

Moses, the Prophets – and ME?

Q: *What's old and obsolete and worn out, but not worthless?*

A: *The 39 books of our Old Testament!*

The Old Testament (or covenant, which is what we mean by the word “testament”) was ratified at Mt. Sinai and was in force for some 1400 years of sacred history. Otherwise known as “the Law,” it is basically the relationship between God and His people which obtained from the days of Moses until the days of Jesus.

The body of sacred literature which Christians refer to as *the Old Testament* records the period from creation all the way to Jesus—a period much longer than the time when the *old (Mosaic) covenant* was actually in force. (That is, the 39 books of the Old Testament cover at least 4000 years, whereas the Mosaic covenant was in force for only the last 1400 years of those four millennia.) According to Hebrews, that Old Testament became old as a result of Jesus’ ministry. That is, when our Lord offered us the long awaited *new covenant* through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, the old covenant became “obsolete and . . . ready to vanish away” (8:13). This is what Jesus meant when He stated in His *Sermon on the Mount*, “Do not think that I have come to abolish (NKJV: “destroy”) the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them” (Mt. 5:13).

We can praise God that we live on this side of the cross and the empty tomb, that we have become the happy inheritors of the *New Covenant* (or Testament) in Jesus’ blood, that we no longer live under the Law, but under grace. Indeed, we do have a *better* hope (Heb. 7:19), a *better* covenant (7:22) based on a *better* sacrifice (9:23), and that we long for a “*better* country—a heavenly one” (11:16).

But does this mean that there is no value in those 39 books for the New Testament Christian? Again, are we relieved of our obligation to know and cherish that portion of God’s Word? *Perish the reprehensible thought!* (Oops! Forgive me, but I get rather worked up over the issue.)

Why, then, is it important to the New Testament believer to study and to cherish the Old Testament? Let me suggest four basic propositions in defense of that mandate:

Reason #1: The Old Testament is Scripture, and God demands that believers study *all* of the Scriptures.

Indeed, the best and only infallible interpreter of Scripture is Scripture. Thus, it is essential that the believer be able to understand any passage of Scripture in terms of what Scripture as a whole teaches. In order to do that, the believer has to know the Scripture as a whole.

Reason #2: Though New Testament writers wrote in Greek, they *thought* in Hebrew.

That is, the minds of the New Testament writers were saturated with Old Testament thoughts, figures, stories, and emphases. They framed their thoughts in terms of both the literary structures and the concepts of the Old Testament. Thus, the believer who wants to understand the New Testament must saturate his own mind with the Older Testament.

Reason #3: Wherever you are in the Bible, God expects you to bring with you *everything He said before*.

This is the concept known in Biblical Hermeneutics as *progressive revelation*. God did not reveal all truth at once; rather, there have been seasons of revelatory activity in history. With each season of revelation, the store of truth which God has made known to men has grown. The progress is never from error to truth; God does not reveal something as truth, and then later change His mind and say something contrary to what He had said earlier. Rather, revelation progresses from truth to *greater* truth; God often makes a truth known in seed form, and then with time expands on that truth so that it becomes ever more compelling and precious.

Reason #4: The remarkable privileges you possess as a New Testament believer are intended to be enjoyed in the bright light of what God taught concerning Himself in the Old Testament.

It is my persuasion that the distinction between the experience of the Old Testament believer the New Testament believer can be reduced to one concept: *intimacy!* This is Paul’s *Abba* principle (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). The godliest Old Testament saint could not imagine coming boldly before the throne of God’s glory, but we are invited to do just that. However, it is all too easy to forget the nature of the God with whom we have been invited to enjoy such intimacy. There is no better corrective for such carelessness than a soul/spirit saturated with the Old Testament.

The Narrative of the Old Testament on One Page

Biblical Record		Time Span	An Outline of the Biblical Narrative		Other Scripture Written During this Period		
Genesis 1-11			I. GOD AND _____ [1]				
		1-3	From Creation (ca 4000 BC) to the call of Abraham (2091 BC)	A. The Creation and Fall of Mankind			
		4-9		B. Destruction by the Flood in the Days of Noah			
		10-11		C. Tower of Babel; the Earth is Populated			
Genesis 12 through Nehemiah 13	Gen 12 – Gen 50		II. GOD & _____ [2]		Job		
			A. The _____ of Abraham [3]				
		Gen 12-36	2091 – 1876 BC - to Jacob's descent into Egypt	1. Out of Ur to Canaan			
		Gen 37-50		2. Down to Egypt			
			B. The _____ of Israel [4]				
			1. Israel under _____ [5]				
		Exodus - Deuteronomy	1876 – 1406 - to the death of Moses	a. Exodus/Wilderness Wanderings			
		Joshua	1406 – ca 1350 BC - to death of Joshua's generation	b. The Conquest & Division of the Land of Canaan			
		Judges 1 – 1 Samuel 12	Ca 1350 BC – 1041 BC -to coronation of King Saul	c. The Period of the Judges			
				d. The Period of the Monarchy			
		Exodus 1 through 2 Kgs 24	1 Sam 12 – 1 Kgs 11	1041 – 971 BC - to death of Solomon		(1) The United Monarchy	Psalms (most), Song of Solomon, Proverbs (most), Ecclesiastes
			1 Kgs 12 – 2 Kgs 17	971 – 722 BC -to fall of Northern Kingdom (Israel)		(2) The Divided Monarchy	Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah/Lam, Habakkuk
			2 Kings 18 - 24	722 – 586 BC - to fall of Southern Kingdom (Judah)		(3) The Surviving Monarchy	
				2. Israel under _____ [6]			
		Ezra 1 through Neh 13	No biblical record	606 – 536 BC - to Cyrus' decree/Jews' return		a. Exile in Babylon for 70 years	Daniel, Ezekiel, 1,2 Chronicles
				b. Restoration to Jerusalem/Israel			
	Ezra 1-6		536 – 516 BC - to completion of 2 nd temple	(1) Return under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple		Haggai, Zechariah	
	Ezra 7-12		458 – ca 414 BC	(2) Return under Ezra to reform worship		Esther	
		Neh 1-13	444 – ca 414 BC	(3) Return under Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem		Malachi	