

Christ In The Old Testament

Lesson 1: Introduction

Genesis 3:15, John 5:39-47, Luke 24:25-27

The goal of this series of Bible lessons is to show that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, can be seen throughout the scriptures. His arrival in the first-century was not a coincidence, an accident, or something that God improvised because of the failures of the Israelites. Rather, it was predicted many ages before the birth of Jesus – the plan of salvation is the completion of the Old Law, and it is the fulfillment of numerous promises given in the Bible. What we want to see very clearly is that our Savior is the main character in the Bible. He is at the center of its story, the protagonist, the beginning, middle, and end to every bit of law, history, and poetry found in God’s Holy book. As our Lord Himself states, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty”* (**Revelation 1:8**).

Today’s lesson is going to focus on establishing the idea that Christ is the central figure of the Bible, even if not by name. He is there from the very beginning, after all, according to **John 1:1**. His presence is felt in the creation, and His promise of redemption from sin comes only moments after Adam and Eve first fell in the Garden. We begin by examining **Genesis 3:15** and its context and application. Then we will consider what Jesus Himself said about the witness of the scriptures. He emphasizes, in at least two passages that we will look at, that the written word of God shows repeatedly that He was exactly who He claimed to be.

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.”

From the very first book in the Bible we find a prophecy about the triumph of Jesus Christ over Satan. In the end, can any enemy stand before the Almighty? Consider **Romans 8:31** and **Philippians 2:9-11**. The immediate application of this verse is the enmity between Eve’s children and the serpent’s children, and the curse placed upon the snake for Satan’s wickedness. *“Enmity”* means a great hatred between two things. In fact, **Vine’s Dictionary** even notes the relationship

between the word “enmity” and its cousin “enemy.” *“It is the opposite of agape love” (Vine’s Dictionary, Vol. II, 32).* However, it is clear from other verses that there is a much deeper application. The verse is a prophecy about how the devil will inflict a damaging blow on the ankle of Jesus – His death on the cross, as well as other humiliating derisions. Christ conquered death, though (**Romans 14:9**), so Satan’s apparent victory can only be compared in significance to a minor injury to the ankle. Jesus, however, completely defeated the devil by inflicting a terrible death-blow to his head, crushing him. *“And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:20).* Other verses that point out Christ’s victory over Satan include **Luke 10:18-19**, **Revelation 12:17**, and **Revelation 20:10**.

When considering this text, we should note that Satan still has some power (**Revelation 20:3**), and that the blow to the head does not cause an immediate death. We should be wary of Satan and his influence over us (**1 Peter 5:8-9**), but we can also take great confidence in Christ’s power to save. With His help, we can defeat even our most powerful foes. While Satan has been able to tempt every single person in the history of the world to sin, there is One who never gave in. There is One man who had no sin, and conquered Satan completely. That is Jesus Christ (**Hebrews 4:15, 9:14**). Only Christ can beat sin, so if we ever want to have a chance ourselves, we must submit to Him and accept His help.

As another note worth remembering, remember that Christ is a key player even at the very beginning of the Bible story. He is not an afterthought, as some claim, but it was predicted from the very day that sin entered the world that Jesus would come and allow Himself to be injured by Satan, but would defeat the wily serpent in the process.

Beyond simply noting the enmity between Christ and Satan, also see the immediate effects of sin entering the world. As we continue reading in the text, we see that painful childbirth, suffering, weeds, difficulty in vegetable cultivation, pestilence, and the necessity of hard work are all directly related to sin (**Genesis 3:16-19**). Death and shame entered the world because of Satan’s craftiness and man’s selfishness, so we should always be careful not to blame God when life gets rough.

Discussion Question: What does this very early text teach us about the role that Christ plays in the Bible story?

John 5:39-47

³⁹"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. ⁴¹"I do not receive glory from men; ⁴²but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴"How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? ⁴⁵"Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷"But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Our Lord is trying to impress His listeners with the fact that the Old Testament is a witness to His ministry – being a witness, it proves Him, answers Him, and verifies Him. His listeners, however, did not want to see Jesus in the scriptures. *"They searched the scriptures, but they did not know the truth about the Christ because they searched with a closed heart (Matthew 13:13-15, 2 Timothy 3:7-8). Others who had open hearts found sufficient testimony"* (**John: The Gospel of Belief**, Harkrider, 39). Christ is not trying to teach us that searching the scriptures is a bad thing. In fact, some have tried to use this verse to argue that reading the Bible is a mistake, and Jesus is attempting to downplay the significance of the written Word. This is not consistent with other verses, however, that teach the absolute importance of study (**1 Timothy 4:13-16, Acts 17:11**). If we continue reading the passage in **John 5**, we will very clearly see that Christ does implore them to read, and even uses the written word to prove His validity. He exhorts them to *"believe the writings of Moses"* because those words predicted His arrival.

Discussion Question: What were some of the problematic attitudes that Jesus encountered among His First Century audience? What did they think about the scriptures, and how did this thinking prevent them from seeing the truth about Jesus?

"Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father..." Jesus does not mean that He will not judge these people, but is trying to make the point that he *does not*

have to accuse them because the scriptures already do that sufficiently. “... *The one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.*” This same Moses who was seen as the greatest leader and prophet in all Israelite history predicted Christ, and at the same time condemned the Jews for their hard hearts. If Moses could believe in the future Messiah, then why could the Jews not believe, since they had Christ standing right in front of them?

Luke 24:25-27

²⁵ “*And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*” ²⁶ “*Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”* ²⁷ “*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*” In the verses just previous to this (**Luke 24:17-24**), some of Christ’s disciples are found walking along the road, discussing the events of the Lord’s crucifixion. Appearing to these disciples in a way that made Him unrecognizable to them, Jesus inquires about the subject of their conversation. Being quite surprised that He has not heard about the crucifixion, they explain to Jesus how they were disappointed by the fact that He had not yet proven to them that He was risen. It is for this lack of faith that Christ chides them and makes His statements in **Luke 24:25-26**, and goes on to explain the prophecies concerning Himself.

Once again, this text illustrates that Christ is the main character throughout the scriptures. He does not simply say that some of the prophets spoke about him, or that Moses occasionally referred to the coming of the Messiah. Rather, He asserts that He is present in “*all that the prophets have spoken.*” Not only that but “*Moses and all the prophets*” are mentioned in **24:27** as explaining Christ. The Old Testament is not just a fun book of history, with exciting stories and useful life lessons for us. It is, more significantly, the story of Jesus Christ throughout all the ages of man. Every single writer in the first half of the Bible foretold Christ in some way, or looked forward to His coming with great eagerness. This point is made clear from **1 Peter 1:10-12** and **Acts 3:19-26**.

“*Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled’*” (**Luke 24:44**). Added to His previous statements, we now see that the Psalms are also included in the catalogue of prophetic literature. There are a great number of poems, in fact, that teach us

about Christ and served the purpose of preparing the readers of ancient Israel for the advent of Christ. Several of these psalms will be examined in later lessons, with application made to their New Testament references.

Have we become like the two disciples in this story? How much proof do we need to believe in Christ, and see the Old Testament scriptures for what they truly are? It is sometimes tempting to ignore the Old Testament because of its long descriptions of historical events, its numerous judgments against a nation that no longer means anything in the eyes of God, and its supposed lack of usefulness in the lives of today's believers. We must make it very clear from these verses, and the future lessons, that the Old Law is our guide to Christ. It acts as a tutor (**Galatians 3:24**), and as a powerful book filled with multiple prophecies about Christ – all meant to legitimize Him and prove the truths that He taught.

Discussion Question: What attitudes or misconceptions have you had about the Old Testament that have sometimes kept you from studying it as you should?