

Introduction to *Finding Treasure: Christ in the Old Testament* (Rosemary Bardsley 2023)

Hello Everyone.

Before I begin talking about the Christ in the Old Testament studies, let me introduce myself: my name is Rosemary Bardsley. I've been speaking and writing for CWCI since the 1980s. I have my own Bible study website, and I teach Bible study groups in my church.

Have you ever found something wonderful in an unexpected place? Some treasure you had no idea was there? When I think about finding Christ in the Old Testament I am reminded of a poem by A.A. Milne. In this poem Christopher Robin wants a rabbit. He takes his pennies to the market square trying to buy a rabbit, but he can't find a rabbit at any of the market stalls. Three days he goes, but each day his search is fruitless, ending with the sad, desolate statement -

'But they hadn't got a rabbit, not anywhere there.'

Then the next day, when he didn't have any pennies, he says:

*'I had nuffin',
No, I hadn't got nuffin',
So I didn't go down to the market square;
But I walked on the common
The old-gold common ...
And I saw little rabbits
'Most everywhere!'*

Those rabbits had been there all the time. All the time he was searching. All the time he was trying to buy a rabbit. They had been there. And, when you think about it, you can only say 'Of course!' Of course that's where you find rabbits!

And out of his overwhelming sense of joy and satisfaction and fulfilment, Christopher Robin says this:

*'So I'm sorry for the people who sell fine saucepans,
I'm sorry for the people who sell fresh mackerel,
I'm sorry for the people who sell sweet lavender,
'Cos they haven't got a rabbit, not anywhere there!'*

He found what he was looking for. He found what he so greatly wanted. And such is his joy that he pities everyone who hasn't got any rabbits – who hasn't found what he has found in abundance.

The Old Testament is like that 'old-gold common'. If you didn't know what a rabbit looked like, you could be looking right at them, but not realising they were rabbits. It's like that with the Old Testament: once the New Testament has introduced us to who Jesus Christ is and what he has done – when we read the Old Testament we can see Jesus Christ 'most everywhere' there.

And if we think about that, we can only say 'Of course!' Of course the Lord Jesus Christ is in the Old Testament! Indeed, it would be surprising if he was *not* there.

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The New Testament repeatedly refers us back to the Old Testament for information about Jesus Christ.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus, then later to a larger group of disciples, heard the resurrected Jesus explained from “Moses and all the prophets ... what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). He used “the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” to “open their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (v 45).

Which Old Testament books here in Luke 24 did Jesus use here to teach his disciples about himself?

Jesus used ‘the Prophets’. Our western minds commonly understand the term “the Prophets” to refer to the ‘major’ prophets (Isaiah to Ezekiel) and the ‘minor’ prophets (Daniel to Malachi). However, to the Jews, the term “the Prophets” included what we call ‘history’: Joshua to 2 Kings. The Jews called these historical books ‘the former prophets’. What we call ‘prophets’ they termed ‘the latter prophets’ (also known as ‘later’ or ‘writing’ prophets). So when Luke tells us that Jesus taught about himself from “the Prophets”, this included all the historical books as well as the books written by the actual prophets.

Jesus also used “Moses” to teach his disciples about himself. This is a reference to the first five books of the Bible.

Jesus used “the Psalms”. It is not clear whether Luke’s reference to Jesus teaching from “the Psalms” is intended to refer only to the Psalms. It may be a shorthand reference to all ‘the writings’ — that is, to all the scriptures not included under the headings of ‘Moses’ and ‘the Prophets’. In any case the summary statement “all the Scriptures” comprehensively includes the whole Old Testament.

It is clear, then, that the resurrected Jesus identified and taught truths about himself from the whole Old Testament. This teaching opened the disciples’ minds to really understand the deep meaning and Christ-centredness of the Old Testament in a way they had not previously understood it.

That Christ is in the Old Testament is further attested by Jesus himself in John 5. There he challenged the unbelieving Jews with these words: He said -

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life ...

“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?” (5:39, 45–47).

When Jesus said Moses ‘wrote about me’ he was referring to the first five books of the Old Testament – the books of Moses. From this we learn that:

Genesis teaches us about Jesus.

Exodus teaches us about Jesus.

Leviticus teaches us about Jesus.

Numbers teaches us about Jesus.

Deuteronomy teaches us about Jesus.

Jesus clearly believed the whole Old Testament spoke about him. The Old Testament, just like the New Testament, is Christ-centred. It is Christo-centric.

Another aspect of Christ in the Old Testament is the anticipation/fulfilment motif.

We find in the Old Testament many verses referred to in the New Testament. There are many references to Jesus and his actions in the New Testament with words like 'it is written' and 'in order to fulfil'. The New Testament, particularly the Gospels, make multiple references to Jesus' fulfilment of Old Testament scriptures. Sometimes these references are to macro things like his death, sometimes they refer to otherwise irrelevant things that have no significance other than the fact that they were fulfilled – things like the soldiers gambling for Jesus' clothes.

Thus the Old Testament anticipates Christ; the New Testament reports the fulfilment of those expectations.

In what ways is Christ found in the Old Testament?

There are many answers to this question ... not *alternative* answers but many layers of answers, coming from a range of perspectives. All of them true. All of them valid. All of them deepening our understanding of the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Here is a brief list, with *some* examples, of these answers to the question *Where is Christ found in the Old Testament*:

We find that Christ himself is personally present in the Old Testament

- He is there in Genesis 1 creating the world. This is confirmed in New Testament verses such as:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made' (John 1:1-3).

'For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him' (Colossians 1:16).

- He is the glorious Lord who appeared to Isaiah in Isaiah 6.

The apostle John wrote of this in John 12:41 – where, having quoted a verse from Isaiah 6, John says:

'Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him'.

What Isaiah tells us he saw was 'the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple'. John says: that was Jesus. That was Jesus, surrounded by the seraphim, who were calling to one another 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory'. That was Jesus, in whose holy and glorious presence Isaiah felt himself condemned.

Indeed, Christ is present *wherever God is present* because he is God – so that he said to his Jewish audience 'Before Abraham was born, I am' (John 8:58), taking upon himself the holy name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3.

We also find that –

Christ is promised in the Old Testament covenants. He is:

- The promised seed of the woman who would defeat the devil (Genesis 3:15).
- He is the promised descendant of Abraham, through whom all the nations of the world would be blessed (Genesis 12:3).
- He is the promised Son of David, the eternal King, whose reign and whose kingdom will never end.

Christ's person and work are predicted in the Old Testament written prophecies, e.g.

- He is the child who is born, the Son who is given. He is the one whose name is called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6)
- He is the one upon whom God laid the iniquity of us all – he is the one pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, punished so we could have peace with God, wounded so we could receive spiritual healing (Isaiah 53:5,6).

Then again, we find –

Christ's person and, more particularly, his role/work are prophetically symbolised in the Old Testament rituals:

- He is the ultimate sacrifice, of which all other sacrifices were symbolic shadows, and from which all other sacrifices drew their power and their grace.
- He is the ultimate high priest, to whom all other priests pointed, the reality of which they were mere symbols.
- He is the one true Passover: 'Christ, our Passover lamb' sacrificed for us (1Corinthians 5:7).
- He is the real Sabbath of which all other Sabbaths were mere shadows (Colossians 2:16,17).

Whenever we read Old Testament references to sacrifice, priesthood, festivals and holy days, we are reading about Jesus Christ and his substitutionary and intercessory work. All of these aspects of the ritual and worship of Israel are copies of the real thing, 'copies', representations, of Jesus Christ and his sin-bearing death. Any minimal saving power they had, any minimal evidence of grace, was a visible pointer to the ultimate salvation, the ultimate expression of grace in Jesus Christ. The letter to the Hebrews tells us this repeatedly.

Again we find that –

Christ and his work are prophetically anticipated in events in Old Testament history

- The salvation of Noah's family in the ark is a massive, real-life, prophetic drama depicting our salvation in Christ.
- The incredible exodus of the Israelite slaves from Egypt is an equally graphic real-life, prophetic drama, pointing ahead to the even more incredible redemption that we have in Christ. Interestingly, on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah spoke with Christ, they spoke, according to the Greek text, about his '*exodus*' that he would accomplish, that he would bring to fulfilment, in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

And then, there's more –

Christ is typified in Old Testament characters

Many Old Testament characters are understood by Bible scholars to be what they term 'types' of Christ. In some way or another these characters portray in a micro way some macro truth about Christ. For example;

- Moses – typifies Christ as both Redeemer and Prophet.
- David – typifies Christ as King.
- Job – portrays the suffering of Christ, particularly the sense of abandonment by God.

Details of Christ's life, both major and minor, are predicted in the Old Testament

For example:

- Psalm 110 predicts the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God.
- Zechariah 9 predicts Christ's entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey.

The four gospel writers, plus Paul and Peter, all draw our attention to Christ (inclusive of both his person and his work) as the one cohesive element, the unifying truth that binds together the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament good news. These New Testament writers want us to understand:

- That the Old Testament stands in eager expectation and anticipation of the coming of the Christ and the salvation to be achieved through him. Through all of its pages, the Old Testament is shouting: 'Christ is coming! Jesus is coming!' As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the Old Testament to the New Testament is that of anticipation/fulfilment. The Old Testament is not discredited by the New Testament. Rather, it's fulfilled and authenticated by the coming of Christ. The New Testament reality is the reason the Old Testament exists.
- Secondly, the New Testament writers want us to understand that Christ and his gospel is the deep mystery that has *always* been 'hidden' in the Old Testament. It is now revealed, now made known, now no longer a mystery, now that Christ has come. A great Christian in the past stated '*The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is in the New revealed.*' The truth about Christ was always there in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it is brought out into the open. It is hidden no longer. It is a mystery no longer.

For example, Paul wrote:

'We declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began' (1Corinthians 2:7).

'... this grace was given me: ... to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God ...' (Ephesians 3:8,9).

'... to present to you the word of God in its fullness – the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people ...' (Colossians 1:25,26).

Think of it this way: Imagine you have bought a new rose bush. You wait with eager expectation for the first bud to open. So long as it is a bud, you cannot see the glory of the rose, but you know that it is all there, tucked away, hidden, in the bud. Then when it is full blown, you see it. It is a mystery no longer. Its overpowering colour, its beauty, its glory, is in full sight. Such is the relationship of the Old and New Testaments.

- Thirdly, the New Testament writers want us to know that Christ is the eschatological hope, the end time hope, the expectation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament spoke of his coming, and prepared the way for his coming, with great desire and heartfelt longing.

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The Old Testament is so rich with truth about Christ that it has not been possible to include all aspects of that truth in this KYB series. Much has been left out, particularly places referring to the *micro*-details about Christ's life and death. There's much, much more to find out about Christ in the Old Testament than what is covered in this series.

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So, this KYB series on *Finding Christ in the Old Testament*, uses a topical approach rather than book-by-book approach. This gives a more powerful, more cohesive, more comprehensive, more manageable and more memory-friendly presentation of Christ in the Old Testament than a book-by-book format.

The choice of topics, and the sequence in which these topics are studied, is deliberate.

- The series starts with a unit on **the eternal divine existence of Christ**. This is the essential presupposition behind the fact that Christ is 'in the Old Testament'.
- The second unit moves to **the divine attributes of Christ**. These attributes, roles and functions are claimed of or by Christ in the New Testament. They are actually taught in the Old Testament to be the attributes, roles and functions of God.
- The third unit looks at **Christ in the covenants**. These covenants define and anticipate how this divine LORD would himself come and fulfil what was necessary for human redemption.
- By finding **Christ in the worship rituals of Israel** in the fourth unit, we will learn in these symbolic shadows how this redemption would be accomplished.
- The units on **Christ and historical figures** and **Christ in the worship of David** give further insight into the person and work of Christ. (They also provide an element of relief from the intensity of the previous and following units. Although they also have their own intense moments.)
- **The suffering of Christ** unit (featuring Isaiah's servant songs) brings our focus back on God's plan for our redemption. It prepares us for deliberate face-to-face focus on **the death of Christ** in the next unit. Both confront us with this incredible event, planned by God before the creation of the world and predicted and symbolised in the Old Testament from Genesis onwards.
- Then, of necessity, the final unit in the series focuses on **the victory and eternal reign of Christ**. It is the necessary and always certain sequel to his death: Christ, the Mighty God, the conquering King; Christ receiving his rightful glory.

Thus this study series comes full circle. It starts with the glory of Christ in eternity. It finishes with the glory of Christ in eternity. But there is a difference: that we whom he has redeemed are there with him at the finish. That was his intention at the beginning! And that is why the whole awe-inspiring, over-whelming, in-between 'story' happened! — That is why Christ, the eternal Son, the LORD of glory, became one of us and died for us.

Because of this beginning and because of this end, we find Christ, the ultimate treasure, in the Old Testament. Indeed, he is the beginning, and he is the end. Of necessity he is also present in-between.

So let us think again of Christopher Robin and his rabbits –

‘I went to the common

The old-gold common –

And I found little rabbits

‘Most everywhere!’

May this be your experience, your joy, your deep satisfaction at the end of this study series –

I went to the testament,

The old, Old Testament –

And I found Jesus Christ

‘Most everywhere!’

Thank you for listening.

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