

## THE CHRIST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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If we were to ask any believer in the Bible who is the central character of that book, there could be only one answer--Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. There is a multitude of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament the gospels tell of his birth, life, death, and resurrection; the Acts tell of the rise and growth of his church; the epistles round out and crystallize his teachings, and the Book of Revelation prophesies of his coming in glory to bring about the final consummation of his work.

In spite of this wealth of material about Christ, and in spite of many fragmentary hints that suggest the possibility of much more abundant information on some points, there are many things which we do not know--about which the Bible is strangely silent. Why did Cain and Abel offer sacrifice to the Lord? By whom were they commanded so to do? Did Adam know anything about the Messiah who was to come? If there is no other name given except the name of Christ, whereby men may be saved, how was Adam saved? How and why did men begin to "call upon the name of the Lord?" (Genesis 4:26) We are told that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8) that those who heard him were disobedient. (1 Peter 3:19) What gospel did Noah preach? Did he tell the world of Christ? Was it the gospel of Christ to which they were disobedient? Such passages as 1 Peter 3:19, 20, and 4:6 would seem to indicate that it was.

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews Paul indicates that Enoch, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Moses all knew of Christ and had faith in him, but the old Testament is almost completely silent as to how much they knew of him, or from what source they learned it. The book of Jude tells in the 14th and 15th verses of Enoch, who prophesied that the Lord would come with ten thousand of his saints, but there is not a single verse in the Old Testament that tells of this prophecy, or of Enoch's knowledge of Christ.

A careful reading of the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians also suggests some questions to the student of the Old Testament. Verse 8 of this chapter says: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." We may find this promise in Genesis 12:3; 18:18; and 26:4, but in none of these places, nor in any other I have been able to find, does the Old Testament tell us specifically that this promise refers to Christ, who should come of Abraham's seed, nor does it tell us that Abraham believe in Christ, nor that he found salvation through Christ.

In this same chapter Paul also speaks of a "covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ," and which the law of Moses, coming 430 years after, could not disannul. He goes on to say that the law was added, because of transgressions. Added to what? Seemingly, to the gospel covenant in Christ, which had been followed by Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the other patriarchs and prophets until the law was given as a "schoolmaster" to lead an ignorant and rebellious people to Christ, 430 years after the Lord's covenant with Abraham, but nearly two thousand years after the gospel was first preached to Adam.

The 26th verse of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews says that Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt..." Deuteronomy 18:18,19 gives Moses' prophecy of another prophet who should arise, like unto him, and warned that whosoever would not hearken to his words should be cut off from among the people; but it remained for Peter to make application of this promise to Christ, the promised Messiah, as he preached to the people of Jerusalem following Christ's resurrection.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints believes that it is peculiarly fortunate in having supplementary material which throws much light on these questions. That material is contained in the revelations given through Joseph Smith, the prophet, and in his corrections and additions to the Bible, contained in what is known as the Inspired Version.

Did Adam know anything about Christ? The Inspired Version of the Bible tells us that he did. We are told that Adam and Eve were commanded to worship God, and to offer the firstlings of their flocks for an offering unto the Lord. The scriptures continue: "And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth; Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son. And thou shalt repent, and call upon God, in the name of the Son, for evermore."(Genesis 4:4-8) A later verse adds: "And the Lord God called upon men, by the Holy Ghost, everywhere, and commanded them that they should repent; And as many as believed in the Son and repented of their sins, should be saved." (Genesis 5:1,2, Inspired Version) And again: "And God cursed the earth with a sore curse, and was angry with the wicked, with all the sons of men whom he had made, for they would not hearken unto his voice, nor believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him who he declared should come in the meridian of time: who was prepared from before the foundation of the world. And thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels, sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by an holy ordinance; and the gospel preached; and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof."

These scriptures go on to tell how Adam was commanded that he must be born again, of water and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by the blood of the Only Begotten who was to come in the meridian of time; how he was caught up by the Spirit and baptized in water; how he was then baptized by the spirit, and told that he was now after the order of priesthood of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, and a new-born son of God.

Adam taught this gospel of faith, repentance, and baptism to his sons; and those of them who were obedient handed it down to their sons. Abel understood that his offering of the firstlings of his flocks was in the similitude of the offering of the Only Begotten Son, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who was to come in the meridian of time. Enoch believed on the name of Christ, and looked forward to and prophesied of his day. And by the way, that prophecy of Enoch, mentioned by Jude, but not found in the Old Testament, is also included in our Inspired Version of the Bible. Noah was ordained to the holy priesthood which was handed down from his fathers, and commanded to declare the gospel which had been preached unto Enoch. The gospel he preached was faith on the name of the Messiah who should come, repentance, and baptism in his name.

Jesus himself said "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56) Abraham understood that the Messiah was to come of his seed, and that it was he who should be the means of redeeming and blessing all the families--or nations--of earth. Abraham understood in a way that is made far from clear by the fragmentary story in the Old Testament, that his offering of Isaac was a type of God's offering of his only Son, and that the animal sacrifice provided in Isaac's stead was still a symbol of the one who should come and be offered for the sins of the world.

Moses understood that the law given on Sinai did not do away with the gospel which had been preached from the beginning, but was "added up to" that gospel covenant to meet the needs of a nation of slaves, who needed such a strict law to lead them back to the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior whom they had forgotten during four hundred years of bondage in Egypt. This idea is more fully elaborated in the 4th chapter of Galatians, where Paul compares the original Messiah covenant to Isaac, the son of Abraham's lawful wife; and the law given on Sinai to Ishmael, the son of the bondmaid Hagar, pointing out that the promise continued through Isaac despite the temporary intrusion of Ishmael upon the scene.

Paul also makes it plain in the Hebrew Letter (4.2) that the same gospel in which the Christian Hebrews of his day believed, that is, the gospel of Christ--had been preached to the ancient Hebrews; for he says, "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." In the First Corinthian letter, chapter 10, verses 1-4 Paul tells how all Israel was baptized in the cloud and in the sea, and how they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them; and that Rock was Christ. Ancient Israel knew of Christ, obeyed his gospel, and looked forward to his coming. He was the hope of Israel.

To sum up our conclusions, Latter Day Saints believe that Jesus Christ was with the Father from the beginning; that he was the partner of his Father in the work of creation; that before the world or man was created the plan of salvation had been devised, and the Son designated as the Redeemer of Fallen man. We believe that Christ was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

With other Christian people we accept and rejoice in the fragmentary promises given by Old Testament prophets concerning the coming of this Messiah. With you we point to the promise given to Eve that she shall bruise the head of the serpent. We claim the promise given to Abraham concerning the blessing that was to come to all nations through his seed. We exult with Job in the assurance to which he gave utterance long years before the Redeemer was born, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." We point to the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the rod which would come out of the stem of Jesse, and concerning the virgin who should conceive and bring forth a Son and call his name Immanuel; God with us. We know and teach the other prophecies of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Zechariah, of Daniel, of Micah, but we also rejoice in the added testimony which is contained in modern revelation, and in the Book of Mormon--testimony that the gospel plan was given from the beginning, that Jesus and his redemption were taught from the beginning, and that God, his gospel, his love, his plan of salvation are eternal, unchanged and unchangeable.

Latter Day Saints believe that there is only one name whereby men may be saved--the name of Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God. They believe that there is only one gospel through which that name may be declared--the gospel of Christ, which was preached to and through Adam, with a promise that that gospel should continue and be preached to the end of the world as in the beginning--the gospel that was preached by Enoch, by Noah, by Abraham, by Moses, and by all the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament. Christ is the central figure of the Old Testament for us in a way that is not possible for those who lack the witness of those added scriptures which have been given to us through the modern prophets.

We call again on men everywhere to repent, to believe on the name of Jesus Christ their redeemer, to have faith in him, to be baptized in his name, and to receive also of the baptism of his Holy Spirit. We point to him and say who is the Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven, which is broad as eternity, and repeat the promise that whosoever cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by him shall never fall.