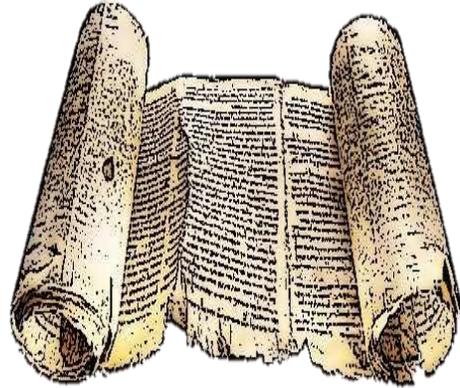


**Dear Aebi:** *“What is the use in our studying the Old Testament? Isn’t the New Testament our law?”*



Yes, the New Testament is God’s word or law for us today. In it God instructs us by direct commands of Christ (John 14:15) and the apostles (Acts 10:48) as well as by approved examples (Phil. 4:9) and necessary inferences that evidence the weight of a command behind them (Acts 20:7). But the Old Testament is also useful in several ways. For one thing, we need to know the Old Testament history and context of many New Testament references (Melchizedek, Rahab, and Abraham, for example) in order to correctly understand what is being said.

We also learn much from the principles of the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). In fact, some things can be learned most easily through a study of some Old Testament examples. What is involved in obedience may be learned by considering the examples of Noah, Abraham, Moses, King Saul, Uzzah, and others. It is hard to find a better way to show that obedience means to do all that God says, not just part of it, than to study Saul’s failure to obey God’s directions and the result in 1 Sam. 15. The consequence of failure to teach our children can be seen in the cases of Eli, Samuel, David, and the Israelites in the generation after Joshua. The results of substitution in worship may be learned from the examples of Cain and of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu. The consequences of greed are seen easily from the stories of Balaam and Gehazi. That obedience is a condition for blessing is obvious from the history of Naaman, the Syrian leper. The principle of repentance averting threatened destruction is evident in the repentance of Nineveh, and from this we learn that prophecy is often, if not always, conditional.

The first-century Christians often had only the Old Testament and a few writings of inspired Christians, and they used these Scriptures extensively. One need look no farther than the speeches of Jesus or the writings of Paul to see that the Old Testament was used regularly to reinforce lessons taught to disciples and churches about applying the principles of God to their lives. Many of God’s ways for man have not changed; nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament. God’s marriage law given to Adam and Eve, Jesus said, is still binding (Matt. 19:3-9); asked whether Moses’ law let one divorce his wife for any cause, Jesus answered that God’s intent in the beginning was God’s continuing rule: “What God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Both in converting those outside of Christ and correcting those in Christ, the apostles and inspired evangelists in the first century quoted Old Testament prophecy as fulfilled in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, as well as in the Christian’s responsibility in the church. Peter in Acts 2 cited three such prophecies and referred to a fourth. Paul in one speech in Acts 13 quoted five Old Testament prophecies. In Acts we find 21 references to specific Old Testament prophecies, and Matthew and Hebrews cite many more. Yes, the Old Testament is of great value to saints and sinners alike if they will use it correctly.

*Charles Aebi*