

Jesus and His Bible - TWR 65

Some weeks ago I heard of someone entrusted with a regular preaching ministry who takes the line, "Oh, I don't bother with the Old Testament!". This preacher evidently serves up only the New Testament to his congregation, presumably believing that that is all they really need.

Such an approach is by no means uncommon in the Church today, but is in fact a very old error. It springs from the idea that because Jesus is at the very heart of the Christian Faith, to spend time in the pre-Jesus era of the Scriptures has to be a waste of time.

But the errors of that approach are obvious. How ever can we begin to understand who Jesus is and why He has come to this earth, unless we have a good understanding of all that happened before He came?

What is more, if we choose to neglect the Old Testament, the process will become self-fulfilling, with a progressive downgrading of the Old Testament itself. Such a process has been encouraged by the rise of so-called "Higher Criticism" of the biblical text over the past 200 years, which has frequently given the impression, (a false impression it must be said), that the whole text is unreliable anyway. Add to this the baleful influence of Darwinian evolutionism, with its lofty rejection of early Genesis, and the setting-aside of the Old Testament by "thinking people" becomes the acceptable norm.

But what folly! When we stop to think about it, is such an unbalanced understanding of God's Word likely to make us stronger Christians, more effective "faithful sheep" of Christ's flock in today's increasingly chaotic and challenging world? I don't think so!

We have only to look to the Lord's example concerning His own Bible - what is for us now the Old Testament - to "get the message". The Lord knew His Bible intimately, and of course recognised His own presence within its every page - remember for example that walk to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-32), involving the finest Bible study there has ever been!

By way of encouragement, for us always to treasure the Old Testament as well as the New, here are some examples of the Lord's own references to Old Testament people and places for you to follow up should you wish -

Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 - the creation of Adam and Eve - Mark 10.6-8

Genesis 4.1 - the murder of Abel - Luke 11.51

Genesis 6 - corruption in Noah's day, and the Flood - Luke 17.26

Genesis 18.20 / 19.21 - the corruption of Lot's day, and the fire - Luke 17.28-29

Genesis 19.26 - the worldiness of Lot's wife - Luke 17.32

Exodus 3 - Moses and the burning bush - Luke 20.37

Exodus 16 - Moses and heavenly manna - John 6.31

Numbers 21.8 - Moses and the brazen serpent - John 3.14

I Samuel 21.6 - David and the shewbread - Matthew 12.3-4

I Kings 10.1 - Solomon and the Queen of Sheba - Matthew 12.42

I Kings 17.1,9 - Elijah, the widow and the famine - Luke 4.25-26
II Kings 5 - Naaman and his leprosy - Luke 4.27
II Chronicles 24 - the murder of Zechariah - Luke 11.51
Daniel 9.27 / 11.31 / 12.11 - the abomination of desolation - Matthew 24.15
Jonah 1.17 - Jonah and the great fish - Matthew 12.40 / 16.4
Jonah 3 - the repentance of Nineveh - Matthew 12.41 / Luke 11.30.

Quite a list!

If the Lord studied those Scriptures so carefully, then so should we, all the more so because we can now understand them so much more fully in the light of Christ cast so brightly over them.

If the Lord believed those Scriptures so matter-of-factly, then so should we. He knows they are true. He was there and involved throughout all those events, from Creation, the Fall, the Flood, Babel - those massive foundational events underlying all God's dealings with this planet - right through to the end of Malachi. After all, "Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1.3).

Jesus believes and accepts the Old Testament as genuinely the Word of God, because He knows that what we are told in its pages is - true.

What is good enough for our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is surely good enough for us! Let us study, with care and prayer and gratitude, the New in the light of the Old, and the Old in the light of the New, that the whole of God's Word may indeed be "a lamp to our feet and a light to our path" (Psalm 119.105).

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