

The Glory of Christ in the Old Testament

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Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 0 0] In John chapter 5 and verse 39, Jesus says, these are the scriptures that testify about me.

! In other words, the Old Testament is full of the glory of Jesus and full of His grace. Perhaps, like me, you've tried to read the whole Bible, beginning with Genesis, and reading right through to Revelation. Like as not, we get stuck in Numbers or Joshua, not sure of what it all means or where it's all headed. We give up, leaving the Bible behind. Having tried to do that many times, I've given up trying to read the Bible that way.

Rather, I start with reading the New Testament, and only then do I go back to read the Old Testament. And I do that because of what Jesus said in John 5, 39, about how the Old Testament bears witness about Him. Unless we know who Jesus is and why Jesus came, which is what the New Testament explains to us, we will never understand the need for or why things happened the way they did in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is filled with the glory and grace of Jesus. But it's only in the New Testament we get the key to understanding the Old Testament in terms of Jesus. The New Testament shines a light on the Old Testament in such a way as to point us to Him. When we read the Old Testament in the light of the new, new truths jump out of the page at us. The Old Testament becomes alive and filled with the glory of Jesus. We've been working our way through a series of studies in the glory of Christ.

This evening, we want to look at the glory of Christ in the Old Testament. There are so many avenues we could explore, but I want to confine myself just to four. I don't know if there's notes up for this, Jonathan, on the overhead, no? First of all, the glory of Christ in the temple, then the glory of Christ in His people, the glory of Christ in His appearances, and the glory of Christ in prophecy.

[2 : 4 3] Perhaps tonight may help to shed a light into the Old Testament so that you may read it like it ought to be read. Jesus says, these are the scriptures that testify about me, referring to the Old Testament.

Rather than confusing us, the Old Testament, if we read it in the right way, will fill us with knowledge, joy, and a deeper desire to know this Jesus for ourselves.

First of all, then, the glory of Christ in the temple, in the temple. When I was a young Christian in Gospy, there was an older Christian in the next village. Walter Jackson took a particular interest in helping younger Christians in the area grow in their faith. One of the ways he did that was by inviting me and some of my friends round to his house to study the Bible with them. In particular, being from a brethren background, he wanted to talk to us about the temple in the Old Testament.

The temple in Jerusalem dominates the storyline of the Old Testament. First built by King Solomon, then destroyed by the Babylonian Empire, it was rebuilt by Ezra the priest after the captivity. Everything about the temple was carefully designed. The design of the temple wasn't of earthly origin, but God gave instructions to the builders as to the exact dimensions, decorations, decorations, and furniture of the temple. Furthermore, God gave instructions as to how the priests were to operate, the ceremonies they were to observe, and even the clothes they were to wear.

Nothing was left to chance, but everything was carefully designed to comply with God's instructions. Why was God so exact in all the instructions about everything to do with the temple?

[4 : 55] It was because everything about the temple was carefully designed by God to point to Jesus. The temple signified God's dwelling place among human beings.

And in John 1.14 we read, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The ultimate and final dwelling place of God among human beings was the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus replaced and fulfilled the temple as the dwelling place of God. So everything about the Old Testament was carefully designed to point to who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

Think of the sacrifices the priests were commanded to make. Every morning and every evening the priests made sacrifices of bulls and lambs and goats.

And their sacrifices were made to indicate that the people's sin was serious. And it needed to be dealt with. Sacrifices were offered to show that sin had to be punished.

[6 : 10] And as the writer of Hebrews himself, Jewish, would later say, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. Sin leads to death.

But God provided a way by the sacrifice of animals whereby the people's sins could be forgiven. The people sinned. But innocent, blameless animals paid the price.

These were the people's substitutes being sacrificed on their behalf to make atonement for their sin. But this whole system, it was just a shadow and a sign of reality.

It was never designed to be final. It was always preparatory. A shadow of the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1.19 talks about the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

John the Baptist famously pointed to Jesus and said of him, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Many times in the New Testament, Jesus is described as being the sacrifice of atonement for our sins.

[7 : 25] So when Jesus dies on the cross, we are seeing the ultimate and final sacrifice being made for human sin. He's bearing the punishment we deserved.

He's dying the death we deserved. In Hebrews 10, we read, It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.

But when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

But I said, Behold, I have come to do your will. So Jesus came as the fulfillment of the shadow of the sacrificial system of the temple in the Old Testament.

As the ultimate Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The ultimate and final sacrifice of atonement, so that through him and him alone, our sins can be forgiven and our guilt removed.

[8 : 29] Everything about the Old Testament temple was carefully designed to point to Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to be with his people and save them from their sins.

You can study it for yourself and I trust you'll find it a most spiritually enriching experience. The Old Testament temple is all about Christ.

It's all about his glory. He shines from every golden brick in the temple, every ornately designed piece of art and furniture, every garment worn by the priests, all the ceremonies, all the sacrifices.

God left nothing to chance in the design of his temple. In the same way, God has left nothing to chance about our salvation as both the church and as individual believers.

We may wonder tonight about the direction our lives are headed in, but God has left nothing to chance. God sealed it on the cross.

[9 : 36] The glorious Christ, the Word became flesh, gave himself to take away our sin and bring us close to God. One day we shall see Christ as he is in the heavenly temple of God, and then on that day we shall fall down and worship him, for then we shall see him in all his glory.

So the glory of Christ in the temple. Second, the glory of Christ in his people. His people. The Old Testament is filled with strange writings which some Christians avoid and other Christians twist.

One such book is the Song of Solomon. It's a difficult book to preach through because it's a difficult book to interpret. It's full of expressions of love and affection.

But at its most basic level, the Song of Solomon is an Old Testament account of the love relationship between Christ and his church.

The Puritan John Owen, whose book on the subject of the glory of Christ, I'm using as the template for this series, he writes of the Song of Solomon. He says, It is a gracious record of the divine relationships of Christ in love and grace unto his church with their return of love to him and delight in him.

[11 : 07] It's all about the grace of Christ's love to us and our love for him. So the Song of Solomon, it's a poem telling the story of a man and a woman in love.

She adores him and he adores her. They describe each other in almost indecent terms, which has led some preachers to twist this book into a manual for erotic human love.

But at its most basic level, it's the account of the love relationship between Christ and his church. If the temple is a picture of the objective, external way in which Christ has made atonement for us before God, the Song of Solomon is a picture of the subjective, internal way in which Christ relates to those for whom he has made atonement.

And that relationship is characterized by deep intimacy, by love. It's dominated by this chorus, which you read at various parts.

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. It's a shadow and type of the way in which we as Christians are to relate to the Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us.

[12 : 27] We're to pursue this Christ. characterized by deep intimacy, passionate love. Listen to how in the passage we read in Song of Solomon 5, the church views Christ.

My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished, chiefest, I love the way the King James Version describes it, chiefest among 10,000. His head is the finest gold, his locks are wavy, black as a raven, his eyes are like doves beside streams of water, his mouth is most sweet, he is altogether lovely.

This is my beloved. How deep the love the church has for Christ. How glorious Christ is in our eyes. We'd rather have him than anything else.

How like Paul when he said, I count everything as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. father. But then in the previous chapter, Song of Solomon 4, Christ views the church and we read, Behold, you are beautiful my love.

There is no flaw in you. You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride. You have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, one jewel of your necklace.

[13 : 51] How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride. How much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than any spice. Christ adores his church and he loves her deeply and intimately.

How glorious his love for us, we who are called in the New Testament the bride of Christ. We love Christ because he first loved us but we love him with deep intimacy and passionate love.

how glorious the way in which Christ loves us, the way in which he fills our hearts with the beauty of who he is and what he's done for us.

Let's pursue such love with him. As we commune with him in prayer through the reading of his word, let's grow in our love for him.

The more we love him, the more glorious he'll become in our eyes. One day we shall see him as he is and on that day we'll love him because on that day we'll realize how much he really loves us.

[15 : 07] The glory of Christ and his people. Well, thirdly, third aspect of the glory of Christ in the Old Testament, the glory of Christ in his appearances.

On many occasions throughout the Old Testament a strange figure seems to appear from nowhere. He's often called the angel of the Lord. The thing is he's not an angel because the word angel simply means messenger.

He's the messenger of the Lord and as we read the whole Bible through we realize that the Old Testament angel of the Lord is none other than Christ himself. Before he became a real human through his incarnation and birth Christ took human form and he appeared to people in the Old Testament.

It was not a permanent form such as he has now it was just an appearance. It's called a theophany which literally means an appearance of God.

Theophany appearance of God. Christ appeared to Moses this way on top of Mount Sinai Christ appeared to Manoah the father of Samson in this way he appeared to Abraham in the person of Melchizedek but perhaps his most famous appearance was to the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6.

[16 : 29] The chapter begins In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord seated on the throne high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple. It's quite clear from a later reference in John 12 41 that the Lord Isaiah saw in the vision was Jesus.

Technically this isn't the theophany in that Jesus didn't assume the form of a man but it was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus so it counts. The overriding images of Isaiah 6 are that of holiness and glory.

The glory of Christ is so great he cannot be seen. Although Isaiah said I saw the Lord if we were to ask him well what did the Lord look like he would say well the temple was filled with smoke I could see his throne it was high and lifted up and I could see the train of the robe of his temple or train of the robe filling the temple but I couldn't make that figure out.

Then there are the angels the so-called seraphim burning ones millions of them flying before the throne of Christ each with six wings with two they cover their feet with two they fly with two they cover their eyes from the burning holiness of King Jesus.

In a deafening earth-shaking song they call out to one another holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty the whole earth is filled with his glory.

[18 : 04] well Isaiah probably the holiest man on planet earth is stunned and he falls to his face and he says woe is me I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts.

But then then the most amazing things happen one of the angels touches Isaiah's lips with a burning coal taken from an altar and he says behold this has touched your lips your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.

Now you know an altar is where sacrifices are made and there's an altar in this temple where Christ himself is seated on this glorious throne in Isaiah 6.

Little does Isaiah know that the ultimate sacrifice which will take away all his sin will be the sacrifice of the Lord who is seated on the throne himself.

Little does Isaiah suspect that the glorious Christ worshipped by the angels holy holy holy will one day hang upon a cross as the suffering saviour.

[19 : 27] we could read this passage again and again and not exhaust all it has to tell us about the glory and holiness of Christ in the Old Testament. If you ever get a chance try to listen to a sermon by the late Eric Alexander on Isaiah chapter 6.

It is life transforming. But lit up by the spotlight of the cross Isaiah 6 brings us to our knees in worship when we realise that the King of Glory stooped down from that throne and died to make atonement for my sins.

Who is he on yonder tree dies in grief and agony tis the Lord oh wondrous story tis the Lord the Lord of Glory at his feet we humbly!

fall crown him crown him Lord of all. well lastly we want to look at the glory of Christ in the Old Testament in prophecy in prophecy a simple definition of prophecy a prediction of what will happen in the future a prediction of what will happen in the future now the Old Testament is full of predictions about what will happen in the future and in particular it's full of predictions about Jesus the book of Isaiah is probably the richest source of prophecies about Jesus written over 600 years before Jesus was born it predicts Jesus' birth his life his death his resurrection his mission for example in Isaiah 7 14 the prophet says behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel 600 years later

Mary miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and gave birth to a son so the Christmas story is deeply embedded in the prophecies of the Old Testament right down to where he would be born Micah says in Bethlehem then in Isaiah 42 the prophet talks about the life of Jesus a bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench he'll be a light to the nations to open the eyes that are blind to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon from the prison those who sit in darkness and then 600 years later we see Jesus reaching out to the unreachable touching the untouchable loving the unlovable giving sight to the blind and making the lame walk and then in Isaiah 53 perhaps the greatest of all the prophecies of the Old Testament we read about the death of Jesus he was despised and rejected by men he was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief like a lamb that is led to the slaughter cut off from the land of the living he poured out his soul unto death 600 years later we see

[22 : 41] Jesus despised and rejected by the Jewish leadership being led like a lamb to the cross where they put him to death by crucifixion but then we turn not to Isaiah but to Psalm 16 to read a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead you will not abandon my soul to sheol or let your holy one see corruption in your presence that is fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures evermore 600 years later we see Jesus bursting forth from the tomb with great glory ascending to the pleasures of God's right hand now we could have chosen countless other texts for each of these predictions about Jesus birth life death and resurrection because the Old Testament is packed full of prophecies about Christ but then Isaiah also predicts why Jesus came what his mission was why was

Jesus born why did he live the way he did why was he put to death why did he rise from the dead in short succinct statements which go right to the heart of the matter Isaiah says he was wounded for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all Jesus gave himself as the sacrifice to take away all our sin Jesus endured the punishment we deserve he died for us what glory that is in the Christ we discover in the prophecies of the Old Testament the Christ who was prophet priest and king the Christ who was the Lord seated on the throne the Christ rejected and despised by men wounded for our transgressions and upon whom was laid all our iniquities tonight

I kind of hope that I partly honored the memory of my old mentor Walter Jackson he would love to be here and as he served his whole life as a missionary in Morocco and he never saw one Moroccan come to the Lord Jesus Christ he would love to be here tonight to meet you but more than that I hope that from now on when we read the Old Testament we're always on the lookout for images and pictures of Jesus in the glory of his grace you look carefully you'll find them everywhere in every story on every page in every song but more than anything else we want to worship the Jesus we find in the Old Testament and as we praise him we'll be joining with all the saints of the Old Testament Abraham and Isaac Moses and Samuel Ruth and David Isaiah and Jeremiah and yes all the rest of them for to them as to us there is no greater glory than is to be found in our

Lord and theirs Jesus Christ