



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

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God requires more than 2 hours a week. He requires 168 hours a week. A whole offering of yourself unto the Lord is sanctification.

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in the Old Testament (Part 2)

By
Steve M. Schlissel

Here is what I really need to know and I learned it all, well, you know where:

Lesson one: The Creation

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He created the world in the space of six days, and all very good. He rested on the seventh day and blessed that day, set it apart. And that became a pattern for all his people afterward. He created the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that is in them, and therefore he owns

everything and is Lord of all. This is the first lesson that everybody has to learn. If you don't get this lesson down, nothing else will make sense. This lesson is taught—guess where?—in the Old Testament. This is the foundational lesson of everything else that follows. That is why it is put on the first page. In the beginning, our God, the God who is defined there, the God who is revealed there, that God created the heavens and the earth. He is the owner. Everything has his stamp on it. To him belong all things. For his pleasure

they were and they are created. Yes, this theme of the first book is refrained in the last book, Revelation. One Book. One God, the Creator. That is my first Old Testament lesson.

Lesson two: The Consequences of Sin

In the Old Testament I learn of *sin and its consequences*. I learn that sin is any lack of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. Where do I learn this? In Genesis 3. I don't need to go to Ephesians 2 to learn this lesson, although it is helpful and

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expands my understanding of it. But the lesson is learned very early. God gave a command. Our first parents violated it; and that violation, that failure to live up to it, that transgressing of what he said not to do was sin, and sin brought death, and death was banishment from God. And I discover that it immediately required some radical solution that only God could provide. And here, right at the beginning, are the differences in all the religions of the world. There is the religion of man, in which he self-righteously and arrogantly proclaims that he by himself will make a way back to God, somehow or other, and that he will somehow be vindicated on his own, self-defined terms. Then there is the true religion, which is the one religion of the Bible, which says that man cannot justify himself, that in sin he only increases his debt, that he must be justified by God. That is humbling. It puts us in the position of a beggar seeking mercy. Thus I learn right here in Genesis 3 that sin has

terrible consequences, even separation from God.

Lesson three: The Antithesis

I learn also that henceforth, from the Garden, there are to be in this world two groups of people: the people over here, on this side of *the Antithesis*, who believe God and his word, and the people over there, the people of the world, the wicked who, though they may prosper, are going to go down because my God says they are going down. And so I must be among those people who believe the Word and obey it, even though we are not considered hip and cool. What matters is whether you are here abiding by the Word of God or you are over there abiding by the word of the world. Take your starting point with the Word of God: “In the beginning God. “All alternatives are wrong. They amount to “In the beginning” (something else beside the true God). Fill in the blank. It doesn’t matter with what: my job, my profession, my friends, my family, Ted Koppel. All these idols will go down. Only those who live in and by the Word of God will abide. This is an Old Testament lesson to all the people in the world.

Lesson four: The Cure for Sin

In the Old Testament I learn about *sin’s cure*. God promised that there would be One to come into the world who would crush the serpent’s head. He gave a picture of this One who would come into the world *right away* to my first parents by telling them that their own righteousness and covering were not adequate.

This is before Abraham, before Moses. This is even before Noah. This is as old as you can get. He said, “Your righteousness is not adequate. I will make coats of skin for you. I will cover you. I will justify you” (ABV). And he offered a blood sacrifice, for blood had to be shed, in order to provide a covering for our first parents. And so God himself made a covering for our parents. And therefore I learn that, **a)** there is a promised One, **b)** until he comes there will be various ways in which justification is spoken of, and **c)** Nevertheless, common to all administrations is this: it is always through blood, a blood substitute.

Thus, right away in Genesis 4, two worshipers come to God. One of them brings what he thinks is right—an offering without blood. The other one brings what God said was right, a blood offering. And God accepted the blood offering and rejected the one that was the product of man’s own vain imagination. Man is justified by a substitutionary death. And this is taught throughout the Scripture. It is taught in the offering system of Israel: come with a blood offering, a sin offering, before you come with anything else. It is taught in the holidays, with Passover beginning with the substitute lamb who is slaughtered and whose blood is put on the door post of the house. And because of that blood, God passes over. I learn this from the Old Testament. Before I get to the New Testament, I can see all this. It is very understandable that the apostles reasoned from the Scriptures and persuaded people that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. *Every Christian doctrine is in the Old Testament. There*

is no Christian doctrine that is not in the Old Testament. Why? Because the Old Testament is the Christian book, just as is the New Testament.

**Lesson five:
The Manner of
Sanctification**

In the Old Testament I learn that *sanctification* is in the way of submissive, obedient surrender. This is seen in the burnt offering. You are to put *the whole thing* on the altar as a sacrifice. There is no better picture of sanctification. It is entire. The justified man is to love the Lord with *all* his heart, soul, mind and strength. Sanctification is offering everything you are to God and his service. “Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness” was found in Deuteronomy before it turned up in Matthew!

I understand that some people don’t want to give God an hour a week. Or two. I understand that. That is because you are wicked. But it is not because it isn’t what God requires. God requires more than 2 hours a week. He requires 168 hours a week. A whole offering of yourself unto the Lord is sanctification. This is seen in the burnt offering.

**Lesson six:
The Goal of Life**

In the Scriptures of the Old Testament I see *the goal of life*: to enjoy God. The Shorter Catechism contains no new doctrine when it answers, “What is the chief end of man?” with the answer, “To glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” That is right out of the Old Testament. The chief end of man is to enjoy God.

This is seen in the offerings. The first was for sin, for justification. The next was burnt for sanctification. To what was all this leading? What was at the end of the offering scheme? **The friendship offering, the fellowship offering**, where Jehovah and man would eat at the same table. God would welcome the sinner to his table after he had been justified and sanctified. This is the Old Testament teaching: that my goal is to get to fellowship with God. That is the goal of life.

**Lesson seven:
Attaining the Goal**

How do I attain unto the goal of life? The way is to *trust and obey*. Not to trust and disobey. Not to mistrust and obey. But to trust and obey. No modifications allowed. That is it. Trust God and believe what he says about himself and obey him, honor his law.

Listen to what God said in his law: “And now, O Israel, what does Jehovah your God ask of you but to fear Jehovah your God, to walk in all His ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.” Has that changed? Absolutely not. That is the abiding word of God forever. God requires that we love him with all our hearts and walk in his ways. Trust and obey.

**Lesson eight:
The Offering of a
New Heart**

I learn from the Old Testament that God has determined to have a people throughout history with a strong obli-

gation: *the obligation to offer him a new heart*. “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens. The earth and everything in it. And yet the Lord set His affection upon your forefathers and loved them and chose you, their descendants above all nations as it is today. You are God’s people.” Therefore what? “Therefore circumcise your hearts and do not be stiffnecked.” Because God chose you, you have an obligation to give him a new heart. That is not only an Old Testament teaching. I have heard people say, “In the Old Testament you just have to be born; in the New Testament you have to be born again.” No, no, no, no, no! You had to be born again in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. Every believer in history is a born-again believer. This is what the Bible teaches and not just in the New Testament. This is the Bible, the Scriptures. Jesus upbraided Nicodemus for being puzzled at the teaching on regeneration; “You are Israel’s teacher and you do not know these things? Outrageous!” (ABV).

**Lesson nine:
Inclusion of the Gentiles**

In the Old Testament we see indications that *God’s people will not be taken from the Jews alone*. He tells us that the covenant of faith through Messiah will ultimately include great numbers of Gentiles: **Amos 9:11-12, Zechariah 6**. In fact Paul, in a litany of Old Testament quotations in Romans 15, says, “I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs, so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing

hymns to your name.’ Again it says, ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.’ And again, ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.’ And again, Isaiah says, ‘From him will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’” Thus, throughout the Old Testament, the Scriptures speak about the fact that there will be among the people of God a great number of Gentiles. No mystery; no one should have been surprised. Simeon wasn’t (Lk. 2:32).

Lesson ten:

The Lineage of Messiah

I learn in the Old Testament that *the Messiah would come from Judah* (Gen. 49:10). I learn that he will come from David in 2 Samuel 7. In fact, it is not just I who learned this: every Jew at the time of Jesus Christ had another name for the Messiah. That name was “Son of David.” Everyone knew that he would come from the line of David. Everyone learned that from the Old Testament.

We learn that though he would come from David, humanly speaking, yet he would be David’s Lord, because David called him Lord. David, speaking by the Spirit, says, “The Lord said to my Lord...” And so Jesus asked them, “How is it that if the Messiah is the son of David, that David called him Lord?” They responded, “Can we answer that Tuesday? We don’t have the answer right now.” And we have been waiting. Like Wimpy’s never paying back for that hamburger, we have been waiting for the answer. They don’t have one yet. But we do. He is the Lord. This is why it says in Romans 1, “God promised before-

hand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son which, as to his human nature, was a descendent of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God.” In the Messiah we will find two natures in one Person forever. This is what the Bible teaches. This is the *Old Testament* teaching, that he would be Lord, the Root and Offspring of David.

A Number of Other Lessons...

We know from the Old Testament that he would be born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14., “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son and He shall be called Immanuel, God with us.” Two natures in one Person: he will be virgin born but he will be God with us. I learn this in the Old Testament. In fact, I learn in the Old Testament that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. And not just I, but when I open up what is called the New Testament, everybody asks, “Where is the Messiah going to be born?” And they *all* say, “Bethlehem.” Everybody knew it would be in Bethlehem. Everybody knew it because it was in the Bible: Micah 5:2., “Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, yet out of you will come forth for me the one who will be Ruler over my people Israel.” The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

I learn in the Old Testament that the Messiah will be born in the first century. Particularly, he will be born before the destruction of the second temple. In Daniel 9 there is a prophecy that measures the coming of the Messiah from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem—measures it to be

accomplished in less than 500 years. In other words, I not only know that he will be virgin-born and from the line of Judah and from the line of David, I not only know that he will be born in Bethlehem, I know that he will be born within 500 years of the prophesy of Daniel, or the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. So it had to have happened already. *I know that from the Old Testament.*

I know that this Messiah would give his life as an atonement. I learn this from Isaiah 53: “He shall give his life as a sacrifice for many. By his wounds people will be healed. The punishment that would bring us peace was upon him.” There is no clearer prophecy of substitutionary atonement than that found in Isaiah 53. In fact, in the providence of God, the Ethiopian who was on his way back home after going to Jerusalem was reading that portion of Scripture. And the Holy Spirit told Philip to go catch up with him. And Philip ran and caught up with the chariot. He began talking to the Ethiopian and he said, “What are you reading?” And the Ethiopian replied, “I am not sure what it means.” “Well, why don’t you read it to me and I will tell you what it means,” Philip rejoins. And the Ethiopian is reading—of all things!—Isaiah 53. And the Spirit says, “Tell him what it means.” And so Philip told him what it meant. And that man became a Christian. By what? How did he become a Christian? By reading Galatians? No. By reading Isaiah 53. ***By reading Isaiah 53 he became a Christian.***¹

Furthermore, by Isaiah 53 I know that the Messiah would rise from the dead. It is obviously a very important passage, this Isaiah passage. It

says, “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though He had done no violence... It was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he—the Messiah—will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” Because “after the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many.” *After* he dies he is going to see the light of life. He is going to come back from the dead. The Old Testament tells me that his resurrection is certain.

Conclusion

And there is one last thing. The Old Testament teaches me that the Messiah would rise to rule the world. This is predicted throughout the Old Testament in Psalm 2: “Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance”; in Psalm 72, it tells of his kingdom extending over all the world. In the book of Daniel, Daniel interprets the vision of the stone cut without hands, explaining, “Here is the interpretation. In the

time of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end. But it will itself endure forever.”

So what happens when we come to the New Testament? Do we find an eradication or dismissal of any of these things? Exactly the opposite! What we find when we come to the New Testament is the recording, the *seamless* recording of the fulfillment of these things. *They have happened among us.* And it began with that marvelous enunciation, that speaking of the angel to Miriam: “Oh, Jewish maiden! Oh, Jewish maiden, virgin pure, God has favored you and given you a calling above all other women. He has called you to bear the hope of the world that was first promised in Genesis.” She bows down and humbles herself and says, “How can this be?” He replies, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and overshadow you. And that holy One to be born of you will be called the Son of God, the Son of the Most High.” Hallelujah, indeed!

And she did conceive that child. And she did bear that child. But when that child was born, upon him was the shadow of the cross. He was marked for death from birth. He said, “For this reason I came into the world, that I might give my life as a ransom for many.” And at the shadow of the cross was a crown that he would be raised from the dead and lifted to wear. Yet none of these teachings are new to the New Testament. They are just realized, fulfilled, and recorded there. This is the fulfillment of the hope of our fathers.

The message of the New Testament is nothing other than this: “What God has promised to our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children.” And if you believe it, you are children of Abraham. If you don’t, you are cut off. One word of God, one truth. One covenant, one promise, one fulfillment. This word, truth, covenant, promise and fulfillment extends to and incorporates all believing families, both Jewish and Gentile.

“Everything you need to know you learned in the Old Testament.”

¹. Strictly speaking the conversion came through the proclamation of the Gospel by Philip (See Westminster Confession of Faith 7:6; 14:1; Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 89). Nonetheless, Mr. Schlissel’s point is fundamentally correct: It was an *Old Testament Text* that was in use—Ed.

NOTES



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