ... we know this is wrong ... wrong ... wrong! We can't dismiss ... should not dismiss ... the Old Testament ... or avoid it ... or treat it as old and out-of-date. The Old Testament represents about 75% of the whole Bible. As far as the New Testament is concerned ... you can't properly understand that unless you're familiar with the Old.

Let's review again: Is the Old Testament of real value to us? Can it help us to come to know better the true God?

Matthew 4:1-4

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But **He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"** *(quoted from the Old Testament ... Deuteronomy 8:3)*

Jesus' example under satanic pressure. Live by the Word of God! The only such word then was the Old Testament!

Luke 24:13-21

13 **Now behold, two of them (disciples) were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.**

14 **And they talked together of all these things which had happened.**

15 **So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.**

16 **But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.**

17 And He said to them, "**What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?**"

18 **Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"**

19 **And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,**

20 **"and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.**

21 **"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.** Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

These disciples were sad! It's all over!

Luke 24:25-32

25 **Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! (The words from the Old Testament)**

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 expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.** *(that's where you find out so much about our Saviour)*

28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.

29 But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them.

30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

31 **Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him;** and He vanished from their sight.

32 **And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"**

Jesus opened the scriptures (Old Testament) to them — things concerning Himself.

To get the whole story of Jesus — birth ... ministry ... death and resurrection ... and His yet-future-coming ... WE NEED THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It helps us to know Jesus ... the person. It is not just dry ... academic doctrine.

John 5:39-40

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

40 **"But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**

The scriptures — the Old Testament — "testify" of Jesus ... the Saviour ... the Messiah.

John 5:45-47

45 "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust.

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?"**

If you believed Moses (Genesis—Deuteronomy) —you'd believe Me!

No hint here of Jesus "relegating" the Old Testament as not being important.

In fact ... if you don't believe Moses (and obviously read the writings of Moses!!) ... you'll struggle to really know Jesus.

Acts 17:1-4

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

2 **Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,**

3 **explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead,** and saying, "**This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.**"

4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

Paul reasoned from the scriptures. About Jesus ... being The Messiah.

You can preach Jesus from the Old Testament.

Acts 17:10-12

10 **Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.** When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 **These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.**

12 Therefore **many of them believed**, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

The Bereans searched the scriptures — the Old Testament — to understand about Jesus.

Was Paul's preaching accurate? Was it true? Was he a deceiver?

Was Jesus really The Messiah? They checked the Old Testament.

We can see many people here — in Thessalonica — in Berea etc — who came to Jesus ... baptised ... begotten saints of God ... based upon “Old Testament” preaching!

At this early stage of the New Testament Church ... there was no New Testament! No gospels! No letters to the Romans ... Corinthians ... Ephesians. No Book of Acts!

The New Testament can be easier to read in places? Perhaps more practical instruction? But obviously as we've seen here ... you can preach a salvation message from the Old Testament!

It is much too important to dismiss ... or treat as “second-class”.

Acts 28:16-24

16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans,

18 "who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death.

19 "But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.

20 "For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you.

22 "But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

Paul preached the Kingdom of God ... and Jesus ... from Moses and the Prophets.

Acts 28:25-29

25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "**The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,**

26 "saying,

'Go to this people and say:

"Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;

And seeing you will see, and not perceive;

27 **For the hearts of this people have grown dull.**

Their ears are hard of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed,

Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,

Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them." '

28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves

The Holy Spirit spoke through the Prophet(s).

Acts 28:30-31

30 **Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,**

31 **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ** with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Paul — preaching the Kingdom of God.

Some today would almost imply reading the Old Testament is dangerous! A harsh judgmental God ... it's legalistic! Avoid it!

But back in those days ... the only scriptures were the Old Testament. And they were preached daily.

A huge number of quotations from the Old Testament appear in the New Testament — about 695 separate quotations. Plus ... on top of that ... over 4,000 allusions ... references to: Adam ... Abraham ... David ... Solomon ... Noah ... Job ... the Flood ... Daniel's Abomination of Desolation ... Melchizedek etc.

Of 404 verses in the Book of Revelation ... approximately 278 have allusions to the Old Testament (about 69% refer back!). We probably find the Book of Revelation difficult enough ... but without the Old Testament we have no chance!

If Paul ... James ... Timothy ... had not preached from the Old Testament ... probably no one would have believed a word they said! Where is the evidence? To the Law and to the Testimony.

The Old Testament is spiritual food for us today. We need it!

Romans 15:1-4

1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

4 **For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**

The Old Testament was written for us! To comfort us ... to reveal the comfort and support of God our Father.

Romans 15:5, 13

5 **Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,**

13 **Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

This is our God — hope ... comfort ... patience.

It is probably unfortunate that we use terms like "Old Testament" and "New Testament". To us ... "old" implies out-of-date ... not as good. Whilst the

scriptures talk of a New Covenant and an Old Covenant ... it's not really Biblical to call the whole of Genesis —Malachi as the “Old Testament”.

One message ... from one Author ... and all of it is useful and relevant.

Acts 6:3-8

3 **"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;**

4 "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. **And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,** and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 **And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.**

Stephen — full of faith ... full of power ... doing signs and wonders. And yet he'd only been exposed to the Old Testament scriptures. That didn't hold him back.

Acts 7:48-60

48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, **as the prophet says: (quoting from the Old Testament)**

49 'Heaven is My throne,
And earth is My footstool.

What house will you build for Me? says the LORD,
Or what is the place of My rest?

50 Has My hand not made all these things?'

51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

52 "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

53 "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

55 **But he, (Stephen) being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,**

56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and **the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!**"

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;

58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 **And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."**

60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen ... the first of the martyrs ... will be in the Kingdom of God. He had never read a single Gospel! Never read any of the Apostle Paul.

2 Timothy 3:12-17

12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

15 and **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.**

16 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Holy Scriptures = the Old Testament. They are able to make us wise unto salvation. Scripture is profitable = the Old Testament.

It is foolish for us to ignore the Old Testament. It can make us wise unto salvation. It testifies to us of Jesus.

2 Peter 1:17-21

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

19 **And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed** as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 **for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**

Verse 19: "WHICH YOU DO WELL TO HEED".

2 Peter 1:17 (NLT)

19 ... **You must pay close attention to what they wrote,**

The words of the Prophets were given by the Holy Spirit ... not just the ramblings of carnal men.

Rather than dismissing them — treating as old and out-of-date — Peter says: "PAY CLOSE ATTENTION"!!

1 Corinthians 10:1-11

1 **Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,**

2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

3 all ate the same spiritual food,

4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 **Now these things became our examples,** to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;

9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

11 **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.**

Our examples. Written for our admonition.

Paul was writing to largely Gentile believers. It was important that they learned from the written history of Israel — the Old Testament scriptures.

If we want to grow to maturity ... we can't afford to neglect the Word of God — and certainly not the first 75% of it!!

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

23 **having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,**

24 because

"All flesh is as grass,

And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers,

And its flower falls away,

25 **But the word of the LORD endures forever."** (Isa 40:6-8)

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

Chapter 2

1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,

2 as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,**

3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Today we are more blessed than those of New Testament times. We've got the Old Testament plus the New Testament writings.

We have our own personal copies.

So. How are we doing?

Do we value the Word of God? Easy answer is to examine how much time we spend in it — apart from Sabbath services?

Maybe we don't need God's Word? We can grow on our own?

There is a great deal of Biblical illiteracy in our countries. The only way to remedy it ... is to read our Bibles — including the Old Testament!

It only takes 10-15 minutes a day for the "average reader" to read the whole Bible ... the whole counsel of God ... in a year.

Some have read the whole Bible 20-30-40 or more times. Some — never! Some ministers and preachers — who have never read the Bible all the way through!?

How are we doing? Let's make sure we read the whole Bible ... including the scriptures of the Old Testament.