

## Old Testament: thoughts for March seminar

Not a workshop on “how to teach the OT”. Rather, to stir up a love for the OT in your minds. Aim: to have someone say, “I really need to go home and start reading the OT”.

### Pre-quiz:

1. Have you read the book of Nehemiah in the past five years?
2. In what book and chapter of the Bible would you find God’s call to Abraham?
3. T.or F. The OT was written for the Jews, the N.T. for Christians.
4. In which O.T. book will you find the command “Fear God and keep his commandments  
for this is the whole duty of man?”
5. What OT book (or books) tells us a lot about future times?
6. T or F – the Holy Spirit was not given until the N.T.?
7. Name two things the Israelites complained about during their wanderings in the wilderness.
8. Have all the OT prophecies already been fulfilled?
9. The hymn “There is a fountain filled with blood” was based on a verse in which OT book?
10. The verse, “the just shall live by faith” is often quoted in the NT but it originates in an OT book. Where?

\* OT is ignored even by PCA churches and other Bible-teaching churches. How many have heard a series of messages from the OT in the past year?

## **Why do people avoid the O.T.?**

### Reasons;

1) \* Stress now is on grace, not works. The Gospel is all about grace. Eph. 2:9,10 – “*By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; not of works lest any man should boast.*”

\*. We are “the NT church”, NT Christians, living under grace not law, etc. and many Christians believe we are people of the NT therefore the OT doesn’t apply to us. The OT is all about law-keeping and we are not saved by keeping the law. **But...**

\* Matthew 5:17 Jesus Himself said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” The law **DOES** apply to us. We are not saved by law-keeping, but the law is still our standard, fulfilled in Christ, but nevertheless valid. We are by no means to ignore it.

2) \* Many people think of it as boring. Instead – many relevant, even thrilling passages!

3) \* Many people think of it as all finished, past, all wrapped up. Instead as relevant as this week's news. In fact -- there are many prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled. Or many that may have been immediately fulfilled but have a greater fulfillment yet to come. Not by any means closed and finished. It is still waiting completion.

4) \* Think they can't understand it. Get a better translation or version. Use commentaries. (More to come).

5) People say "We need to follow Christ. Learn about Him, His life etc. Not the O.T"

## **Why should we study the OT?**

One shocking fact --

**(FACT: Jesus never read the NT.)**

- **Jesus used the OT exclusively!!** Jesus told people that the Scriptures -- meaning the OT law and prophets "testified of Him". ( John 5:38,39). He expected them to know them. He was often disappointed when He found Jewish teachers and leaders who didn't know the OT Scriptures. Luke 24:25 and 27. "He criticized them for not believing "all that the prophets have spoken". And vs. 27 "he taught them things concerning Himself." Jesus said the OT teaches about me. **Jesus was a fan of the Old Testament!**

- **it's the beginning of the story.** Like reading a mystery and finding the perpetrator and the verdict before you even know what the crime was. Can't understand the end of the story until you know the beginning. **The OT is the basis for the New** I often skip prologues and end notes when I read. I go straight to the story. *The OT's not just prologue. The OT is not just introductory notes which you might find helpful in understanding the REAL book. The OT is half the book!*

- **Covenants:** We must not think of The O.T. as the "covenant of works" in contrast to the NT "covenant of grace." No

Basic definition of religion itself is communion with God. Man with God. So God had to reveal himself to man so they could know Him and live in fellowship with Him. Even before the Fall, when Adam and Eve were living without sin, in the Garden, there was revelation. Not written--It was what we might call "special revelation" -- it was face-to-face revelation, face-to-face communication with them. Walking in the Garden together in the evening etc. God was revealing Himself and His heart to His creatures. This "Preredemptive Special Revelation: is commonly given the name of Covenant of Works." This is what was in force in the Garden of Eden.

But man did not keep the covenant of works. He sinned. So the O.T. from Gen.3 onward forms the first of the two divisions of the covenant of grace. **The OT is that period of the covenant of grace which precedes the coming of the Messiah, the NT that period of the covenant of grace which has followed His appearance and under which we still live.** So we study the OT because it is the first part of the covenant of grace.

- **God introduces Himself** to man first in the O.T. **Don't miss His introduction!** No one knows as much about a person as the individual himself. Get His own introduction of Himself. He tells us about Himself there as a God of mercy, compassion, longsuffering, etc. – that is the OT God, not just the Jesus of the Gospels!

- **They hold so many surprises!** a) how relevant they are to today b) how many of the familiar sayings in the NT actually are found in the OT first c) how many of the familiar hymns of the ages we find rooted in the OT

**So what should we do with it?** Especially for teachers.

1. In light of the popular and excellent series many of us are studying written by Nancy Guthrie – seeing Christ in the O.T.: Don't read the OT or teach the OT **only** to see what it foretells about Christ. It is full of types and symbolism and pictures of our Lord. But it is **not only** that! Remember that it was written to ordinary, real people of that day. It said something to **them**. We should read it as if we were the people to whom it was written. What was it saying to them? If I were one of the Jews returning home after 70 years in exile, what would my priorities be? What would the book of Haggai say to me? Or if I were facing deportation by an incoming enemy, what would the words of Habakkuk mean to me? Because – guess what – I also often put my priorities ahead of God's and need to hear Him say, "Give careful thought to your ways." I am also facing disastrous days ahead, days when the fig tree shall not blossom...

And It was about them. Scripture tells us their stories were recorded FOR US so we would benefit from their lessons. Take warning from their sins, be encouraged by their faithfulness etc. There is meaning in the histories and stories themselves, quite apart from what they prophesy about Christ. SO..

What is the immediate message of the passage. Look at it for its own sake – not just for its pictures of Christ.

**2. Read it.** First read it through yourself.

3. Context. For any book (or section ) you are going to teach: read it; read the history and historical setting of the book (usually in good study Bibles); read through it quickly to get the main point of the book or chapter. What is the message it's trying to convey?

4. Start **writing down** points that become clear to you.

5. Then **read others'** commentaries on the section.

6. Decide how much you can include in your **time allowance**. How detailed can you get? How much will you have to stick with the "big picture"?

7. **Arrange** those points in some kind of order – chronological, power (least to greatest); titles or alphabetical or alliterative etc.

8. Try to find its **application** to today or future. For e.g. Are today's world events clearly echoing the Scriptural situation in this passage; or are there clear teaching here on future events; hearts of people same then as now; warnings that we can apply to ourselves; encouragement for us because God is the same. **NOTE: Word of warning here. Not all lessons apply to everyone! Don't tack on application at end! We cannot apply a lesson. That's the H.S. job.**

9. Remember God is the same now as the God we read about in Exodus or Ezra or Zechariah. He hasn't changed ("I am the Lord, I change not".) Apply that.

Suggested Helps:

Commentaries: W.W. Wiersbe, (two volumes, OT and NT),  
Matthew Henry – one large complete volume. Old but very good. Devotional.  
Martin Lloyd-Jones;  
Philip Graham Ryken – especially on Exodus;  
Crossway Classic Commentaries: some by Calvin, Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer, editors;  
J. Vernon McGee – individual books – sermons he preached

Other:

Halley's Bible Handbook – revised editions. Good for historical data, summaries, archeological insights, etc.  
Study Bible in your favorite version. Thompson Chain Reference Bible (in KJV). NIV Study Bible etc. ESV-popular in the PCA  
Baker Illustrated Bible – 1 Volume  
Baker Bible Atlas  
NIV Application Commentary – single books.