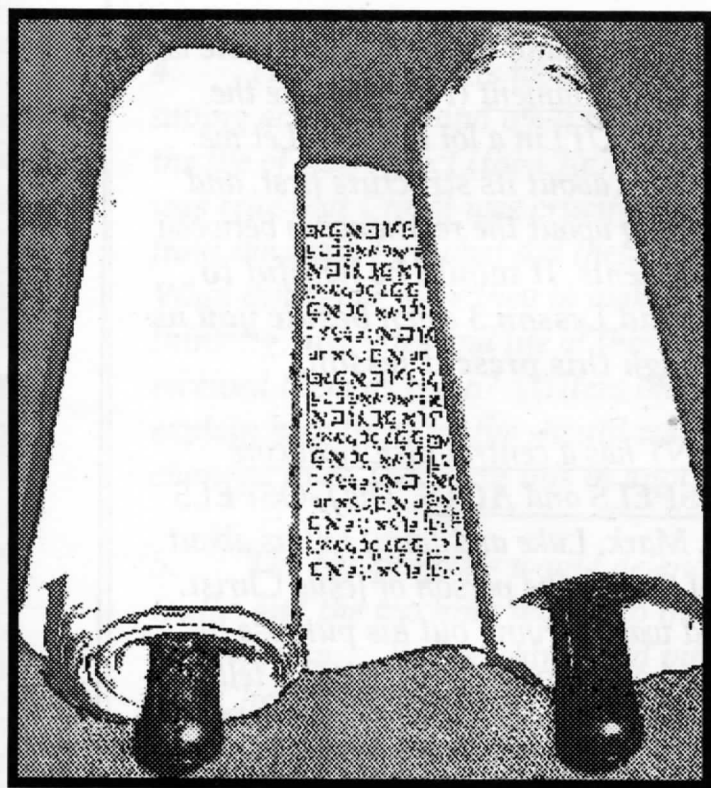


LISTENING TO GOD



AN APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

Part Four In A Series Of Seven

4. The Drama: Act 2

PROPHETS WERE NOT SIMPLY FORETELLERS

THE SECOND MAJOR DIVISION OF THE BIBLE

1. *The second major division of the Bible is called the New Testament (NT). It's like the Old Testament (OT) in a lot of ways. Let me say a few things about its structure first, and later, something about the relationship between the two testaments. **It would be helpful to you if you had Lesson 3 open beside you as we go through this present lesson.***
2. *The NT has a central historical core called GOSPELS and ACTS. The GOSPELS (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) tell us about the work of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In him God was carrying out his purpose to rescue man from slavery in Sin. ACTS tells us how the people responded to the saving work of God in the person of Jesus, the Christ. ACTS teaches that those who trustingly turned to God in Christ became known as The Church.*
3. *The NT has a large section of prophetic materials usually called EPISTLES. Now you've got to remember that prophets were not simply foretellers. They did foretell or predict*

BAD VIEWS OF GOD AND CHRIST LEAD TO BAD LIVING

many things but that wasn't their main function. They were inspired teachers! They called God's people to remember their roots, to remember who they were and to live up to that status.

4. *The NT prophets would explain the saving acts of God and what these acts meant to the life of God's elect (the Church). That is, it was true that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead, but what did these events mean? What difference were they to make to the thinking, attitudes and life of those who received them as truth? Writers like Paul would explain how these truths should result in changed lives. (More on this in another lesson.)*
5. *The NT prophets would defend these truths and the teaching related to them against false teachings. Bad teaching, bad views of God and Christ lead to bad living, and God wants people to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before him. Anything which undermined or basically altered this fundamental message was dealt with in bluntness (read **I John and Galatians 1:6-8**). The EPISTLES are **Romans through Revelation**.*
6. *The NT has no clearly defined "wisdom"*

THE TWO TESTAMENTS ARE PART OF ONE DIVINE DRAMA

or 'praise' material. It has Christian hymns embodied in the epistles, here and there, and it has 'wisdom' type literature scattered throughout it (see the book of **James** and **1 Peter 3:9-12**, for example). It makes full use of the OT wisdom and praise literature (as it does of other OT material).

7. So, when you read the OT, it would be helpful to you if you regarded **Genesis through Joshua** as the basic history of God's saving and blessing activity and the rest of the OT as woven around that basic history. When you read the NT it would be helpful to regard the **Gospels through Acts** as the basic history of God's saving and blessing activity and the rest of the NT as woven around that basic history.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OT & THE NT

8. The two 'testaments' are part of one divine drama. Neither one is complete without the other. If we wish to understand God and his eternal purpose we need to listen to both 'testaments'.

NEITHER ACT 1 NOR ACT 2 CAN TELL THE WHOLE STORY

9. We've all come across plays with two acts. If you miss the first act a lot of the second act is meaningless. If you have to leave after the first act, then of course you don't know where the whole drama was heading. Things are often said in the first act which become crucial only in light of the new developments in Act 2. But Act 2 depends on Act 1 to create a context and foundation for Act 2. Neither Act 1 nor Act 2 can tell the whole story. Together they are more than two independent parts. Putting them together makes them both richer and fuller than they can be standing alone. Some parts of Act 1 are passing features of the drama but the bulk of it is taken up into and becomes the fabric of Act 2. (It's terribly easy for New Testament students to forget how much they owe to the Old. It's equally easy to underestimate how much use NT writers make of the OT.)

10. The OT has much foundational teaching for NT people. It was to a New Testament Christian that Paul said (2 Tim 3:16-17): "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Paul spoke here of Old Testament scripture and you'll note that the first fruit of the inspired

THE OT IS PREPARATION FOR THE FULLER REVELATION OF THE NT

scriptures is teaching! Immediately before saying this Paul urged Timothy to continue in the scriptures he had been taught as a child. These scriptures teach a man how to be right with God by faith (3:14-15). Throughout the NT, the writers prove their case about Christ and justification by grace through faith by using the OT—over and over and over again. It isn't doing the OT full justice to go there simply for 'examples' of how or how not to live! So, to treat the OT as an outdated book written to ancient Jews and with nothing to teach Christians today is to miss the truth in a very important area.

11. The partial teaching of the OT is brought to completion by the teaching of the NT.

Though the OT teaches more than most NT students realise, it is still only preparation for the fuller revelation in the NT. The work God began in OT times could only be fulfilled by Jesus Christ. So while the OT pointed men to Christ, it didn't provide the teaching of Christ and the message of God's ultimate purposes which were revealed and fulfilled in Christ. This kind of thing is said plainly in many NT sections. See **Ephesians 3:4-5** and **Galatians 3:23-25** as two examples out of many.

THE "SCAFFOLDING" WAS REMOVED SINCE IT WAS NO LONGER NEEDED

12. Many OT practices and truths were for the moment, never intended to be permanent. Animal sacrifices, physical temples and tabernacles where God "dwelled", societal laws given because of some particular need. A special priesthood (including a high-priest), and many other things were meaningful and necessary within the framework of God's developing purposes. But when his Son appeared and brought to completion what God had been moving toward, the 'scaffolding', no longer needed, was gently laid aside as relating to another time and place.

13. Because the NT brings God's revelation to its completion, it becomes the best possible interpreter of the OT. If the NT speaks a clear word on what an OT passage means within God's ultimate purpose (which is to bring all men into a living relationship with himself)—the NT's interpretation is to be regarded as final. **It will help if you read again what you read in paragraphs 8 & 9.** You will often find the NT removing the temporary OT rule and making use of the permanent truth behind that temporary rule. The OT and the NT are two teachers who bring people to God. The OT lays the groundwork and the NT completes the course of instruction.

EVALUATION SHEET

Name: _____

Listening To God LESSON 4

Tick The Box When You Have Read The Entire Lesson

Circle The Correct Scripture

1. Every scripture is inspired and profitable:

Galatians 1:6-8 1 Peter 3:9-12 2 Timothy 3:16

2. God does not dwell in temples made with hands:

Ephesians 3:4-5 Acts 7:48 1 Corinthians 6:19

3. Many OT practices were laid aside by the NT:

Colossians 2:16-17 Hebrews 7:18 Galatians 3:25

4. The OT spoke of things for future generations:

Jeremiah 31:31 1 Peter 1:12 Acts 3:24

5. The NT makes some OT teachings clearer:

Ephesians 3:4-5 2 Timothy 1:10 Hebrews 8:7

Give The Name

1. The NT historical core is: _____ and _____

2. The NT prophetic materials are: _____

Complete This Statement: (As found in the booklet.)

1. In him God was carrying _____

2. Putting them together _____

3. You will often find the NT removing _____

4. ACTS tells us how the people responded _____

5. The OT lays the groundwork _____

6. Bad teaching, bad views of God and Christ _____

In Light Of 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Say True or False

(If the statement is true write T, if false write F.)

- _____ 1. Inspired scripture is profitable for teaching!
- _____ 2. Timothy learned scripture in childhood!
- _____ 3. Only God is holy, Scriptures are not holy!
- _____ 4. The scriptures aim at equipping God's people!
- _____ 5. Salvation is through faith in our own ability!

**Tick The Box When You Have Read All The Verses
Mentioned In This Lesson**