

Using the Old Testament

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Bible Matters sources)

Introduction:

- A. The Old Testament is an essential part of the Bible and is important to knowing God and His eternal will and glory
- B. How do we go about reading and using it?
 - 1. Is it similar to how we would read and use the New Testament?
 - 2. What differences are there that we should keep in mind?
- C. There are four levels of understanding and use for the Old Testament
 - 1. Direct messages to immediate audiences
 - 2. Prophetic messages for future Israelites
 - 3. Prophetic messages regarding the Messiah and Kingdom
 - 4. Counsel, admonition, and applications for Christians

I. DIRECT MESSAGES TO IMMEDIATE AUDIENCES

- A. When we read a passage in the Old Testament, we must first determine who is addressed
 - 1. Ex. 20 - The immediate audience of the Ten Commandments are the Israelites in the wilderness
 - 2. Isaiah wrote directly to Israelites of the 8th to 6th centuries
- B. Part of understanding the text is knowing the current covenant
 - 1. The Old Testament covenant periods
 - 2. Genesis - Exodus 20, for instance, records information about events during the covenant with Adam, Noah, and Abraham
 - 3. Judah and Tamar - Gen. 38 - We cannot hold Judah accountable to the Law of Moses or the Law of Christ
 - 4. They lived under the Noahide Law during the Patriarchal dispensation
- C. What God commanded or permitted under each dispensation must be understood to apply to that context only and cannot be used to authorize the same practice in any other dispensation, unless the principle is repeated

II. PROPHETIC MESSAGES FOR FUTURE ISRAELITES

- A. Is the message designed for Israelites in their current state or is it given to prepare them for future events
- B. Example: the Sabbath
 - 1. In Genesis 2:2-3, God rested from His creation on the seventh day
 - 2. The first level of interpretation indicates that the author is simply explaining that there was nothing created the seventh day, and God rested for the whole day; nothing more is meant at that time for that generation
 - 3. In Exodus 20:9-11, this concept is applied to the Israelites, establishing the seventh day rest for the Israelites
 - 4. The prophetic use of Genesis 2:2-3 is that later Israelites were told the text speaks to the reason for Sabbath observance. However, the word of God will make it clear when prophetic use is in order

- C. Why not just have Genesis 2:2-3 refer to the Sabbath observance directly?
 - 1. Hebrews 4:1-11 also presents an application of Genesis 2:2-3, this time showing how the Sabbath rest of the Israelites was the shadow of the true Sabbath rest of Heaven
 - 2. The event has different applications for Israelites and Christians; therefore, the Israelite application is not to be considered the exclusive understanding of the text
- D. At other times, seeing the application of a text in other dispensations may help us understand how we apply or use the text in our dispensation

III. PROPHETIC MESSAGES REGARDING THE MESSIAH AND KINGDOM

- A. Do the OT texts make references to Christ or the Kingdom?
- B. Luke 24:27; Acts 17:2-3, 18:28; Rom. 1:2-5
- C. Acts 8:27-35 - Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch from Isaiah 53
- D. Types refer to shadow/substance - Col. 2:17
 - 1. 1Cor. 10:4 - the Rock as Christ
 - 2. Moses was a type of Christ - Deut. 18:15-19
- F. Prophecies represent a prophet's foretelling the circumstances of Jesus' life
 - 1. Born of a virgin - Isa. 7:14
 - 2. Born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2
 - 3. To suffer and die - Isa. 53; Psalm 22
 - 4. To be raised on the third day - Jonah 1:17; Hosea 6:2
- G. Gal. 3:19-25

IV. COUNSEL, ADMONITION, AND APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

- A. What can we gain from the OT in terms of our own faith?
- B. The Old Testament is not a source of covenantal doctrine for the Christian dispensation
 - 1. Eph. 2:11-16; Col. 2:14-17
 - 2. No Christian living today has ever been under the authority of any OT covenant; no OT covenant is binding on anyone today
 - 3. Some who hear this think the Old Testament has no purpose
- C. There are many uses for the Old Testament
 - 1. The Old Testament is designed to give us instruction
 - a. Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 10:1-11
 - 2. The Old Testament is full of instruction about the nature of God, serves to illustrate many of the commands in the New Testament, and teaches volumes of wisdom
 - 3. Warning about making small changes to God's will? Consider Jeroboam the son of Nebat - 1Kings 12
 - 4. Warning about not fully reforming? Consider Jehu - 2Kings 9-11
 - 5. Hebrews 11 offers examples of faith that can build us up and move us
 - 6. The Old Testament is profitable to reinforce New Testament doctrine
 - 2Tim. 3:15-17
 - a. 1Cor. 9:6-9 - Paul uses the OT to reinforce his right to be paid to preach the Gospel

b. 1Cor. 14:34 - Refers to the Law to teach that women are to be silent in the church

c. 1Tim. 2:11-15 - Paul refers to Noahide Law to teach about women's subjection

D. The OT is essential to our understanding and teaching. For this reason, it is imperative that we read and study it