

**IS THE OLD TESTAMENT WORTH THE EFFORT?**

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Separated from the reader by thousands of years, the Old Testament has often been overlooked by modern man. Most have considered it to be too technical, too hard to understand, and beyond the grasp of people that live in today's world, not to mention a "dry read." However, the Old Testament is full of truths about the God of heaven and His love for us. When the Old Testament is ignored, we miss so much that has been provided for our learning (Rom. 15:4). Let us consider the large sections of the Old Testament, history, prophets, poetry, and wisdom literature, in the effort to apply what we have learn to our lives as believers in God.

Oswald Chambers (July 24, 1874 – November 15, 1917), once said, "The Psalms teach you how to pray; Job teaches you how to suffer; the Song of Solomon teaches you how to love; Proverbs teaches you how to live; and Ecclesiastes teaches you how to enjoy," and I couldn't agree more! With those things in mind, the journey begins!

If one is going to become more intimate with the Old Testament, he must first understand its value. There are two prominent barriers that hinder the reader from gleaning from the Old Testament its intended treasures. A certain young man was attending a Bible College during a "smart-alecky phase in his life," when his classmates would contemplate the words of the Bible and their favorite passages, he would quote from the Old Testament what he called his "life verse." His usual verses were, "At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar" (1 Chronicles 26:18), or "O daughter of Babylon... Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" (Psalm 137:9). This example highlights the problems that prevents one from becoming personally involved in the Old Testament Scriptures: it doesn't make sense, and when it does, it offends the modern reader. However, we need to realize that the Old Testament speaks to us, as well as to those to whom it was originally written, when we study it in the proper way, which happens when we combine both the Old and New. The Old Testament relates to us exactly who God is, and the reader learns about God's character, the things He loves, the things that He hates, and what He expects from those who desire to have a fellowship with Him, but it takes effort!

**THE ACCOUNT OF JOB:**

Of all the sad events that have been told over the years, the life of Job is one of the saddest, and the universal question that is always asked concerning his life is, "Why does God allow suffering to exist in the world?" We all come face to face with that question when we interact with friends and loved ones. We can see in their lives the suffering that torments them, and also come to understand, sometimes, believers in God often make matters worse; when God is called into question as the source of the problem. However, much like "a cake is not about the eggs, flour, milk, and shortening," they are simply ingredients of the finished product, the suffering of Job is an ingredient in the overall theme of the book. Job isn't about suffering, it is about a man that did suffer, but who also remained faithful to God during his suffering!

One of the most misunderstood aspects of Job's life is the relationship between God, Satan, and Job, and what God's purpose in the scenario was. Some have concluded that it is more akin to a wager than anything else, but in reality it is a trial case scenario. God has been placed on trial by Satan, and is charging Him with not being worthy of worship. Also, the reader must come to the understanding that God does care for our physical and emotional comfort in this life, but not nearly as much as He cares

for our faith in Him, and our eternal destination. That description does not often fit with the sentimental teddy-bear image of God often represented by His followers. From Job, we learn that a person can be faithful, and remain that way, during times of trial and heartache, but it takes a pointed effort to accomplish that feat.

### DEUTERONOMY:

God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and all that is in it. Knowing that, we must also realize that nothing we do in this life shocks Him. God realizes who we are, and He loves us anyway. His love for us can only be matched by His great patience, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Our relationship with God is very similar to a parent child relationship, regarding His patience and love, as we grow and learn more about Him. Vaclav Havel, who led Czechoslovakia through her transition from a puppet of the Soviet Union to independent nation, once commented, “It felt... like a parent trying to teach an unruly bunch of children how to behave as adults.” That is exactly what Moses was burdened with doing as he led Israel out of Egyptian bondage to a Promised Land flowing with milk and honey.

God does still love His people even when they make mistakes, but He expects them to make tough choices and to endure uncomfortable situations to bring glory to Him. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses spoke as God told him and made no promises to himself or to the people about happy endings in this life, but instead believed that the next life would surely be worth it all! We know that “the LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy” (Psa. 103:8). Even when we act like people, God still loves and directs us, what a shame to miss the comfort of Deuteronomy.

The *Cordova Connection* will continue next week with this study of the Old Testament.