

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is a living history of the God relationship with a people he chose to be his own (the Jewish People). God chose to favor a people, enter their life and history and interact them. The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) is the interaction of God and his people: Historically, Legally, and Spiritually.

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“14. In carefully planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race the God of infinite love, by a special dispensation, chose for Himself a people to whom He would entrust His promises. First He entered into a covenant with Abraham (see Gen. 15:18) and, through Moses, with the people of Israel (see Ex. 24:8). To this people which He had acquired for Himself, He so manifested Himself through words and deeds as the one true and living God that Israel came to know by experience the ways of God with men. Then too, when God Himself spoke to them through the mouth of the prophets, Israel daily gained a deeper and clearer understanding of His ways and made them more widely known among the nations (see Ps. 21:29; 95:1-3; Is. 2:1-5; Jer. 3:17). The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. “For all that was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).”

HOW WE LEARN:

we experience something,
we reflect on the experience and
we draw conclusions from the experience.

“15. The principal purpose to which the plan of the old covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ, the redeemer of all and of the messianic kingdom, to announce this coming by prophecy (see Luke 24:44; John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:10), and to indicate its meaning through various types (see 1 Cor. 10:12). Now the books of the Old Testament, in accordance with the state of mankind before the time of salvation established by Christ, reveal to all men the knowledge of God and of man and the ways in which God, just and merciful, deals with men. These books, though they also contain some things which are incomplete and temporary, nevertheless show us true divine pedagogy. (1) These same books, then, give expression to a lively sense of God, contain a store of sublime teachings about God, sound wisdom about human life, and a wonderful treasury of prayers, and in them the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. Christians should receive them with reverence.”

The old testament points and is fulfilled with the New Testament. It is one continuous action and Jesus fulfills and completes what began in the Old Testament

“16. God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New. (2) For, though Christ established the new covenant in His blood (see Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), still the books of the Old

Testament with all their parts, caught up into the proclamation of the Gospel, (3) acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament (see Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27; Rom. 16:25-26; 2 Cor. 14:16) and in turn shed light on it and explain it.”

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS A HISTORY OF TWO WAY RELATIONSHIPS

The Hebrew people discovered who they were by
experiencing God in their lives
reflecting on their experiences
deciding what that relationship meant

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

- 1260 BC Exodus Experience
Era of Moses, Leading the promise land and Moses Death
Tribes and Government of Judges
 - 1000 BC David the Charismatic Warrior and King
Monarchy, Solomon, Temple
Divide Monarchy
Israel
Judah
 - 721 BC Israel
 - 586 BC Judah Conquered and Exiled
- Pre History
- Joseph in Egypt
 - Jacob, Joseph and his brothers
 - Jacob and Esau
 - Isaac & Rebecca
 - Abraham and Sarah Abraham and Hagar (Ishmael)
 - Noah
 - Adam and Eve (Garden and Fall)
 - Genesis (Creation)
- 539 BC Restoration King Cyrus of Persia
 - 490 BC Greek Occupation
 - 64 BC Roman Occupation
 - 0 AD Jesus

Biblical Forms

What form are the stories of the Old Testament and the Bible as a whole?

eg. Newspaper

Headlines, Opinion (Letters to the Editor), Graphs and Statistics, Cartoons

So How do we know what is true in the newspaper? How do we know what is true in the Scripture?

The one who knows is the writer—so the church tries to find the mind of the author

LITERARY GENRE OF THE BIBLE

There are different types of Literature in the Scriptures

Poetry, History, Pre-history, Apocalyptic, Gospels, Letters, Parables, etc.

Not all literature factual, yet it still has truth (myth)

Even Facts have a perspective (*History is written by the winner*)

Added to that, it is written in a different language and translated through several languages. Aramaic spoken language, Hebrew was the written language. Romans were the occupiers and spoke Roman, many educated people spoke Greek since they were the previous occupiers

It means that you can't pick up the bible and understand it without know the TYPE OF GENRE you are reading. That is why the Church says that THE CHURCH gets to interpret what the scriptures say. That is why in the front of each of the books of your bible, there is an explanation of the type of literature it is, who wrote it, and what were the circumstances in which it was written given by the scholars.

Also the scriptures have to be taken as a whole. You cannot understand the meaning of the Scriptures unless you see the New Testament as a fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures (OT). You can't just take a piece of scripture out of context and quote it—it might mean something else.

SO HOW DID WE GET TO THE POINT THAT SCRIPTURE NEEDED TO LOOKED AT IN A DIFFERENT WAY? Isn't IT God's Word? If it is God's word, then it must be true.

The Age of Enlightenment(Reason) was from 1637 to the 1800s. Reason was thought to be the guide for life rather than Church teaching. In the 1850s, archaeologists were digging up sacred sites and science was making strides in carbon dating. They (non believers) challenged the dates of the bible against the information of science. In brief, the Church and Science battled and eventually some protestants accepted that the bible was not always accurate. Evangelical Christians still believe the scriptures as literal or fundamental. Catholic scholars were not able to participate in the discussion until Pope Pius XII issued in 1943 *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. This gave them the power to research information with scientific methods.

Ultimately, it allowed us (Catholics) to understand that God's message was given to man and God allowed man to use man's skills in communicating the message. So God's Word comes through man's words. Man can be expressive in many ways, thus we need to know which form of literature that the author chose and what God is teaching.

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THE TEXT? We use critical methods to understand.

Types of Biblical Criticism various methods of scientific study that have their goal in establishing the text, understanding the content and literary style of the books, and determining their origin and authenticity.

Textual Criticism- seeks to establish the wording of the biblical text as the biblical authors wrote it. *Ras a ma taz, Groovy, dube, dude*

Literary Criticism- attends to the words and images, the characters and relationships, the structure and progress of thought, the literary form, and the meaning. What type of literature? What words are used?

Historical-Critical Method- uses literary criticism to find out about the origin and growth of the biblical documents. Where was it written? Was it added to?

Source Criticism- finds out where previously existing material has been used by a later author. *eg: Flood Story,*

Form Criticism- seeks to clarify literary devices and to isolate the historical settings in which the forms developed and functioned before they became part of the context. *eg: Nativity Story*

Redaction Criticism- deals with the ways biblical authors used sources, changed them to address the problems of their time. *eg: Creation Story*

Historical Criticism- the reality of an event behind the text rather than the meaning of the event. *eg: Jonah, Walls of Jericho*

The Book of Genesis is not a Science Book, it is a Religious Book! It is written around 450 BC. They were in Babylon, having reflected upon what just happened to them. They first blamed God for not keeping his Covenant, but came to reflect that they did not keep his Covenant. They are introduced to new science and stories and they are deeply interested in finishing their history, so they write the pre-history— less it be lost. They hear many stories of creation and floods, which we have today in Babylon literature. These stories preceded the bible story of creation. Yet, we know their Jewish theology (understanding of God and his actions) did not fit the stories they heard, so they rewrote them from their perspective.

After the Critical Biblical Method is used what did we learn from the Book of Genesis?

All creation comes from God. God created everything Good. When things aren't good, it is man who causes that "not good," not God. How did they learn that? Reflection! God has always been good to us through our entire history! So from the very beginning God created everything Good.

Obvious Issues for Biblical Critical Method: book put together by a committee, two creation stories, no female children of Adam and Eve, a snake is the tempter (by the way no apple), lived great lengths of age until sin, flood story similar to other flood stories, how was the Ark possible? God of OT was 'mean acting' God, Jesus God was a 'loving Father' (2 Gods), how did the Exodus happen with great numbers? We do not have definite answers, but pretty good guesses on 'why' it was told that way.

WHAT ARE WE TO BELIEVE ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT IN OUR LIVES?

God has always cared for us. He doesn't wish us harm. Sometimes we don't understand "God's Will" for us and to do so takes reflection. It was a long journey from the God of the Old Testament to the God of the New Testament. It is not God who has changed, it is us.



