

Christmas In The Old Testament

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Someone told me that the great philosopher, Plato, said that as one goes through life, he must find the opinions of great men unless he can receive a word from God. If he did say that, he is even smarter than I thought (of course he doesn't know that). We all need an answer to the great and important questions of life---What am I doing here? What is my purpose? What is meaning? What does the future hold? Now you can try the Psychic Hotline, or palm readers, or spirits, or astrologers, or divination, but I strongly advise against it based on many biblical passages such as Deut.18:9-12, "There shall not be one found among you who uses witchcraft, or divination, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord." Again in Lev.20:6, "As for the person who turns to mediums and spiritists..I will be against them..and will cut them off". Don't forget that no psychic has ever won the lottery. As Israel was going into the promised land, God spoke to the people through Moses about who not to listen to. Who then is left to help us with these all important questions?

The fact is that we do need a word from God on these great issues. Unless God speaks, we can't know ultimate truth. Unless God speaks we can't know Him or anything about Him. Unless God takes the initiative to reveal the answers to these great questions, along with questions we haven't even asked, we can't possibly know why He created us or what plans He has for us. It doesn't matter what opinions men have, be they scholars or morons. They can't answer transcendent questions that are beyond them without a word from God.

The popular opinion today is that there is no real truth, or that truth is relative, just make truth whatever you want it to be. Frankly, I have never met a person that has been to heaven or been entrusted with all the answers from God. Does truth matter? Can we just make up what is appealing? In matters of taste, like colors or flavors, opinions are fine. You like green, and I like blue. You like Coke, and I like Pepsi. But in matters of truth, 2+2 always equals 4. When you go to the doctor for treatment you don't want just any medicine, you want the one that works to cure your specific ailment. When you give a dying guy directions to the Emergency Room of the hospital, you don't say it's somewhere in that direction, or it might be on such and such a street. No, you give only correct exact directions because his life is at stake. In the same way, on the manner in which you approach God, you can't afford to make a mistake. There is no margin of error. If you make a mistake you die.

The people of this world we live in make a huge mistake by thinking that they are living in the land of the living. Actually we are living in the land of the dying. The Bible is addressed to dying people in a world that is doomed, passing away. The instructions then on how to receive eternal life and survive this world must be exact, precise, and must be listened to carefully. The source of these instructions must be none other than God Himself, nothing else may suffice. We are not going to listen to spooks nor scholars who operate apart from God. There is only one human being who has come from heaven with directions on how to get to heaven, so we can't afford to miss that guy. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:13, "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven is the Son of Man (Jesus)".

LISTEN TO HIM

In Deuteronomy 18:15-22, Moses told Israel before they entered the promised land, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you (a Jew), you shall LISTEN to Him...I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you (Moses), and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not LISTEN to My words which He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him." Moses can only have been speaking of Jesus. The crowd at the feeding of the five thousand in John 6:14 certainly understood this because they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." Later it is evident they meant the prophet like Moses because they likened Jesus' miracle to Moses giving them the bread from heaven in the wilderness (v.31). Peter later confirmed to the church in Jerusalem in Acts 3:22 that Jesus was the fulfillment of that final prophet that we must LISTEN to, "and it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet (Jesus) shall be utterly destroyed".

A Prophet Like Moses

The people of Israel asked Moses to beg God to never again speak directly to them as He did in Exodus 20. When God appeared in an awesome theophany and gave them the Ten Commandments directly, it scared them so bad they lost control of their bodily function. Once they recovered, they asked Moses to speak to God and then report to them what God had said. This was the beginning of a procession of prophets that God would send to Israel. Moses gave the qualifications or the tests of a true prophet in Deut.18. First a true prophet's message had to be consistent with God's previous word. There could be no contradictory message. Secondly, the prophecy must come true. We can check the examples of the prophets who came after Moses like Isaiah and see that his messages were consistent and everything he said came true. Isaiah's prophecies on the first coming of the Messiah in Isaiah 53 are uncanny, and all of them were fulfilled in Jesus.

The people were to listen to God's prophets because their message was true, but also because it prepared them to listen to the FINAL messenger, the final prophet that Moses spoke of in Deut.18., the Lord Jesus Christ. People always ask if there is any new revelation from God today. The answer was given in the prophecy of Moses that there would be a final prophet that they must listen to because their eternal souls would be judged on how they responded to Him. In the person of the Lord Jesus, God put the period at the end of the sentence. God has said everything He has to say to us in Jesus.

How do we know Jesus is the final prophet that Moses spoke of? Peter confirmed it in Acts 3 and God confirmed it in the transfiguration of Matthew 17. Remember that in Matt. 16 Jesus had told the disciples that He must be arrested and crucified, but Peter and the boys said "no way". They did not want to listen to such talk because they had given up everything for Him. Following this event, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on the mountain, and they witnessed Jesus in all His glory. Even more important was they heard God's confirming Word, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; LISTEN TO HIM." Does that sound familiar? This is what Moses said about the final prophet in Deut.18, "LISTEN to Him". Jesus is the final prophet, He has the truth, He has the answers, and He has the way to eternal life. The author of Hebrews said it well in Heb.1:2-3, "in these last days God has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world, and Jesus is the exact representation of His nature". Therefore, listen to Him.

Moses Was a Type of Christ

In Deut.18 when Moses predicted that God would raise up this final prophet that we must listen to, Moses said the final prophet would be like him, but have the final Word. In what ways was Jesus like Moses? First of all they both spoke God's words, and secondly they both provided deliverance for the people. Moses delivered them from slavery in Egypt, but Jesus delivered us from slavery to sin. Jesus delivered us from condemnation to salvation. Next, both did great miracles. Moses also was a type in that they were both Jews, both had lived in obscurity before their ministry, both were protected as a baby, both were rejected by the nation, both were humble, both were intercessors for the people, and both were mediators of a covenant. Moses mediated the Old Covenant of law, and Jesus mediated the New Covenant of grace.

Christmas

Every year on December 25, we celebrate the birth of Christ which was prophesied in the Old Testament going all the way back to Abraham. In Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham that He would bless all the people on earth through Abraham's descendent. He meant that He would send Jesus into the world as a baby to live a perfect life, speak the Word of God, and die a substitutionary death for people's sins. This is confirmed by Paul in Galatians 3:16 that the promise was about Jesus Christ and His atoning work on the cross on our behalf. Moses later spoke of Jesus as the ultimate prophet that people must listen to in order to be saved. A successive line of prophets spoke of the coming Messiah, and of course Isaiah is the clearest and most comprehensive prophet of Jesus. Isaiah said He would be born of a virgin, be called "God with us", Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace. In Isaiah 53, the prophet said that from the cradle to the grave He would live a life of humility. He would be misunderstood and rejected. He would bear our sorrows and griefs, but by the will of God He would be pierced through for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. Everything we deserved would fall on Him. All of us have turned away from God and wandered off like lost sheep, but the Lord has caused our iniquity to fall on Jesus. He would be falsely accused and killed, and then be buried in a rich man's tomb. As Isaiah put it, "He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors."

There is one man speaking to us from the Bible, one man speaking to our hearts who alone has all the answers to all the important questions---LISTEN TO HIM. Rev.3:20 says that Jesus is knocking on the door of our heart, if anyone hears Him and opens the door, He will come in to them and have a relationship with them. CHARLIE TAYLOR