

# **WHO NEEDS THE OLD TESTAMENT?**

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**10.6.17**

We were talking last week about the Sabbath and the Holy Days. Most people ... most "Christians" ... don't keep either.

There are various reasons why that is the case: probably the main one is tradition. Just accept what you're born into ... or get "converted into". In practise ... very few people ever enquire or investigate.

But a large part of the problem is also a general belief among many/most Christians which is ... that the Old Testament is no longer really applicable to Christians. It's the "Old" Testament ... now out-of-date ... it's for long ago. The unspoken view is that we're now New Testament believers ... we're now the New Testament Church and under grace ... not the Old Testament Israel with its laws and judgments.

Since the Sabbath and Holy Days tend to be associated with Israel (Jews) ... and appear to be Old Testament laws ... it's quite easy to dismiss them. "Important once ... but we New Testament Christians have a New Covenant ... so we keep Sunday ... as a voluntary observance ... no longer under Old Testament Law".

The same logic applies to the question of clean/unclean meats ... is dealt with in a similar way. An Old Testament Law for Israel.

And of course ... people look to the animal sacrifices in Old Testament days ... lambs ... bulls ... pigeons ... burnt offerings ... that is also all done away. Another illustration (they allege) that the Old Testament is not relevant.

Circumcision too. Very important in the Old Testament ... but not for today.

Then there's laws about if a man sells his daughter ... what he must do. About not wearing a garment of mixed linen and wool. Of stoning a disobedient child (as usually misquoted).

So ... people look at all of these laws and practices that seem so irrelevant today ... or no longer applicable ... and it confirms their view that the Old Testament scripture is of very limited relevance and not much use to us today.

May have some great stories about Daniel and the Lions' Den ... or David slaying Goliath ... but not really necessary for a New Testament believer. And Sabbath ... Holy Days ... Unclean Meats etc ... get dismissed as well. The only one that seems to remain is ... Tithing.

I've heard preachers recommend ... spend most of your time in the New Testament. The New Testament is addressed to Christians ... believers ... the epistles are letters written to Churches ... so that's where we should spend our time.

I'd probably agree that it's often easier to read and understand some of the New Testament books ... but what do the New Testament writers themselves say about the Old Testament? Is it no longer relevant?

Jesus will give us a clue in the next few verses.

### **Matthew 4:3-4 (NKJV)**

**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.'*"**

Jesus quoted the Old Testament (Deut 8:3) ... He said that man ... you would think that would include believers in particular ... live by every word that God has spoken. The only Word of God then was the Old Testament.

**Luke 24:13-20 (NKJV)**

13 Now behold, two of them 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.

**Luke 24:25-32 (NKJV)**

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

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.**

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 expounded the scriptures ... clearly The Old Testament ... beginning at Moses and the Prophets. He revealed the plan and purpose of the Messiah ... His life ... death and resurrection. So ... do we think we can just treat lightly the scriptures in the Old Testament about Jesus?

**John 5:39-40 (NKJV)**

39 **You search *the Scriptures*, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.** (These would be the Old Testament scriptures)

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

**John 5:45-47 (NKJV)**

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?"

These verses say that we need to believe Moses' writings ... he wrote about Jesus (so we need to actually know them too).

Without the Old Testament ... how would anyone even recognise The Messiah? There are approximately 300-350 prophecies fulfilled by Jesus ... the Old Testament describes what people should look for ... Virgin Birth ... Bethlehem ... Rejected by mankind ... Pour Out His Soul unto death ... Hands and Feet pierced ... cast lots for His clothes ... buried in a rich man's grave ... etc.

Then of course there are many Old Testament prophecies ... even today ... that we are waiting for ... about Jesus' second return ... yet future.

### **Matthew 24:15-16 (NKJV)**

15 **"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),**

16 **"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."**

One of the key signs of Jesus' return ... to watch for ... the prophecy described in Daniel (the Old Testament).

Take the Book of Revelation ... all about future events? All very much for New Testament Christians?

Well ... here's a thought. Of 404 verses ... around 278 of them contain some reference/allusion to the Old Testament ... 68.8% of the total! Some verses contain 2 or 3 allusions each. Some scholars have identified up to 635 echoes and allusions of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. In total ... of the 39 Old Testament Books ... up to possibly 24 are referenced in the Book of Revelation.

Lots of weird ideas about Revelation ... but without a good understanding of the Old Testament ... it will be impossible to understand. We need the Old Testament to understand the future.

I always try to regard the Bible as one book. It has one author. All valuable. Parts of the Old Testament may be more difficult for some of us to understand ... but we can't just select the easy bits ... the "smooth bits" ... and avoid or ignore the rest. If we need to work harder at some parts ... so be it. Some subjects at school may have been easier ... but a well-rounded education needs some effort. Scripture is a bit like that.

### **2 Timothy 2:14-16 (NKJV)**

14 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

15 **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

16 But **shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.**

Study! Be diligent! Do your best! A workman ... put out some effort! Be approved to God.

### **Acts 17:1-4 (NKJV)**

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. These were the Old Testament scriptures. Paul preached Jesus from the Old Testament ... he wasn't just making things up. Salvation was on offer from the Old Testament.

### **Acts 17:10-12 (NKJV)**

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 DAILY. How can you verify if Paul is preaching the truth? Check it out ... against the Old Testament scriptures.

So ... people came to the truth ... converted ... begotten by God as His family ... heading to Eternal Life in God's family ... all based on what they could see from the OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

No gospels as yet. No letters to the Romans or Corinthians or Galatians.

### **Acts 28:16 (NKJV)**

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.

### **Acts 28:20-31 (NKJV)**

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.

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, (Isaiah 6:9-10)**

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.

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.

No way under Heaven was the Old Testament discarded!

They were the only scriptures available. They were used to preach about Jesus ... the Resurrection ... the kingdom of God ... God's Eternal Plan.

A very large number of Old Testament passages are quoted in the New Testament. Scholars suggest that there are about 695 quotes. If passing references and allusions are included ... some count as high as 4,000 plus.

If Peter ... Paul ... James ... John ... Timothy ... hadn't come preaching from the Old Testament ... no one would have believed them!

**Romans 15:1-4 (NKJV)**

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 neighbour 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."** (Psa 69:9)

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 scriptures were given for us to give us hope)

#### **1 Corinthians 10:1-6 (NKJV)**

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 baptised 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.

#### **1 Corinthians 10:9-12 (NKJV)**

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.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

If we don't read them ... are not familiar with them ... it's too much effort ... THEN ... we won't learn the lessons that God has preserved for us.

Take the example of Stephen, the First Martyr.

**Acts 6:8 (NKJV)**

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

**Acts 7:51-60 (NKJV)**

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, 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 died a martyr/saint)**

A great man of God ... a powerful witness. He will be in The Kingdom ... yet he never saw a single piece of the New Testament.

Clearly you can be fully converted ... a powerful witness ... solely on the Old Testament ... though we have additional

understanding ... thanks to the New Testament. But ... the Old Testament is not 2<sup>nd</sup> class material ... of no value ... that has been overtaken by the "new ... improved"! The early New Testament Church only had the Old Testament! And ... did pretty well with it I can say!

### **2 Timothy 3:10-12 (NKJV)**

10 **But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,**

**11 persecutions, afflictions**, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.** *(Written probably about 67 AD ... into the final 12 months of Paul's life)*

### **2 Timothy 3:13-15 (NKJV)**

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.** *(Holy Scriptures ... from childhood ... "to Salvation")*

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)**

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.**

I would suggest that if we don't read/learn the Old Testament ... we can't be complete ... or mature? There will be gaps in our understanding and practice. It may not be wise unto salvation?

### **2 Peter 1:19-21 (NKJV)**

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.**

Holy men weren't just writing down their weird ideas ... and we can "take it or leave it". God moved them ... they're His Words.

In some ways ... reference to an "Old Testament " is a bit unhelpful. The first time "New Testament" appeared was around 200 AD ... long after the apostles and disciples had gone to their graves. A theologian from North Africa ... named Tertullian ... seems to have coined the phrase.

Terms like "Old Testament" and "New Testament" imply a great change. Who wants something "old" when you can have something "new"? Who wants an old car ... old cooker ... old suit ... old computer ... WHEN ... you can have a new version?

In reality ... the Bible is one Book. One Author. It all fits together. All valuable. All necessary. We can learn from all of it. Some describe the New Testament as a commentary on the Old Testament ... but ... the former writings are the absolute foundation. The New Testament makes little sense without it.

ALL OF IT IS SCRIPTURE. ALL OF IT IS GOD'S WORD.

The Bible itself doesn't use the term "Old Testament" ... other than a mistranslation in the KJV and NKJV ... which we will look at quickly.

### **2 Corinthians 3:5-8 (NKJV)**

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

6 who also **made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant**, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,

8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

### **2 Corinthians 3:12-16 (NKJV)**

12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—

13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

14 But their minds were blinded. **For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.** (Greek: *Diatheke* = covenant ... NASB, NIV, RSV, NET, AMP)

15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

We probably have to use the term "Old Testament" in conversation as it's universal and familiar? But try to avoid thinking of it as "old" or "out-of-date" or "not relevant". It is living ... the Word of God that we have to live by.

### **1 Peter 1:22-25 (NKJV)**

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 (quoting Isaiah 40)

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

Genesis to Malachi was the only word that Peter could really refer to? It endures or abides FOREVER.

**Matthew 5:17-19 (NKJV)**

7 **Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. (The Old Testament) I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.**

18 **For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.**

19 **Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

There is plenty yet to be fulfilled (all prophecies about Jesus' Second Coming ... for instance). Not one jot or tittle of the Old Testament will pass away.

So we need to be careful not to dismiss the Old Testament (former writings) as irrelevant ... choose to ignore them whilst concentrating on the New Testament.

The Old Testament was given by God for our benefit. If it's a little harder to understand ... and we need to put a little more effort into it! So be it!

If we avoid it ... remain largely ignorant ... then we will have serious gaps in our understanding ... with potential consequences.

Summary: it's one book whether some parts seem more awkward or not.

As a bridge to next week ... I will read an article.

### **WEST WING Episode 25 (Oct 2000)**

The atmosphere was electric. The president of the United States was about to address a gathering of radio talk show hosts in the White House. As the president entered the hall, they all stood and applauded. All, that is, except one — a woman with strikingly blond hair, wearing a bright green suit. At first, her presence rattled the president. He lost his train of thought several times before he finally spoke directly to the sitting talk show host.

"Excuse me, doctor," the president said to her. "It's good to have you here. Are you an M.D.?"

"A Ph.D.," she retorted smartly.

"In psychology?" he pursued.

"No, sir," she said.

"Theology?"

"No."

"Social work?"

"I have a Ph.D. in English literature," she replied.

"I'm asking," continued the president, "because on your show people call in for advice and you go by the title 'doctor,' and I didn't know if maybe your listeners were confused by that and assumed you had advanced training in psychology, theology, or health care."

"I don't believe they are confused. No, sir," she responded.

"Good," said the president, raising his voice sarcastically. "I like your show. I like how you call homosexuality an abomination."

"I don't say homosexuality is an abomination, Mr. President," she replied haughtily. "The Bible does."

"Yes, it does!" he shouted. "Leviticus 18:22." The president was just warming up. "I wanted to ask you a couple of questions while I had you here. I'm interested in selling my

youngest daughter into slavery as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. She's a Georgetown sophomore, speaks fluent Italian, always cleared the table when it was her turn. What would a good price for her be?"

After a brief moment, he continued: "While thinking about that, can I ask another? My chief of staff, Leo McGarry, insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly says he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself or is it OK to call the police?"

Now on a roll, the president steamed on triumphantly. "Here's one that's really important, 'cause we've got a lot of sports fans in this town. Touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean, Leviticus 11:7. If they promise to wear gloves, can the Washington Redskins still play football? Can Notre Dame? Can West Point?"

"Does the whole town really have to be together to stone my brother John for planting different crops side by side? Can I burn my mother in a small family gathering for wearing garments made from two different threads?"

"Think about those questions, would you? One last thing; in this building when the president stands, nobody sits."

The president paused to catch his breath. The silence that invaded the room was deafening. The once self-assured talk show host slowly rose to her feet, her face reddened with shame. Her quick come-backs and commanding presence wilted away. She had no response. The president of the United States had left her speechless.

The very Bible that she had used to beat up on homosexuals had now beaten her into submissive silence.

*Imagine the humiliation you would feel if you were standing in her shoes. What would you — what could you — have said? Had the president of the United States really demonstrated*

*that the Bible was out of date and absurd? Should it indeed be relegated to the scrap heap of history? Do the very Scriptures that condemn homosexuality commend slavery? Should football be outlawed because touching pigskin makes one "unclean"? Should we kill those who work on the Sabbath as prescribed by Scripture? Should we stone men for planting different crops side by side or burn women for wearing clothing made of two different threads?*

*The impact of this encounter between Dr. Jenna Jacobs and President Josiah Bartlet can hardly be overstated.*

*More than 11 million homes tuned in to watch the drama unfold as NBC's Emmy award winning *The West Wing* used Dr. Jacobs to caricature Dr. Laura Schlessinger as a rude and bigoted religious talk show host.*

*Millions of Christians, no doubt, wavered in their faith.*

*They wondered whether the Bible they had put their trust in had been exposed as antiquated and absurd.*