

GETTING THE MOST FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

March 15, 2015 John 5:39-40 by Bob Branch

Raising The Bar To Normal, Part 3

MAIN IDEA: To help us actively engage the Old Testament (OT) by illuminating the larger story and the separate pieces that compose it. That you would be enriched by reading it!

“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.” **John 5:39-40 NLT**

1. **It’s possible to read the Old Testament and COMPLETELY MISS the point!**
2. **You cannot expect the Bible to provide for you things only intended to come from GOD HIMSELF.**
3. **The Scriptures they were reading—the first covenant—ultimately POINT TO JESUS!**
4. **There can be INTERNAL RESISTANCE in all of us against Jesus taking his rightly place in us!**

It is all part of **God’s story**. God, the central character, & hero!

³ Whole **universal plan of God** worked out through creation

² **Israel’s story:** God redeems a people for his name

¹ Hundreds of **specific stories**

The “**Covenant**” concept is central. A contract between two parties. *Suzerain-Vassal*.

The “**Law**” is the promises & condition of that covenant.

God is ordering a society with the Law (*constitution* with God at center)

A society forged from nothing specific to Israel *then & there in real time*

NARRATIVE... Story

Tells God’s story in dealings with Israel.

1. Story doesn’t directly teach a doctrine, but may illustrate a doctrine taught directly elsewhere.
2. Narratives record what happened—not *what should have happened* or what ought to happen every time.
3. What people do is *not necessarily a good example for us*. Most characters-actions are far from perfect.
4. The stories *don’t always resolve* in a tidy way. We’re expected to discern meaning in them from what God has taught in other places.
5. They are selective and incomplete, often lacking details. Author recorded only what he intended us to know.
6. They don’t answer all our theological questions. They have particular, limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere in other ways.
7. God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

LAW. 5 word uses:

1. ***The OT law is a covenant.*** a binding contract between 2 parties, both of whom have obligations specified in the covenant. Israel & God.
2. ***The OT is not our Testament.*** Unless an OT law is somehow **restated** or **reinforced** by Jesus/writers in the NT, it is not directly binding on us today. (Rom. 6:14-15)
3. Israel’s *civil* laws and *ritual* laws have not been renewed in the new covenant in Christ. The part that was renewed for us are the *ethical* laws, which are restated in various ways in the NT and applicable to us today.

4. Only that which is **explicitly renewed from the OT law can be considered part of the New Testament “law of Christ”** (Gal. 6:2).
5. All of the OT law is still the **Word of God** for us even though it is not still the **command of God** to us.

THE PROPHETS: *I want to give you an alternate perspective, view*

Speaking for God, much more than foretelling future.

1. They were **covenant enforcement mediators**.
 2. Their message wasn't **their own**, but God's. **God's direct representatives**
- Avoid **allegorizing**
 - Reading **too much in**
 - Seeking a **hidden meaning**
 - **Speculating** into the now.
 - Read with **covenant** in mind, with **historical context** in mind.
 - Hold **symbol** and **imagery** lightly and get **informed**.

WISDOM LITERATURE:

PSALMS: Israel's prayers and ours.

Purpose: **Making connection** between the worshipper and God. A **guide to worship**.

Psalms are a guide to **how to relate honestly to God**.

Psalms **demonstrate the importance of reflection and meditation** on God and what he has done for us.

PROVERBS: The nature of wisdom

Wisdom **begins with the fear** of and trust in God Himself.

It means making **wise choices** between good and evil behavior. (Aimed at young people making good choices)

Meant to be **read as collections** and sections, not one off.

JOB:

Goal: Establish convincingly in the mind of the reader that **what happens in life** does not always happen either because God desires it or because it is fair. No easy answers to human suffering.

ECCLESIASTES:

A cynical **wrestling with the meaning of life** and the **inevitability** of death and judgment. Confronts things we chase for purpose, shows their end.

SONG OF SONGS:

Celebrates true, pure, monogamous, **romantic love** with all its dimensions between a man and a woman.

Avoid allegorizing this as the church and Jesus.

WHY BOTHER? *Be enriched.* **God is all over his story!** Understand your roots.

We get a very **big** and **just** view of God “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” **Exodus 20:2-3**

We get a **concrete set of moral boundaries**. “no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.” **Romans 3:20**