Should We Use the OLD TESTAMENT?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Jesus commanded: "Man shall live by every word of God." How can we prove that he included the Old Testament in that command?—that he meant all the Bible?

DID YOU ever observe people going to Sunday school or church on a Sunday morning?

And did you ever notice what a large portion of them—if they carry any Scriptures with them at all—have merely a New Testament?

A young man who had been a student in a Bible college for a couple of years once came to me and confessed: "I'm all mixed up—frustrated! After all my Bible study, I suddenly woke up to realize that I'm not *sure* that the Jesus of Nazareth, who lived 1,900 years ago, really *was* the CHRIST!

"I've heard you say over the air that we must PROVE all things—even what we have thought that we believed. Suddenly I woke up," he confessed, "to realize that *I* never actually PROVED that Jesus was the promised Messiah! That realization FLOORS me. I'm totally FRUSTRATED.

"Tell me," he said earnestly, "How can I prove it?—How can I KNOW? *How* can I BE SURE?"

Was This Your Experience, Too?

That young man had not studied the OLD Testament of his Bible very much. I opened his Bible to certain OLD Testament scriptures, and OUT OF THEM he found *positive, satisfying* PROOF that Jesus is the Messiah—the SAVIOR of the world! I'm going to show you now, a part of what I opened up to him in his Bible.

Many have gained the idea that Christians should never read the Old Testament at all. Many seem to believe THAT part of the Bible was DONE AWAY—that it was only for the Jewish people of long ago—that its message is DEAD today!

Let's Examine This Question!

Certainly the Church—the TRUE Church of God—is a NEW Testament Church! It certainly is not under the Old Testament but the New. But there's a great difference between the Old Covenant that set Israel up as a nation and those scriptures we call by the name "Old Testament."

The Old Covenant—meaning the agreement between God and Israel, made at Mt. Sinai—is replaced by the preaching of the *NEW!* But most certainly the NEW *Testament scriptures* show very plainly that those scriptures we call "The Old Testament" *are NOT done away,* for we read in I Peter 1:25, "the word of the Lord endureth for ever"!

Do you know that for approximately six years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the founding of the NEW Testament Church, that this New Testament Church had and used *ONLY* the Old Testament scriptures?

Christ preached the *Gospel of the Kingdom*—the same Gospel he commanded every minister to preach. Yet do you know he preached *altogether out of the Old Testament scriptures?*

Church Built on Old Testament Scriptures

I wonder if you fully realize that the Church was built upon the writings of the *Old Testament* PROPHETS, as well as on the APOSTLES? Notice Ephesians 2:19-20, "Now therefore ye . . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." No prophets in the New Testament were used to write scripture. The prophets who did write were the Old Testament prophets.

Notice Jesus' own example: While Jesus was sent from God as the Messenger of the New Covenant—yet he preached that message out of the Old Testament scriptures. He said, as recorded in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Yes, they testify of Christ. And do you also know that you could not prove Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God—your Savior and mine—without the Old Testament scriptures?

If we are definitely to establish

and PROVE, beyond doubt, that Jesus is the Messiah—the Savior—we must prove it by bringing him through the door of the Old Testament scriptures—the prophecies PROVING him to be the divine Son of the living God! For, as he said, THEY TESTIFY OF HIM!

Notice further what Jesus preached during his earthly ministry. John 5:46-47: "For had ye BELIEVED Moses, ye would have believed me: for HE WROTE OF ME. But if ye BELIEVE NOT HIS WRITINGS, how shall ye believe my words?"

Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament—the part that has often been referred to as "the Law." And Jesus said, "IF ye believe not his writings, HOW SHALL YE BELIEVE MY WORDS?"

And if we today cannot know and BELIEVE the things Moses wrote to be *true,* how can we believe Christ's words? They are as much a PART of Holy Scripture as those New Testament books *quoting* our Lord!

We Must Believe All the Prophets

Another time, AFTER his resurrection, we find this example of Jesus' preaching recorded in Luke 24:25: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to *believe* ALL that *the prophets* have spoken."

How did Philip of Bethsaida know that Jesus was the Christ? Read John 1:45, "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, *of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write,* Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

What ARE some of these Old Testament prophecies which PROVE that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, the MESSIAH?

First, Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Now, notice, a VIRGIN was to bear a son. The son was to be of a human VIRGIN, to have a human mother, but *not* a human father. And the name of this son, to be born as a baby, to grow up to manhood, was to be "IMMANUEL," which, when translated, means, "God *with us.*" And the fulfillment of that prophecy is recorded in the New Testament, in Matthew 1:20-23: "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy [Spirit]. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

And now, let's read right on. Matthew 2:1-4: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born."

Now *WHY?*—how would the chief priests and the scribes know where Christ should be born? *Because it was written in a prophecy of their scriptures.* Continue, verses 5-6:

"And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." Notice! This prophecy was quoted from Micah 5:2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

So the Old Testament scriptures added another detail—the MESSIAH who was to be the future RULER OF ISRAEL not only was to be born of a virgin—he was to be born and first appear in the little city of Bethlehem of Judaea.

But now let us see how the wonderful 53rd chapter of Isaiah foretold his FIRST coming.

Foretold in Old Testament

Here is what Isaiah 53:1-5, 8, 12 reads:

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. . . .

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

HERE we see it foretold that the Messiah was to be BORN, and to GROW UP from a child—that he was to be despised and rejected, NOT hailed as a mighty King and Deliverer! If those who 1,900 years ago had only known and understood the scriptures—and had their HEARTS been honest and their MINDS open—they would have recognized the Messiah and the Savior! But they were then following the religious traditions of THEIR time, just as nearly *all* the other churches are doing today. They did

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NOT understand their scriptures, just as Christendom does NOT understand the Bible today!

This wonderful 53rd chapter of Isaiah tells us the Messiah was to come in human flesh, to grow up, to bear our afflictions and *our sicknesses*. Yes, HE was to be WOUNDED and to suffer for our physical as well as spiritual transgressions, so that by his stripes—his BODY broken for us—*we* are to be *healed* when sick. *Many do not fully grasp that* truth, even today!

EACH ONE of the original apostles who preached Christ and the GOSPEL OF CHRIST—which is the GOSPEL Christ preached, the NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM—EVERY ONE of them whose preaching is recorded in the New Testament, preached Christ and the gospel out of the Old Testament scriptures!

Yes, *that is* the way the true faith once delivered was originally preached in all its purity and truth! And that is what *we* do today!

New Testament Proof

Notice how PETER used the Old Testament in preaching the gospel of CHRIST, when delivering the first inspired sermon the day the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH was really established: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:14-17).

After concluding Joel's prophecy of the coming of the *other* Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Peter continues in verse 25: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved."

Through the remainder of his sermon on that day of Pentecost, Peter continued to preach Christ from the Old Testament—and 3,000 were CONVERTED through Old Testament preaching that day!

Later, Philip was sent by the angel of the Lord to preach to the eunuch from Ethiopia, returning home in his chariot from Jerusalem. When Philip met him, the eunuch was reading from the Old Testament book of Isaiah: "And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

> "Christ preached the Gospel of the Kingdom . . . altogether out of the Old Testament scriptures."

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:30-35).

And yet, some people today still say, "You can't do that—you can't preach CHRIST out of the Old Testament." But the Spirit-led PHILIP did it—JESUS himself did it—PETER did it—yes, ALL the first-century ministers of the true, original PURE Church of God did it. And we in God's true Church do it *today*!

Now consider Paul. How did he preach? In the very last chapter of Acts, we read of Paul, after he had gone to Rome: "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).

A very large portion of the New Testament is simply the Old Testament *quoted*. The New is BASED on the Old. The New Testament GOSPEL is based on the PROMISES God made to Abraham—for if we are Christ's, then we *are* Abraham's children and HEIRS according to the PROMISES (Gal. 3:29). Without the book of Genesis, how could you establish the PROMISES you hope to inherit THROUGH CHRIST?

Yes, your hope of ETERNAL LIFE rests upon the book of GENESIS!

Notice, too, the writings of Peter: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit]" (II Pet. 1:19-21).

And Paul's instruction to the New Testament Church in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

And how shall we have UNDERSTANDING of salvation? Paul wrote Timothy: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:15-17).

And so, let us say with DAVID: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). □