

# *Truth for Today*

## *The Bible Explained*

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For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

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**Speaker:** Gordon Kell

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## **What does the Bible Teach about: Christ in the Old Testament**

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
The New King James Version of the Scriptures has been used unless otherwise stated.]*

### **Introduction**

Our subject today Christ in the Old Testament. You might be thinking, "Wait a minute, Jesus Christ is only specifically mentioned in the New Testament, so what is the basis for thinking we can find Him in the Old Testament?" An excellent question. There is no doubt the Old Testament promised a Messiah, the Christ, and there are many references to support this. But I want to use what the Lord Jesus says in Luke 24 as a framework for this talk. So, let's look at two short passages in the final chapter of Luke's Gospel,

"Then He (Jesus) said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (verses 25-27).

"Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (verses 44-45).

In these verses, the Lord Jesus makes it abundantly clear that the whole of the Old Testament spoke about Him personally. He presents these revelations in a structured way through the Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.

What I am going to do is concentrate on several examples from the Old Testament that demonstrate these revelations.

### **Let's look at the example of Adam**

In Genesis 1 verse 26 God said,

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

And, in Genesis 2 verse 7 he gives us more detail,

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

Adam wasn't created as a child but as a mature man. God forms Adam and breathes life into him. There is a closeness to man not seen in God's other acts of creation and He plants a garden as a place for Adam to live and work as a gardener, but also introduces the first man to the animal king-

dom. All of this takes place before God creates woman, and before sin enters the world. Adam had a spiritual relationship with God, and he had a job to do. But something was missing; Eve. Adam was incomplete without his wife.

The story of creation of Eve, in Genesis, is remarkable. God doesn't form her from the dust of the earth but from Adam.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (Genesis 2:21-22).

It is worth, reciting Matthew Henry's comment of this passage,

"The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

But why would we relate Adam to Christ? I think God uses Adam's experience to give us a picture of Christ's love for His church. I base this on Paul's teaching in Ephesians chapter 5.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (verses 25-32).

Christ's dying for the church is illustrated in Adam's deep sleep. You will remember the last act of violence against Christ was by the soldier who pierced the Lord's side with his spear causing the shedding of His blood. It was from a rib from Adam's side, in Mathew Henry's words, "near to His heart", that Eve was formed.

In Genesis chapter 2, when God presented Eve to Adam he said,

""This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (verse 23-24).

Paul connects Adam's words with Christ's love and sacrifice for His Church when he writes, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"" (verses 30-31). The Old Testament character of Adam illustrates the love of Christ for His Church.

### **Let's look at the example of Isaac**

We find the first mention of love in the Bible in Genesis 22. It is the love of a father for his son.

"Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you"" (Genesis 22:1-2).

Abraham had waited for such a long time for Isaac. The birth of Isaac was a remarkable as an event in the lives of Abraham and Sarah given their advanced years. Isaac was living proof of God's faithfulness to the promises he had made to his old servant. Then, one day, God instructs Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son on a mountain in the land of Moriah. We are shocked that God would ask Abraham to do such a thing. And what possible purpose did God have given that Isaac was Abraham's heir and the embodiment of all the promises God had made to the patriarch. What is so surprising is that Abraham doesn't question God's command. Abraham was very good at appealing to God. For example, he pleaded to God to spare Sodom. Abraham prayed for God to accept Ishmael to be his heir before Isaac was born. He wasn't afraid to ask God to change His decisions. But this time, instead of trying to alter the situation, Abraham immediately responds to God's command and sets out for the land of Moriah.

As he got near to the place of sacrifice, he left his servants behind. His words to his servants are very interesting. He says, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." (Genesis 22:5). Abraham speaks of both himself and Isaac returning together. Then Abraham continued the journey on foot with his son. "So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together" (verse 6-8).

The words of Abraham suggest that he was looking for a substitute; a lamb that God would provide. When they arrived at the place of sacrifice, Abraham built and prepared an altar. Then he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar. It is very striking that there is no record of Isaac resisting his father's action. Finally, he takes the knife to kill his son. It is at that final moment God intervenes to prevent the sacrifice, "But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me"" (verses 11-12). It is then Abraham sees a ram caught in a thicket,

"Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided"" (verses 13-14).

After Abraham had sacrificed the ram God spoke for a second time to Abraham, "Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice"" (verses 15-18).

So what was God doing? God had developed the faith of Abraham until he trusted God without question. Then God used the faith of Abraham to give us one of the most powerful illustrations of what God himself was going to do some 18 centuries later in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews chapter 11 tells us,

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense" (verses 17-19).

Verse 19 explains that Abraham believed that had he sacrificed Isaac God would have resurrected the young man. The verse explains that the restoration of Isaac to his father was figurative of resurrection. It explains Abraham's belief he and Isaac would return to the servants and also that God would provide Himself with a lamb. But the full force of the story is of a father sacrificing a son. This takes us right into the New Testament and speaks directly of Christ,

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32).

This is why Isaac's willingness to submit to death is such a powerful illustration of what Paul wrote in Philipians chapter 2,

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (verses 5-8).

The Old Testament character of Isaac illustrates God's sacrifice of Christ and Christ's obedience to His Father's will.

### **The next example is Joseph**

Now we turn to the example of Joseph. His story begins in chapter 37 of Genesis and continues to the end of this great book. Let me briefly outline his story. Joseph was also a son who was loved by his father, Jacob. The beginning of the story of Joseph focusses on the special place Joseph held in Jacob's heart. Signified in the coat of many colours. Genesis 37 records Joseph's prophetic dreams which foretold of his future glory in Egypt. His brothers became jealous of Joseph, and this led to hatred.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers in Shechem where they were looking after their father's sheep. Upon arriving, Joseph couldn't find his brothers, and someone asked him what he wanted. He answers, "I am looking for my brethren." He discovers they are in Dothan and sets off to find them. When his brothers saw him in the distance, they conspired to kill him. As he arrived they attacked him, took his coat of many colours and put him in a hole in the ground. While they decided what to do, some Ishmaelites came by and Judah suggested they sell Joseph as a slave. The payment they receive is 20 shekels of silver. Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave. But God was with him and he prospered in Potiphar's house, but later Potiphar's wife caused him to be unjustly imprisoned. God also prospered Joseph while he was in prison. Later Pharaoh imprisoned his baker and his cupbearer. One night they both have a dream which Joseph interprets for them. In fulfilment of the dreams, the baker is executed but the cupbearer returns to his role but forgets Joseph. But when Pharaoh has a dream which no one can interpret the cupbearer remem-

bers Joseph and he is brought before Pharaoh. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream, which foretold a great famine. And Joseph also described to Pharaoh the best way to manage the years of plenty so there would be food when the famine struck.

Later, because of the famine, Joseph's brothers go to Egypt to buy corn. They come before Joseph but don't recognise him. Joseph manages a series of events which lead to his brothers remembering the terrible way they dealt with Joseph. When Joseph tells them he has decided to keep their youngest brother Benjamin in Egypt, it is Judah who offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin. It was Judah who instigated the slavery of Joseph. It is this act of sacrifice and change in the heart of Judah which leads to Joseph revealing himself to his brethren and saving his family. The story of Joseph foreshadows the suffering of the Lord Jesus at the hands of His own people leading to his death, resurrection and glory.

John tells us "[the Lord Jesus] was, in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:10-13).

The Lord Jesus came to His people Israel, was rejected by them, betrayed by Judas for 30 pieces of silver and handed over to the Roman rulers to be crucified. Joseph came out of prison, a picture of resurrection, to become a saviour to Egypt and to his own family. Jesus came out of death and is the Saviour of the world. The nation of Egypt bowed the knee to Joseph. God has promised that one day "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (see Philippians 2:10-11).

The Old Testament character of Joseph illustrates Jesus' rejection, suffering leading to death, his resurrection and His glory.

### **My next example is the Passover Lamb**

We read about the Passover lamb in Exodus, chapter 12. Of all the Old Testament illustrations of Christ, the Passover lamb stands out so clearly. In John chapter 1, John the Baptist introduces Jesus with the words, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (v. 29). A few verses later, as John the Baptist sees Jesus walking, he simply declares, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (v. 36). These declarations relate to the fulfilment of the word of Abraham in Genesis 22, "God shall provide Himself a lamb."

In the Jewish mind, the expression "the lamb of God" would remind them of the Passover Lamb sacrificed just before God delivered the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt in Exodus 12. Moses was given precise instructions from God about the Passover lamb. Each house had to take a lamb. The year-old lamb was to be without blemish, in other words, not diseased or injured. It was kept before its sacrifice to ensure it was perfect. It is interesting that the ram sacrificed by Abraham in Genesis 22 was caught by its horns in a thicket. If it been captured by its neck or one of its legs, it would have been damaged and unfit for sacrifice. On the Passover day the lamb was killed. Its blood was placed on the doorposts and lintel of the house. Afterwards, the lamb was roasted and eaten. God declared on the Passover night, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). The sacrifice of the lamb saved the house from God's judgement on the Egyptians. This sacrificed lamb looked on to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

After all the centuries of sacrifice, which the writer of Hebrews tells us could never take away sin (see Hebrews 10:11), John the Baptist announces, in John chapter 1, that the Lamb of God was present in the world. For the next three years, Jesus demonstrated Himself to be the Son of God who came as the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world. At the end of this ministry and at the time of the Passover, Pilate announced to the assembled representatives of Israel that he found no

fault in Jesus. He presented Jesus to them with the words, "Behold the Man" and later, "Behold your King" (John 19 verses 5 and 14). But Despite Pilate's attempt to release Jesus, the chief priests and elders force His execution. Paul writes, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" 1 Corinthians 5:7. Peter also writes, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot " (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Old Testament example of the Passover lamb illustrates Christ as the Lamb or God.

### **My final example is David**

We are first introduced to David in 1 Samuel chapter 16. God had rejected Israel's first king, Saul, because of His disobedience. He sent his old servant Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a new king. Jesse's sons were brought before him. Samuel thought that Eliab, David's oldest brother, was the one to be chosen to replace Saul. Samuel was looking for another man just like Saul, but God said to him,

"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things that people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (verse 7).

It was David who was to be chosen to be Saul's replacement, and where was he? He was keeping his father's sheep (verse 11). Psalm 79 records how David was called from the sheepfold, "He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (verse 78:70-72).

In 1 Samuel 17, before we get to the end of the story of David and Goliath, we are told David feed his father's sheep in Bethlehem (verse 15). In verse 19 we are told he left those sheep with a keeper. Eliab, David's his oldest brother, tries to belittle David in verse 28 asking him where he had left the few sheep in the wilderness. When David stands before Saul ready to go and met Goliath, Saul points out to David he had never been a soldier. What was his reply? "David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear... The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine"" (verses 34-37).

David is presented as the fearless shepherd. He illustrates a shepherd who was prepared to lay down his life for his father's sheep, and he did this when there was no audience. David is one of the Old Testament's most striking illustrations of the Lord Jesus. In Adam, Issac, Joseph and the Passover lamb we have passive pictures of a suffering Saviour. But in David we have a view of a powerful Saviour. He does not illustrate the suffering lamb but the Good Shepherd. When David went down into the Valley of Elah to meet Goliath the giant mocked him. Let's read what happened next,

"David said to the Philistine,

"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by

sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's"... David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him" (verses 45-50).

This is a vivid Old Testament illustration of what Jesus said in John 10,

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father" (John 10:11-18).

David presents the Lord Jesus as the mighty Saviour in all His strength. He foreshadows Jesus as the Good Shepherd who had the power to lay down His life for us at the cross and the power to take it again in resurrection.

### **Summary**

The examples we have looked at today are illustrations of Christ in the Old Testament. We have not explored the imagery of the Tabernacle or prophetic scriptures like Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 and Isaiah 53. We have not compared the numerous references the New Testament which demonstrate Christ's fulfilment of the Old Testaments Scriptures.

What we have done is traced the features God impressed on lives of some of the great men in the Old Testament which speak of Christ. Also, we have looked at one of the Old Testament's unmistakable illustrations of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God in the Passover Lamb. These all combine to give us a sense of what the disciples experienced as they listened to Jesus expound to them in all the Scriptures, "the things concerning Himself."

When He did that the disciples said,

"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

May the Holy Spirit reveal Christ to us in all the Scriptures as we read the Word of God and may it transform us into His likeness and empower us to worship and serve Him.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on, Christ in the Old Testament. Talk number T1152.

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