

The Place of the Old Testament in the Church's Example

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Introduction

For New Testament saints, the Old Testament provided models for practicing godliness, prayer and praise.

I. Practicing Godliness (1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

The Old Testament Scriptures challenge the New Testament believer to be *holy* (1 Peter 1:13-16). We need to study the events and people of the Old Testament to learn about godly living.

A. Negative Example (vv. 1-10)

- ✓ Exposure to spiritual highlights failed to produce godliness (vv. 1-5).
- ✓ Craving evil things (v. 6).
- ✓ Idolatry (v. 7; cf. v. 14).
- ✓ Immorality (v. 8).
- ✓ Testing God (v. 9).
- ✓ Grumbling (v. 10).

B. Positive Example (vv. 11-13)

- ✓ “Written for our instruction” (v. 11).
- ✓ Humility (v. 12).
- ✓ Help for humans from God (v. 13).

July 2006

II. Prayer and Praise (Matthew 6:13; Romans 15:9)

The Old Testament Scriptures challenge the New Testament believer to be thankful.

A. The Disciples' Prayer (Matthew 6:13)

- The phraseology of the prayer that Christ taught His disciples was saturated with Old Testament concepts.
- 1 Chronicles 29:10-13
- The Psalms include many prayers and petitions.

B. The Believers' Praise (Romans 15:9)

- 2 Samuel 22:50 // Psalm 18:49
- See Psalm 51:15-17; Hosea 14:2 and Hebrews 13:15.
- The Psalms include many praises. The Hebrew name for the Psalter is "Praises" (*Tehilim*).

III. An Example: Psalm 8

A. Psalm 7 Ends with Praise

- "I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness,
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High."
— Psalm 7:17

B. Psalm 8 Is a Psalm of Praise

- "Having wended our way in five consecutive psalms (Pss. 3–7) through the dark valleys of lament and pleas for deliverance, we hear the strains of a joyful melody rising from just beyond the steep hill represented by Psalm 7, and we arrive at the crest to discover a welcome prospect of breathtaking beauty and awesome delight. Psalm 8 introduces us to the first experience of joyful praise and adoration in the Psalter." – Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, NIV Application Commentary, 1:198-99

July 2006

v. 1 "majestic"

- In Hebrew, the term expresses a display of power that is awe-inspiring and even intimidating.

v. 2 "out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants"

- Nowhere else in the Old Testament is such a thought expressed.
- "The sound of the children is concrete evidence of God's fortress on earth. ... The sound of opposition is silenced by the babbling and chatter of children. What a contrast! What a King!" – Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 5:111
- In the New Testament, however, this verse is quoted and applied to praise that children offer (Matthew 21:16).
- Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:27b — "God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."

v. 3 "Your heavens, the work of Your fingers"

- That the heavens are the work of God's "fingers," implies His immensity and the insignificance of the universe. Yet man is more insignificant and finite.
- "We may have left our footprints on the moon, but the further we probe through radio telescope and orbiting satellite, the more awesome becomes the immensity of space and the whirling galaxies." – Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship*, 38

v. 4 "What is man ... ?"

- The majesty of the Creator sparks the psalmist's introspection. Human beings are the only creatures capable of such contemplation and of such verbalizing of praise.
- "In awe of one's immense smallness in this grandiose spectacle, the gaze turns on the self as one becomes aware that the human, small and insignificant, a breath and a shadow, is a marvel of the universe. ... The privilege stems from God's creative initiative and rests on incomprehensible grace. As they discover and praise God they recognize their true dignity, a discovery which confounds God's enemies." – Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam, 23-24

v. 5 "a little lower than the angels"

- The ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (known as the Septuagint, translated by Alexandrian Jews around 250 B.C.), renders this as "for a little while lower than the angels." That translation was quoted by

July 2006

the writer of Hebrews 2:6-8 to help argue that Jesus is superior to the angels.

- Some commentators believe that angels also are referred to by the Hebrew word “gods” in Psalm 82:1, 6-8. However, it might be best to understand the passage as a reference to human judges.

v. 6 “You have put all *things* under his feet”

- This phrase was quoted by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:27 while speaking of the universal dominion of Christ when He returns.
- Compare Ephesians 1:22 where the same phraseology refers to the exalted position of Christ as a result of His resurrection.

Singing Psalm 8

O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth.
O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth.

O Lord, we praise Your name,
O Lord, we magnify Your name;
Prince of Peace, Mighty God,
O Lord God Almighty.



— Michael W. Smith, 1981

Praying Psalm 8

- Lord, fill my mouth with Your praises.
- How beautiful and marvelous is Your creation.
- Thank You, Lord, for making me and caring for me.
- Thank You for sending Jesus Christ as the “second Adam.”
- Father, give me the faith of a small child.

Conclusion

Paul wrote that the Scriptures (specifically, of the Old Testament) are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Old Testament provides examples and instruction for practical godliness, including how to pray and how to praise God.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the basis for the church’s faith and practice.