

# The Old Testament: A Picture of Christ

By Elder Harry L. Jackson

*"...God had spent hundreds and hundred of years, working through Israel, gearing man's mind for what He was about to do to deal with the problem of sin. Every bullock slain and burned on the brazen altar, every sin offering, and peace offering, every Day of Atonement, every tabernacle, every high priest's garment, scarlet yarn and blue yarn, white linen, and gold braid, Feasts of Weeks and Feasts of Tabernacles, all of this was a picture of Christ, all of this was designed to prepare men's minds for the awesomeness of that which was to come. And yet, when the fullness of time had come, when the revelation of the righteousness of God, that One of whom the prophets had spoken, that One whose name was Immanuel, God with us, that Branch, that root out of dry ground, that One called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace, when He finally stood in the very presence of those who were supposed to be awaiting His coming, they didn't even recognize who He was..."*



Above is an excerpt from a sermon that I preached a few years ago entitled, "The Miracle of Righteousness." Central to the scripture text was Romans 3:21- "But now a righteousness from God, apart from Law has been made known, to which the Law and the prophets testify." I believe that one of the primary assignments that God has given to me as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to communicate to the Body of Christ what is the difference between Law and Grace. I believe that if one were to take a survey, one would find that the number of Christians, young and old, who do not understand this difference, is extraordinarily high. And so we have believers who love God, yet live lives filled with heartache, struggle and unnecessary bondage, attempting to earn the approval of a God who has already revealed the abundance of His love for them by the sacrifice of Himself. It is my belief that a great part of my job is to learn as much as I can of the Old Testament and the theology of it. This will enable me to be better equipped to not only walk in the freedom of the New Testament myself, but to also communicate to others how to do the same. I have heard it said that if one were to look closely enough, one would find Jesus on virtually every page of the Old Testament. I myself am inclined to believe that this is true. I am utterly fascinated by the mind of God, of His matchless understanding of the mentality of man, and of the dilemma that Adam had gotten us into when he disobeyed God, and thereby introduced the concept of sin into the world. What men sometimes fail to grasp, even after having examined the typologies and read the prophecies, is that when Jesus showed up, God had had everything that had happened previously in the plan all along. The Old Testament as a

whole depicts God as a Deity who operates by process. Mankind was not yet prepared for what God would bring forth when He stated to Eve in Genesis that her “offspring would crush the head” of the enemy, satan. Therefore, there *had to be* a process. That process would include a Tabernacle, and later, a Temple, an Ark of the Covenant, Levites, high priests, prophets, warriors, kings, and ordinary people, a lamb “without spot or blemish,” the stench of burning flesh, special offerings, at specific times, and blood, much blood, spilled upon the Mercy Seat, sprinkled on the people, and poured on the altar. As I had said in my sermon, all of this had been a picture, a portrait, a shadow, designed to teach Israel, and hence humanity, the difference between holy and unholy, clean and unclean. It would show us what God was like, so that when He finally showed up, walking on this world that He Himself had made, looking, walking, talking, working, laughing, and crying *just like us*, we would know that it was truly He.

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who had been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin.”*

What the writer of Hebrews is telling us is that the God who came down and fulfilled in Himself the Law that He had written, and then gave His life, shed His blood upon the earth, is the same God as Israel’s God, and yet somehow different. Israel’s God was a consuming fire. Israel’s God was thunder from Mt. Sinai. Israel’s was the God who swallowed up Pharaoh’s chariots in the Red Sea. He was a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. He was the bush that burned, the blue flame that lit the Holy of Holies. He *had to* present Himself that way in the Old Testament because men needed to know that God is holy, that he is righteous, that He is “light,” and that “there is no darkness in Him at all.”

And so, in order to eventually introduce us to the God of the New Testament, God intentionally gave Israel a Law that they could not keep. And in their failed attempts to keep the Law, they neglected to see the mercy that was inherent in the process that He initiated when He instituted it. For some, the *knowing* of the intricacies of the Law and the keeping of the ritual of the Law became their delight, for they had not understood that the Law had no power to produce righteousness, merely point to it. “You diligently study the Scriptures that testify about me,” Jesus said to them, “yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” It is the very fact that the Law cannot save that forces one to look to Jesus. It is the operation of sin activating itself in our members even as we strive to keep the Commandments, causing sin to become all the more sinful, that causes us to seek for the grace that increases proportionately to sin through the actions of God’s Law.

So as I strive to grasp the principle of the Old Testament, which is the revelation of the righteousness of God within the Law, it points me towards another righteousness, a radical righteousness, a righteousness which has nothing to do with whether I’ve been good or bad, or how many times I go to church, or be a nice guy, or feed the poor, or give

to charity, or walk old ladies across the street, or any of the other things that many of us do in order to make ourselves feel that we are “in” with God. This is the righteousness that Romans 3:21 speaks of, a righteousness apart from Law, a righteousness that can neither be self-generated nor earned, but is a gift from God. I find myself, then, responding with profound gratitude, and with a strong desire to live a life that glorifies the Giver, and enables me to share with others what I have learned, and am still learning. I believe that this is the right response, the one that Jesus had in mind as He hung, stripped naked, humiliated, dying, on a Roman cross, His precious Blood flowing down from His body and onto the then-cursed ground of a sin-sick world, and then rose from the grave by the Spirit of God. It is a response born of love, and gratitude, and nothing else. When one finally comes to the end of oneself, and cries out like Isaiah, “woe is me, for I am undone!” all else has been done away with. The Old Covenant of Law has been replaced by a New Covenant of Grace. “By calling this covenant ‘new,’” says Hebrews 8:13, “he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.”

And yet, it will not completely disappear. It cannot. It must not. For how shall we take the journey without a road map? How shall we hunger for the glory of the reality if we do not first glimpse the picture?

That is what the Old Testament is to me. A picture. A grand and glorious and panoramic picture that shows me what God is like, and at the same time, though it gives me no means whereby I can be like Him, yet lays before me a path that takes me from discovering “what a wretched man I am!” to an all out search for the One “Who will rescue me from this body of death!” It is then that I find myself being made able, through no effort of my own other than child-like faith, to stand boldly and unashamedly with those who daily cry, “Thanks be to God— through Jesus Christ our Lord!

It is the knowing, living, and sharing of all that I have stated above that is the reason why I exist.