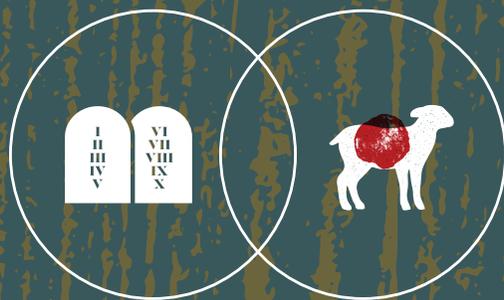


PROCLAIMING
CHRIST
from HIS
BIBLE



by JASON S. DEROUCHIE

**THE ONLY BIBLE JESUS
HAD WAS WHAT WE CALL
THE OLD TESTAMENT,
AND HE SAID THAT IT
WAS ABOUT HIM.**

Not only did he highlight that the Scriptures bore witness about him (Jn 5:39), that Abraham saw his day and was glad (8:56), that Moses wrote of him (5:46), that prophets, righteous people, and kings longed for his coming (Mt 13:17; Lk 10:24), and that everything the Old Testament said concerning him would be fulfilled (Lk 24:27, 44), he also stressed that to “understand the Scriptures” is to arrive at a message related to the Messiah and the global mission he would generate (Lk 24:45–47; cf. Acts 1:3, 8).

Paul, too, saw in his Bible a message of kingdom hope that focused on Christ and the church he would create made up of Jews and Gentiles as one people of God (Acts 26:22–23; cf. Gal 3:28–29; Eph 2:13–16). Paul was an Old Testament preacher, yet to the Corinthian church he proclaimed, “I decided to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). How many Old Testament preachers preach like that? May God raise up more in this day!

Peter tells us that those Old Testament saints who prophesied about the gracious salvation we enjoy were searching and inquiring to know who the Christ would be and when he would come (1 Pt 1:10–11). Where were they searching and inquiring? At the very least, it was their Scriptures!

I briefly offer here five ways that we can faithfully proclaim Christ from his Bible. Seeing

and savoring Jesus in the Old Testament is not a uniform task. Because Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in various ways (Mt 5:17; Lk 24:44), the interpreter must take care in following the signals God supplies us in his inerrant and unified Word so as to properly magnify the Messiah. But if we are willing to dig for gold and not just rake leaves, we will find treasures!

1 PROCLAIM CHRIST THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT'S DIRECT MESSIANIC PREDICTIONS.

Peter stressed “what God foretold by the mouth of *all* the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:18). Every one of the prophets from Moses onward anticipated the Messiah’s work and mission (3:22–24; 10:43). The Old Testament is loaded with explicit and implicit predictions. “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5). These words portray a servant of God who would suffer as a substitute for many, and Peter, writing about the Christ, saw this text fulfilled in the person of Jesus: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed” (1 Pt 2:24). At times, the element of prediction-fulfillment is even more pronounced, as when Micah 5:2 foretells that the royal deliverer would be born in Bethlehem, and then Matthew 2:6 explicitly asserts that it happened just as the prophet wrote. Christ fulfills the Old Testament as the specific focus or goal of direct Old Testament Messianic predictions and redemptive-historical hopes.

2 PROCLAIM CHRIST THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT'S SALVATION-HISTORICAL STORY AND TRAJECTORIES.

The Old Testament does a great job creating problems for which Jesus is the solution. Both the Old and New Testaments are framed by the narrative of redemption—a historical plot designed to magnify that God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ. The entire storyline progresses from creation to the fall to redemption to consummation and highlights the work of Jesus as the decisive turning point in salvation-history. “The Law and the Prophets were until John [the Baptist]; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached” (Lk 16:16). “The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian” (Gal 3:24–26).

The plotline of the Bible is guided by five major salvation-historical covenants, each of which finds its terminus in Christ, and the first four of which are named after the covenant head or mediator (Adamic-Noahic → Abrahamic → Mosaic → Davidic → new). We also see that various themes develop or progress as God gradually reveals more of himself and his ways through biblical revelation. Some of the main ones would include covenant, God’s kingdom, law, the temple and God’s presence, atonement, and mission, all of which find focus in Jesus. Christ fulfills all of the Old Testament’s salvation-historical trajectories.

3 PROCLAIM CHRIST BY HIGHLIGHTING HOW THE OLD AND NEW AGES, CREATIONS, AND COVENANTS ARE SIMILAR YET DISTINCT.

The progress of the biblical covenants and the history of redemption display numerous points of similarity and contrast, many of which are centered on the person of the divine Son. For example, whereas Adam disobeyed and brought death to all, Christ obeys and brings life to many (Rom 5:18–19). Whereas God used the blood of

bulls and goats to picture atonement in the old covenant, Christ’s own substitutionary sacrifice provides the ground for eternal redemption (Heb 9:11–14). Whereas access to YHWH’s presence in the temple was restricted to the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Christ’s priestly work opens the way for all in him to enjoy God’s presence (Heb 9:24–26; 10:19–22). Whereas the nations needed to come to the tabernacle/temple to encounter the Lord’s presence in the old covenant, the Spirit of Christ now empowers the church in its witness to the nations from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Mt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). The work of Jesus creates both continuities and discontinuities.

We can celebrate his work more by identifying the patterns and transformations.

“CHRIST FULFILLS ALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT’S SALVATION-HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES.”

4 PROCLAIM CHRIST BY NOTING HOW OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS, EVENTS, AND INSTITUTIONS CLARIFY AND ANTICIPATE HIS PERSON AND WORK.

The author of Hebrews said the Old Testament law was “a shadow of good things to come” (Heb 10:1). Similarly, Paul asserted that clean and unclean food laws, the various Jewish festivals and monthly sacrificial calendar, and even the Sabbath were each “a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col 2:16–17). In the New Testament, these anticipations and pointers are called “types” or “examples” that in turn find their counter or fulfillment in Jesus as their ultimate realization. God structured the progressive development of salvation-history in such a way that certain Old Testament characters (e.g., Adam, Melchizedek, Moses, David), events (e.g., the flood, the exodus, the return to the land), and institutions (e.g., the Passover lamb, the temple, the priesthood) bear meanings that color and predictively anticipate the life and work of Jesus Messiah.

5 PROCLAIM CHRIST WHEN YOU REVEL IN YAHWEH’S IDENTITY AND ACTIVITY.

You will recall Jesus said that “no one has ever seen God” the Father except the Son (Jn 1:18; 6:46), but that “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). What this means is that when YHWH becomes embodied in a human form in the Old Testament, we are most likely meeting the pre-incarnate Son. We see him in the stories of Abraham’s third guest (Gn 18), Jacob’s wrestling opponent (Gn 32:24–30), Joshua’s “commander of the army of YHWH” (Joshua 5:13–15), Ezekiel’s exalted king (Ez 1:26), Daniel’s “son of man” (Dn 7:13–14), and the numerous manifestations of the “angel/messenger of YHWH” (e.g., Gn 16:7–13; 22:11–18; Ex 3:2; Nm 20:16; 22:22–35). With this, when we hear Yahweh speaking or acting as the object of people’s faith in the Old Testament, we are seeing the very one who would embody himself in the person of Jesus. The Word who was “in the beginning with God” “was God” (Jn 1:1–2). The very Son who would be named Jesus “was in the form of God” (Phil 2:6), was the very “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:16), and was “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb 1:3). Thus, the author of Hebrews could attribute Moses’s reproach for *God’s* sake as a reproach endured for *Christ* (Heb 11:26). This is also why Jude could identify Israel’s deliverer at the exodus as *Jesus* (Jude 5). When we meet Yahweh in the Old Testament, we are catching glimpses of the divine Son.

CONCLUSION

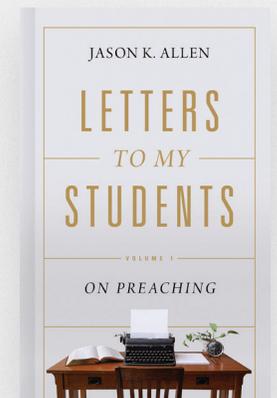
There are still more ways I believe we can faithfully proclaim Christ from the Old Testament (see the link below). But I offer these five for the church to better engage the initial three-fourths of our Christian Bible for the glory of Jesus. I urge you to “preach the Word” (2 Tm 4:2) and to do so like Paul, who, as an Old Testament expositor, could say, “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23). **M**

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