

The Old Testament and education in the 21st Century

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An essay on how the Old Testament of the Bible should not be forgotten and how it and the New Testament are really one book that should not be thought of separately.

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I was recently told that the Old Testament was not to be paid attention to and that I should only read and abide by the New Testament. My reaction to this statement was one of complete surprise and shows how poorly informed our current generation is. There are many reasons for this, but the biggest reason is a pure lack of interest in knowledge and science. Some see science as an attempt to prove the bible wrong, but when science is practiced properly it actually raises more questions than answers and thus gives more credence to the bible itself. The grandeur of the Cosmos and awesome machinery of life on Earth cannot be written as a mathematical equation or even as an elegant Galactic encyclopedia of everything, if one ever existed. We need religion just as much as we need science. Unfortunately today most people do not know that the sun is a star or that an electron is smaller than an atom. Or why grass is green or the sky seem blue and it's not just from a lack of understanding, but a lack of caring to understand. People today are less educated and less apt to educate themselves than ever. As children we are mesmerized by the world around us and we ask questions, lots of questions. But by the time we get to High School for instance we no longer ask questions, or at least questions we don't already know the answer to because we are afraid of ridicule. High School kids as well as college students simply memorize facts without the knowledge of the how when and why concerning those facts. A High School student may memorize the fact that two atoms of hydrogen and an atom of oxygen combine to form water, but do not know the first thing about why or how. Is it right or even considered learning or teaching for that matter if we do not have a full understanding of everything being taught in the classroom? Once the test is done and the instant gratification received in the form of an A or an F, the facts are flushed down the toilet and forgotten. I myself am completely guilty of this phenomenon that has swept our nation for the past 40 to 50 years. I specifically remember in lab tech school studying late at night to memorize facts and names of bacteria or protozoa and once the test was complete a wave of relief came upon me and I literally said, now I can forget that and move on. It's a sad testament to our education system, ourselves and to the future scientists who are growing fewer in number each decade. Perhaps partly to blame is the instant gratification system that we now heavily rely upon. Or maybe it's because a student cannot see how algebra or biology will someday get them the house or car of their dreams or the lifestyle they desire. And what rewards are there to students who excel and who do ask questions and have the desire to learn and retain that information? They are not consoled by their fellow students or even teachers for that matter; they are labeled as nerds or geeks and then become outcasts, so how can someone find motivation to learn given those facts? There must be other ways of rewarding a child for asking questions or being inquisitive then just making them a social outcast. I would often ask follow up questions in High School only to be told they didn't have time to further explain or that I needed to go to the library to look it up myself. Even an incomplete attempt by the teacher would constitute some reassurance and encouragement. It seems to me that if we tell our children the only dumb question is a question you did not ask, then teachers should abide by their own catch phrases and at least make an attempt to answer them and more over encourage questions in the first place. Now that I have touched upon the education system and the educational status of our country I want to discuss the statement made to me about not abiding by the Old Testament. First the English word Bible is from the Latin word biblia, later in Medieval Latin and Late Latin and translates to "the books". The Old Testament or first book lays the foundation for the teachings and events found in the New Testament. It was written in approximately 1445 B.C. starting with Genesis and contains 46 books. The New Testament was written after the crucifixion of Jesus and has 27 books. Since the Old Testament laid the foundation for the New Testament and bible verses from the New Testament specifically state not to forget the Old Testament, in order to be a Christian you must believe in both and cannot simply forget the first book due to its graphic nature. Also the bible is a progressive book and therefor you must begin with the Old Testament. Just as you would not begin reading any other book at the middle or ending, you must start reading the bible at the beginning of the Old Testament. Only then can you understand the New Testament when it is seen as a fulfillment of the events, sacrificial system, characters, covenants, laws, and promises of the Old Testament. Without the Old Testament we would not know why the Jews were looking for a Messiah or King. We would

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not understand Jewish customs that are mentioned in passing in the New Testament. We would not understand the perversions that the Pharisees had made God's laws as they added their traditions to it. Christians, we would not understand that we can make use of the same wisdom that Christ used against his adversaries. And most importantly, without the Old Testament we would not understand or be able to identify Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah through the many prophecies that were given concerning him such as his birth, manner of death and resurrection and many other details of his ministry. The New Testament Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles record many of the fulfillments of prophecies that were recorded hundreds of years before in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we find that Jesus's birth, miracles, death and resurrection to be fulfillments of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the Messiah's coming. It is the Old Testament's details that validates Jesus's claim to be the promised Messiah. Many of the books found in the New Testament are built upon earlier prophecies found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament gives the Law, which has two parts: the commandments and the blessing and curse that comes from obedience or disobedience to those commandments. The New Testament clarifies that God gave those commandments to show men their need of salvation; they were never intended to be a means of salvation (Romans 3:19). The Old Testament describes the sacrificial system God gave the Israelites to temporarily cover their sins. The New Testament clarifies that this system alluded to the sacrifice of Christ through whom alone salvation is found (Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:4-10). The Old Testament shows a world fraught with evil and the New Testament shows how paradise was remade for the whole of mankind starting with Adam and Eve. The Old Testament declares man was separated from God by sin and the New Testament declares how man can be restored to God in Romans chapters 3-6. The Gospels record Jesus's life and the Epistles interpret his life and proclaim how we are to respond to what he has done. Without the Old Testament we would not understand how Christ's reign of 1000 years fits in with his promises to the Jews. In conclusion the Old Testament lays the foundation for what was meant to prepare the Israelites for the ultimate coming of the Messiah. Who would sacrifice himself for the sins of the world? Finally in both Testaments we find all we need for eternal life and Godly living as is written in 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Given the above facts about the scripture, anyone who claims that the Old Testament is no longer applicable is deceiving you or at least misconstruing the message and demonstrating a complete lack of understanding. As far as our educational system, I can only imagine how it will progress. With teachers merely dishing out facts without a full explanation and students who lack a sense of excitement for knowledge for the betterment of themselves through further education, I can only hope for the future of mankind.

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