

Jesus' Use of the Old Testament

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- [0 : 00] Now may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.
- In the name of Jesus. Amen. Well, I'm sure that you will be disappointed to hear that today we have only four points to make in the presentation.
- Last week you will recall there were twelve points, all of them alliterative, and I fear that not even one of my four points is alliterative.
- What is the background to this talk? Well, during the months of February, March and April of this year, ten to fifteen members of this congregation met over a bag lunch and opened the Word of God to pursue this topic of Jesus' use of the Old Testament.
- Many of them are here, many of you are here, and you will please interrupt when I quote you incorrectly. But I can recommend the Tuesday lunchtime, as long as you have a good lunch to share.
- [1 : 29] It is a group of committed Christians who are desperately anxious to dig deep into the Word of God.
- We are not, however, a group of professionals. None of us, as far as I know, has a formal degree in theology or in biblical studies.
- I may be doing somewhat an injustice here, but on the whole we are members of the congregation who sit in the pew at St. John's and who find the opportunity of sharing around the Word of God to be a special privilege.
- And so the kinds of points that I'd like to share with you are ones that have emerged from this community Bible study.
- And these six separate occasions have given rise to some new insights for many of us, and it is a privilege to share them.
- [2 : 40] The professionals amongst us today will know them all, and therefore we can only hope that they will bear with us as we share the insights from a more ordinary pew perspective.
- Let me then, first of all, before the notes which you have, and I hope they are not reading the notes, as I mentioned before, when I said to my students at UBC, don't write that down.
- We could see them vigorously writing, don't write that down. So please don't emulate the UBC students. In that respect.
- You should know a little bit about my presuppositions. My starting point is a strong interest in seeing the big picture.
- I'm hopeless on detail, as Margaret will confirm, but I try to look for the big questions and the big answers.
- [3 : 53] I don't always find them, but it seems to me that the Bible is a good place in which to exercise this interest. There are so many major questions and themes that flow through the Bible, that repay digging, and which don't necessarily appear on the surface.

To give you a little insight into my perspective, I shall say something heretical. For example, I'm very fond of the lectionary, which imposes the discipline of Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms, such as we have at the communion service.

I find it to be a serious loss, either when we read only from one testament, or alternatively when we include all the readings, but make no attempt to integrate them.

I noted this morning at the 7.30 service that Dan made a conscious effort of relating the psalm to the gospel. And the sermon which was on the gospel was directly interpreted through the words of the psalmist.

This kind of holistic view of the study of the Bible, to me, is something extraordinarily powerful. So to come to the point, what is the big question that we're talking about today?

[5 : 32] What is the connecting thread? And the big answer for me is that the Bible is one revelation of God's creative and redemptive work.

There are 66 books which are entirely consistent in confirming this thought. But the more we can study the scriptures to see the interconnections that exist through the whole 66 book sequence, the more I think we will be blessed.

So the four points that I would like to share with you can be summarized in the following way. First of all, and these actually do correspond to the four points on the script in front of you, but as I say, you can read that at home.

The four points are, in Jesus' use of the Old Testament, that there is here a model of admonition to unbelief.

This concerns the Bible study that occurred on the road to Emmaus. Second point is that there is a model lesson in revelation.

[7 : 03] This concerns the revelation of the connection between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Thirdly, that there is a model exhortation to dig deeper.

The disciples who were receiving the Bible study from Jesus were expected to make a more serious effort in digging through the scriptures.

And fourthly, there is a model here of practical strength from the scriptures. The fact that Jesus, who is God, received strength from his constant reliance upon the scriptures is surely a strong hint to us of the strength that we can receive from the scriptures.

So I will come back at those points in different ways, but they are the four essential points of the talk. So the first point, a model admonition to unbelief.

If you remember the details of the account in Luke chapter 24, essentially verses 13 to 35, of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, you will remember that there were, in this group, two or three persons gathered together with Jesus in their midst.

[8 : 44] They were able to meet Jesus physically, but also they met him in a new way through the scriptures. There's a necessity for expectancy on the part of the Bible student, and as a result of that, hearts were burning as a result of meeting with Jesus.

So that the principles of Bible study that Jesus essentially exemplifies in this chapter of Luke provide us with some essential ingredients of our own Bible studies.

And you may think about your experience in your own local Bible study, to what extent these ingredients are a lively part of that Bible study.

The two or three being gathered together is an obvious necessity. Whether or not we meet Jesus through the scriptures depends very much on the seriousness with which we approach the matter, depends very much on the extent to which we expect the Holy Spirit to direct our discussion, and it depends very much on the extent to which we overcome details and perceive the big picture.

It also depends very much on our expectancy as to what we are likely to get from the Bible study. And I'm sure that all of us have had a variety of experiences of dead Bible studies, and that's not because of the other people being dead, it's because we ourselves were dead at the time, not expecting anything to happen, and not prepared, and not sufficiently serious about our commitment to the Bible study.

[10 : 54] But I'm sure we all have, and give great thanks for the fact that our hearts have burned within us during many of the Bible studies that we have experienced.

So my comment then, on this point one, seems a little to one side, is that there's an admonition to unbelief.

It seems to me that the statement, you foolish men, so slow to believe the full message of the prophets, which Jesus said to the disciples, is a most extraordinarily harsh statement.

You foolish people, slow to believe the full message of the prophets, slow to believe the full message of the prophets, and yet none of the disciples, as far as we know, have managed to short out the significance of the prophecies, even while living very close to Jesus for three years.

So what does this say to us? Slow to believe the full message of the prophets, slow to believe the full message of the Old Testament and the New Testament, foolish, yes, I think we all have to admit foolishness.

[12 : 37] Not in terms of intellectual foolishness, it seems to me, but it is foolishness in terms of slowness to believe. And it's foolishness in terms of not responding to the level of revelation that the Holy Spirit has given to each of us.

And so this is, to me, the sobering part of this story of the experience of the Bible study on the road to Emmaus.

And it forms, if you like, the key to the whole question of how Jesus uses the Old Testament. He says that we need to probe the Old Testament, we need to understand the connections between the Old and the New Covenant, and we need to be serious, and we need to expect to meet Jesus throughout the Scriptures.

I would urge that we think very seriously after those Bible studies where we have not got the sense of having met with Jesus.

Either the direction of the major point was somehow amiss, or more likely it's our own spiritual foolishness which has led to that outcome.

[14 : 20] So I would urge you to read during your time this week the passage in Luke 24 once again. You all know it. But if you think of it as an admonition to all of us to unbelief, even though we are keen members of St. John's Church, even though we are strong in our admission of conservative Christian orthodoxy, even though we think things are going well at St. John's, and in many respects they are, but let us remember that it's possible to be a disciple and foolish at the same time.

The second point, which we talked about in this series of Bible studies, is to get to grips with what is the essential connection between Old Testament and New Testament, Old Covenant and New Covenant.

By the way, how many Old Covenants are there? I'm offered three from someone?

Any advance on three? Four? Five? Thank you very much. That was very thoughtful. Five. They are in the following order, the pre-flood covenant, to Noah and his family specifically, the post-flood covenant, which was to the whole of the created order, the Abrahamic covenant, which was the very first specifically redemptive covenant.

There was the Mosaic covenant, which we all remember, specifically in terms of the Ten Commandments, but the details of which, having all of you studied Exodus recently, you will remember in great detail and the very interesting context of Exodus 19 to 24, where not only the Ten Commandments are listed, but the context in which those rules of the relationship between God and his people are specified, and then of course there's the Davidic covenant, which you find in the second book of Samuel.

[17 : 01] Well, you might say, what's all this about not interested in detail? Wants to get the big picture. Well, I think the big picture is then so very interestingly completed in the new covenant, the rationale for which you find in Galatians chapter 3, in a very explicit way, in which the reason for the completion of the covenant and the redemptive work of Jesus completes this whole revelation and this whole relationship between God and his people.

So none of those old covenants is wasted. Each one of them confirms the long-term purpose of God and confirms that the covenants themselves are not in the sense of a signed contract between people and God, but they are a covenant made by God with his people.

And they're covenant made by God with his creation. So I think what the essential basic text might be, if you like to think of two minimal basic texts, one is, I think, in Exodus 24, when Moses, presumably Moses, speaks of the establishing of the old covenant and implies the connection backwards to the creation and forwards to Jesus 40 days in the desert.

In other words, there's a perception by Moses of the continuity of this covenant relationship, all the way from creation and through to the 40 days and 40 nights, implied in his reference to the time that Moses went up the mountain and stayed there for 40 days and 40 nights.

And the connection is made between the perception of that and Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and Jesus does apply this to his own understanding of the Bible.

[19 : 42] In chapter 24 of Exodus, in the context of this link between the Old and the New Covenant, we read, taking the book of the Covenant, Moses read it to the listening people and they said, we will observe all that Yahweh has decreed.

we will obey. Then Moses took the blood and cast it toward the people. This, he said, is the blood of the covenant that Yahweh has made with you, containing all these rules.

Moving on into verse 16, the glory of Yahweh rested, settled on the mountain of Sinai. For six days the cloud covered it, and on the seventh day Yahweh called to Moses from inside the cloud.

The link here between the seventh day of creation and the Sabbath that God had declared. And verse 18 again, as previously mentioned, Moses went up the mountain and stayed there for forty days and forty nights.

So one can see the link made consciously backwards and forwards in the thinking of the writer. them. And then of course, if one wants the second key passage, then Matthew chapter 5 in the Sermon on the Mount gives you the link backwards from Jesus' own Sermon on the Mount.

[21 : 18] Verse 17, as we all know, reads, Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish, but to complete them, or to bring them to perfection.

And the remainder of that chapter explains the nature of the perfecting of the Old Covenant, which Jesus teaches and exemplifies. So I think those are two basic texts which give you the sense of the forward-looking and the backward-looking that is involved in linking the Old and the New Covenants.

One of the curious experiences that we had in a previous church that we attended was the common statement that of course we've outgrown the Old Testament and we really can't take seriously the revelation in the Old Testament.

Now that's not a word that would be whispered at St. John's of course, but I think it does signify the rot that very easily creeps in because as soon as one starts to take the Old Testament out of the picture, one is seriously denying the nature of the unity of Scripture, but more importantly the consistency of our God, the fact that God is God in the Old Testament and is God in the New Testament and is always the same God.

So I think the pursuing of these connections, obviously we don't have time to do this here in any detail, but just to see how each of these covenants in the Old Testament and in the New point forwards and backwards simultaneously and they therefore make that link that is so important.

[23 : 38] The third, that is the model lesson in Revelation, in other words the Revelation that we have is the Revelation of the continuity and the integrity of the character of our God, that he is the same today, yesterday, and forever.

The third point, an exhortation to dig deeper, we shall explore this again later this term, I guess, but the Gospels are simply full of examples of the way in which Jesus took verses from the Old Testament and applied them to himself.

Some of these ways in which Jesus took verses from the Old Testament led to some discussion in the group. Indeed, some of the terms of our interpretation may have been a little contentious.

The word typology caused considerable difficulty, and my wife was convinced me that I didn't need to use it. But there is typology.

And the trick is that the types are of so many kinds. The types are people, the types are nations, the types are priesthoods, the types are all kinds of things, which then Jesus applies to himself as the anti-type, in other words, the fulfillment of each of these particular phenomena.

[25 : 37] phenomena. So, in order to pursue this, it does require concentration, it does require dedication, and whether or not you like the word typology, the simple point, again, is the continuity of the old and the new, and the fact that these events in the Old Testament, and the people in the Old Testament, are specifically taken up by Jesus as the fulfillment of what was experienced in the Old Testament.

So, that's one of the ways in which the continuity is expressed, but secondly, of course, there are predictions about judgment and about salvation.

The two go hand in hand to the distress of most modern scholars. We like to think about the predictions about salvation, but we're less keen on the predictions about judgment.

And you think, for example, about the way in which Jesus dealt with the traitors in the temple, the way in which the discussion between Jesus and the Roman centurion, and his expression of faith, which involved the combination of salvation and judgment.

And, interestingly enough, if you look at the story of the conversion of Zacchaeus, the way in which Zacchaeus represented the conversion of the conversion of the tax collector and the conversion of those who were remnant of Israel.

[27 : 35] But I suppose most supremely, and the way in which we're most familiar with the way in which Jesus uses the Old Testament is the prediction around his Messiahship.

These are all scattered throughout the Old Testament, and they include, of course, the suffering servant, image from Isaiah, the way in which the inevitability of Jesus' death was recognized by himself and confirmed from Old Testament predictions.

The whole complex nature of his role as the Son of Man is a fascinating theme.

Jesus as the Son of Man is a theme that was introduced in the prophecy of Daniel. And then the implications of what this means, we talked about a considerable amount in the group, and we thought in terms of the way in which this not only represents the human, absolute humanness of Jesus, Jesus, but also it represents the way in which he came as a perfect man and perfect God at the same time.

The expression Son of Man is found virtually only in the Gospels, and is virtually only used by Jesus himself, so it repays consideration as to what the implications of that are.

[29 : 24] Then, of course, the predictions of his second coming, which are also contained in the whole of the Old Testament. And so these three kinds of ways, the typology and the prediction of salvation and judgment and the prediction of Jesus' Messiahship, all of these are emphasized uniquely by Jesus himself.

And they, each of them repay careful digging. I would just want to encourage you to dig deeper.

That's the actual message of this particular point, because all of us found that we were a little rusty on the precise ways in which these messages were used by Jesus.

All of us found that there were some new things that we hadn't realized before. And I think some of the personal stories of the Roman centurion and of Zacchaeus were perhaps some of the most startlingly interesting ways in which the old and new were tied together.

So I'm grateful for the predictions about Jesus' messiahship. We're all aware of those, but again, I don't think we are perhaps aware of how extensive those predictions are in the Old Testament.

[31 : 01] And we all of us know Isaiah 53, or at least most of us do. frequently quote it, but it's only one of so many, many places in the Old Testament.

So the fourth point, the strength that we draw from the study of the scriptures, is something that I think is the most significant practical point from this series of Bible studies.

Again, I stand to be corrected by the members of the group who are here, but Jesus simply showed his constant reliance on the Old Testament.

It's not just that the gospel according to Matthew has this enormous number of quotations which has been emphasized by many and suggested by some that it skews the whole gospel, more.

But more importantly, it pervades all four gospels. And it's quite clear that Jesus drew strength from simply recalling the words of the Old Testament.

[32 : 23] God is strengthened by the fact that he identified himself with the Old Testament message and he identified his mission from the scriptures.

And so he was strengthened in a very specific way through that. but it seems to me that the simple point for all of us which we can all take away and give thanks for is the way in which strength can be sought from the whole of the scriptures.

You will remember going back to Luke 24 that Jesus says starting sorry that Luke says starting with Moses and going through all the prophets he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

And so it seems to me that the lesson is that there is a source of strength throughout the scriptures.

I'm not suggesting that it's wrong to have a favorite passage or a favorite book. I mean my favorite book for example is Hebrews but different people will have different favorite books.

[33 : 51] But the point is that if we stop at our favorite book or more seriously if we stop at our favorite verse we can guarantee some reduced growth in our spiritual journey.

people will be. And so the emphasis is very much it seems to me on this expression explaining to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

And I think that most of us will find that we don't have enough time to actually exhaust the number of links that are found between the Old Testament and Jesus realization of them.

So these are the four points. Next time we may look at more detail but these seem to me to be overriding.

There's lots of unbelief even the most erudite and experienced Christian. there's a need for revelation.

[35 : 11] There's a need for a source of strength for every day and for every time and for every situation which is found in the whole of the scriptures.

So that's really the analysis of what I want to say about the analysis of all of what I want to say today but I want to reflect on this analysis just briefly.

What do we mean when we say that Jesus found strength from his use of the Old Testament? what does that actually imply in terms of the importance of seeing the big picture?

It seems to me that again we are in danger of limiting our experience if we don't look at the whole picture of the relationship between Old and New Testament.

Why do people get bogged down in controversy in some circumstances? Controversy about whether or not this verse or that verse is appropriate.

[36 : 56] It seems to me that it is because they are missing the overall message of Jesus is telling us in this Bible study. The problem is with our foolishness not with the foolishness of the Bible.

The problem is with our slowness to believe not with the text that has been provided for us.

And if the Son of God and the Son of Man found strength why do we restrict our attention to limited passages and specific verses?

So again please don't take this as a criticism it's an attempt to consider what would lead Jesus to make such a damning comment to these two disciples.

You guys are foolish you guys just don't take seriously what you have been told and you haven't thought carefully enough about what you have seen.

[38 : 22] So that's my most reflective thought but again there is time I'm sure for the odd question even though our distinguished chair has ruled out the questions quite happy to take the odd question and you may leave if you have to get to this other meeting but it doesn't start until quarter past I think I wasn't given a time I would hate to stop people from talking to that so that's my text as I say the idea is that we will look at some of the specifics of this in a subsequent learners exchange occasion but this is my overview of what I believe is the essential point about Jesus' use of the Old Testament corrections some of the yes when you think about the son of man as being the only time it was used what is the difference between the way it's used in this context in the

New Testament about Jesus and how it was used in Ezekiel when God said to Ezekiel who son of man prophesied well I guess that's that's a 64,000 question isn't it and similarly in Daniel where the term is used but in the New Testament it's exclusively used by Jesus and so what he is claiming is the that he represents the fulfillment of that prophecy of being the son of man and so this essentially then says that you're looking at the humanness of Jesus but the perfect humanness of him and you'll notice that it's I don't know what the original would be

Dr. Parkin in terms of the expression whether it is in uppercase or whether it is in some way underlined differently but it's obviously in the Bible it's shown uppercase son of man well you're looking at my direction so I mentioned your name so it's a Hebraic way of saying man as in English we often do address males as man that is the basic meaning in Ezekiel God says to Ezekiel man which is a call to take call to Ezekiel to take his humanness seriously and to take seriously the person addressing him who is

God in Daniel the son of man is still well still human the man but think of it as if this is man with a capital M because the picture is of the man with a capital M receiving the kingdom and it's one of those predictions associations of Jesus messiahship that's the natural way to take it I think and it's the way I take it and I guess you too from the things that you've said so when Jesus picks up the phrase and uses it of himself son of man it means it's got those associations the man who takes the kingdom the man who is more than man actually and I have sometimes thought that the overtones of his phrase of the phrase when he used it correspond to what the overtones of superman would be this is superman but

Jesus doesn't sort of cache the phrase I mean he doesn't explain what he means by it he simply uses it of himself and leaves it to us by reflection to discern what's going on here as so often in Jesus own teaching there's a gap left I mean he says something it remains a bit enigmatic the gap is a gap of understanding which is to be filled as we think and pray and discuss and discern this is the implication of what he said and I think in all his words about all his references to himself as the son of man that's how he leaves it you have to discern who I'm talking about and why I'm using this phrase of myself if you know your scriptures you'll be able to do it and then in the gospels just once or twice the gospel writer uses the phrase son of man and that's pointed to

[44 : 23] Jesus him the man with a capital M the super man who is God well all of that I think is part of the discernment to which God would lead us that's very helpful I'm very glad you directed that question to Dr.

Parker as you can imagine he wasn't actually at this focus study so he brings a near perspective I'm just wondering if you'd accept this kind of supplementary point to what you said that we can learn something from Christ's use of the Old Testament scriptures he had as teaching us something about the trustworthiness reliability and authoritative nature of scripture absolutely I thought that was something that I could mention but I absolutely accept that as if you like undergirding each of the points that I was making that the authoritativeness of scripture is essentially that you know that's why these people are called foolish that's why they're called foolish because we very often don't work under the authority of scripture and this is one of the reasons why the emphasis on the consistency of the text and of the revelation of God from page one to the end of revelation authority but authority is an underlying point

I guess I didn't make it explicit I think Christ also taught us the dual nature of it that it's equally the word of man and the word of God I was struck I didn't find many examples of this but I found one at least of both of these things where Christ would be using the Old Testament he'd be saying essentially have you not read what Moses said to you and then he would quote a ten commandment which would be something straight from God written by God the highest thing in scripture from God be referred to it as coming from Moses and Moses said to you this and then he would do the opposite where he'd say he'd attribute to God directly something that Moses was just teaching the people without him saying thus saith the Lord or quotes before and after Moses just teaching the people but Christ would use that passage saying haven't you read where

God said to you so he seemed to be almost deliberately switching it around to try to get it clear to people that this really can be used this way yeah that's a very interesting point seems to me that that in a sense is this whole question of the overview of the interlocking of the Old and the New Testament in such a way that it does in certain sense doesn't matter the distinction between God and Moses in that context is something that they are entirely together so this would underline the authority point of you saying Bill I think those two scriptures that you use and many others on here but how true it is that

Jesus many times is coming up behind us in our discussion we should be alert to that that he comes up behind us and wants to sort things out the Zacchaeus stories one of my favorite stories because after my conversion I was talking about living in the stock room and they told me I was up a tree which is prophetic in a sense and that's what Jesus does if he sees that we do the climbing to get a clearer view of him he will look back and we experience him and the way he sat down with the woman at the well these are absolutely real experiences for us if we have a faith to experience these things and wonderful brilliant points Bill I really appreciate that contribution

[49 : 09] I do suffer from brilliance sometimes you always suffer from brilliance but sometimes you have greater clarity do you know of any commentaries will there be one commentaries that have been written to tie all the old testament and the new testament references to the other well I hesitate to recommend the book that I recommended to the group because it fell into disfavour and the reason it fell into disfavour is it was actually a PhD thesis so it's a book a book a book a man called France a lay person we're all lay persons here we're all lay persons here but anyway let me just say this book is by a man called France and it's entitled

Jesus use of the old testament and you'll find far more in that than we were actually able to discover ourselves and in fact we abandoned it because it was heavy but the essential perspectives that he talks about are there and you can actually track down the scriptures that are most relevant he does a very comprehensive job of listening to the scriptures well if you want an easier one then obviously the handbook of the Bible which there are several handbooks of the Bible which you're probably familiar with but Erdman's has got a stock in trade of these and do you have a recommendation anyone else who for example the whole this one is so out of date I guess I'm embarrassed to mention it but it's the old IVCF book that is a commentary on the Old and New

Testament that links the passage oh one that comes to mind is by Hammond again a very old one which is entitled what in understanding be men which means women in this case as well following the theme the understanding we meant is a systematic discussion of Christian theology for lay persons and it gives a little set of footnotes on the key verses that are most helpful two hints from Richard Longenecker apostolic exegesis in New Testament period

I think first published in 1979 and there are later editions too and I think last year Don Carson and GK Beale published a large commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament a book of this thickness it covers all the passages of the New Testament who are concerned with Old Testament could you give me the name of the authors again Donald Carson and GK Beale B-E-A-L-E thank you they are the editors actually there's a whole string of scholars writing on particular books of scripture and Stephan is right about the thickness of it it weighs several pounds you can use it as a crystal actually as a work of reference it's talks

I use it myself and I'm very grateful for it does everyone hear that the reverend professor Dr.

[53 : 34] Packer uses this as a helpful source Carson and Beale so again it would be helpful I apologize for not knowing of it and even this horde of 15 members of the congregation never mention it however this is an example of where digging will be greatly helped in getting the realm to pass it and I'm sure more will be discovered let me say the title if anyone wants to know is dictionary of the Old Testament and the New Testament dictionary is the word fascinating title thank you oh last one Richard Hayes Paul's use of the Old Testament might be mentioned but for the ambition right thank you very much to anything good