

by Tim Greenwood

I like all too many other Christians was taught first from the Old Testament and then the New Testament. This was continually reinforced by ministers who attended seminaries and Bible Schools where one of the first Bible classes they were required to take was “Old Testament Survey” or “OTS.” In retrospect, I believe this put a “spin” on my later study of the New Testament. To the extent – that when the Holy Spirit began to teach me in 1997, I literally had to “throw out” nearly everything I had learned in the previous 30 years of Bible study – and completely start over.

As a result of re-studying the Bible – First the New Testament and then the Old (in light of the New) I have learned far more in the last 7 years than the cumulative total of the previous 30 years. And most importantly, in the process, I believe that I have come to know the very heart of God.

Now I rarely use the terms “never” and “always” in teaching – except when teaching on absolute laws, foundational principles or primary ground rules. I feel that these fall into the category of foundational principles of Bible Study. “Always – study (or read) the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament.” And “Never – study (or read) the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament.”

The Old Testament and most of what is in it are preparations for and types and examples of – the things fulfilled and waiting to be fulfilled in the New Testament. That is why I always encourage new believers to began reading the Bible with the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John plus The Book of Acts – before reading anything in the Old Testament. For example, it really makes a difference when you read John 1:1-5 before reading Gen. 1:1-31. It helps you to understand the Old Testament role of the entity that we later came to know as Jesus. How the entire physical universe was made by Him and for Him. How the gift of eternal life was His gift to mankind. And it clarifies just how great a sacrifice He made to come to us in the flesh as Jesus.

So often the way the Old Testament is translated, seems to portray God as a harsh, exacting judge. On the other hand, the New Testament paints a portrait of Jesus’ love, kindness, forgiveness and tender mercy. Looking at the

New Testament in the light of the Old, one could imagine a kind but rebellious Son standing between His unforgiving Father and us. Yet when looking at the Old Testament in light of the New, one sees that the same loving Jesus of the New Testament WAS the “Lord” of the Old Testament! (Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.)

Most of the problem stems from the fact that Hebrew was for nearly 1900 years a dead language only resurrected after 1948. Much has been learned about the language, but some things are still unclear. Dr. Robert Young, the author of Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible, an outstanding Hebrew and Greek scholar, states in his work, ‘Hints and Helps to Biblical Interpretation’, "Active verbs frequently express a permission of it." i.e. the active or causative voice is frequently used in English translations where the permissive voice should have been used. Therefore many of the destructive things that have been attributed directly to God causing or making them happen, were instead simply permitted by God. And many, if not all, of those were only "permitted" due to the fact that His direct intervention would go against what he had already spoken.

A good example of this is in Deut. 28 where in verses 1-13 the blessings of hearing and obeying God's law are listed and in verses 14-62+ are listed the curses of the law. Note that one is either under the blessing or the curse - there is no middle ground - no neutral zone. Note also that the blessings are listed FIRST and that they are conditional to hearing and obeying. Now lets say that I fail to hear and obey. This is stepping out from under the blessing and into the curse. God did not change, move or take any action at all! I was the one that changed and made the move. The curse is the LACK of being under the blessing. God is not executing the curse - He doesn't have to!

There are so many things that we can see when we look at the Old Testament in light of the New.

One of many – is the vast amount of legal preparation, processes and precedents laid out by the Lord over thousands of years all for one purpose – the legal redemption of mankind – paid for by the shed blood of the very one that did the preparation, created all the processes and set all the precedents.

Another thing that I think is so wonderful is how Jesus has always been pictured in all of the Holydays. He is the flawless lamb killed on the 14th day of the 1st month. He is the unleavened (sinless) bread of life. He is the first-fruit

the Son sowed as a seed towards a harvest of many sons of God. Fifty days later (Pentecost), He poured out His glory by filling His temple(s) with His Holy Spirit. The rest of the Holydays are soon to be fulfilled -- i.e. the feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

When you study (read) the Old Testament in the light of the New – you see the one we now call Jesus everywhere! He spoke and the universe was created. He walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden. He sealed Noah into the Ark. He cut the blood covenant with Abram and called him Abraham. He spoke from the burning bush. He divided the Red Sea. He was in the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. He gave the tablets to Moses. He dwelt in the temple of God. He stopped the Jordan River. He drove out the inhabitants and gave Israel the Promised Land. He was the 4th man in the fiery furnace. He was with Gideon in battle. He appeared to Samuel in Shiloh. And, He spoke to Isaiah and the other prophets. And that doesn't even begin to touch all the types and analogies of Jesus all through the Old Testament.

When you study (read) the Old Testament in the light of the New – you open yourself to revelation and a rich depth of understanding that would never be available from the Old Testament alone.