

## Column

Someone has said that the New Testament is to the Old Testament as the rose is to the bud. One precedes and brings forth the other.

The same point could be made by looking at an older building and its foundation. In some cases, there will be as many bricks below as there are above. I know of one late 19<sup>th</sup> century church where this is in fact the case with the bell tower. The bricks beneath do not get the same attention as those above, but they are just as needful. So it is with the Old Testament in relation to the New.

Sadly, this understanding is lacking the minds of some Christians. If asked, they would no doubt say they believe the Old Testament to be the inspired Word of God, but they fail to see or see very partially how it undergirds the mission of Jesus.

In many cases, the Old Testament is viewed as a collection of unrelated stories. There is Noah and the Ark over here; the call of Abraham over there; and David slaying Goliath still somewhere else. And, what they usually get out of these stories – if they think about them at all -- is some moral lesson. In the case of Noah, it might be the importance of obeying God; in the case of Abraham, the virtue of faith; in the case of David and Goliath, the value of facing life's challenges courageously.

Well, there is nothing wrong with these extrapolations, especially if you are teaching boys and girls in Sunday School. But my point is there is so much more. The Old Testament is the beginning of the story of God putting the world, battered and bruised by sin, back together again . . . but it is not complete. It is like a novel in which a number of strains emerge but which, as of yet, have not been brought together. Or, changing metaphors, it is like a piece of music that is building towards a grand crescendo but which has not yet arrived at that moment.

So, it is as the Old Testament ends. God's redemptive plan has been announced. Great promises have been made, but the fulfilment of these promises lies somewhere in the future. There is puzzle, not resolution.

But then comes the New Testament. Even from a cursory reading, it is clear its writers see Jesus as the great telos of the story. In the words of Phillip Brooks' great Christmas carol: "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

All of which to say, whether we see the Old Testament as the bud from which comes the rose, or the bricks that undergird a majestic tower, we are on the right path in understanding God's great story and finding our place in that story. Let's read the whole Bible for all its worth.

*BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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