

# **How to Read The Hebrew Bible (The Old/First Testament)**

Addressing Common  
Misconceptions

# Pre-understandings?

**“... those of us who have had long term exposure to Scripture from within a particular culture of interpretation—be it a church culture and/or a tribal one—have a natural, human tendency to read the words in light of what we already ‘know.’ That is why we like to read translations that bolster what we already believe, ignoring or denouncing ones that don’t fit into our own theology.”**

(“Far Trekkin” Vol. 9, Issue 1, Feb. 2013)



**Eshinee Veith,**  
Lutheran Bible  
Translator,  
Botswana

# Teachable?

**“If we are not teachable, there will be no transformation.”**

(Uprising, 45).



**Erwin McManus,** named by Church Report in January 2007 as one of the "50 Most Influential Christians in America."

# Small Group Discussion



\* Hur tänker din kultur på Gamla testamentets Gud?

\* How does your culture think about the God of the Old Testament?



**Michelangelo,**  
Sistine Chapel

# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



**Ian Provan,**  
Regent College,  
Vancouver, BC

- 1. The Old Testament has been left behind by the New Testament**
  - \* **However:**
    - \* **Jesus did not leave the OT behind.**
    - \* **Paul and the early church utilized the OT.**
    - \* **“All Scripture is inspired...” (2 Timothy 3:16)**
    - \* **Marcion (c.85 – c.160) declared as heretic for wanting to get rid of the OT**
    - \* **The Nazis tried to get rid of the OT**

# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



## 2. The Old Testament cannot be read the same way as the New Testament (old only through the lens of the new).

### Problems:

- \* No authority on its own
- \* The OT becomes an empty theological shell that you can fit in anything you want to.
- \* Miss what God and the author intended for the original audience

# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



## 3. The Old Testament is only important as a witness to Jesus.

### Problems:

- \* Narrows the Bible down to the prophets. But they spoke about a lot more than the coming Messiah.
- \* Misses full revelation of God, other theological content, etc.
- \* While Jesus is the central figure in the Bible, its not sensible to reduce the great diversity of biblical content to just Jesus.



# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



## 4. The Old Testament is about Israel and the New Testament is about the Church.

### Problems:

- \* Some theologies (Dispensationalism) hold this.
- \* If one does not think the OT is continuous with the NT, then there tends to be a different view of the Sacraments (baptism and Holy Communion)
- \* Miss NT and early Church concerns that continue OT concerns (Light to the Nations, widows and oppressed, etc.)
- \* Miss that Jesus was a Jew and most of the early church were Jews and carry the Jewish worldview.



# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



## 5. Old Testament ethics have been superseded by New Testament ethics.

### Problems:

- \* “We’re Christians and we know better” is arrogant.
- \* Great gulf put between the two testaments.
- \* Simplistic

---

While there is a distinction, Jesus and Paul both quote and use OT ethics.

# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



## 6. Old Testament is about law and the New Testament is about grace.

Problems:

- \* One can only believe this by not reading the OT closely.

---

The OT does not teach salvation by works.

Saved by grace out of Egypt (and brought into a right relationship with God).

The law comes after being saved, Deut. 7-9.

# Ian Provan's 7 Common, Modern Misconceptions of the Old Testament



## 7. Old Testament knows a God of wrath and judgment and the New Testament knows a God of love.

### Problems:

- \* Heretic Marcion saw an inferior God in OT, but he had to remove the OT and much of the NT as well.
- \* Misses God the Father that Jesus teaches us to pray to.

---

**“There is no difference on the Testaments on this matter.”**

# Openness?

**“Openness to new understanding presupposes the willingness to yield old convictions...”**

(Models for Interpretation of Scripture, 4).



**John Goldingay,**  
Fuller Theological  
Seminary

# Small Group Discussion

**How has your concept of the Old Testament changed or been challenged?**



# Why isn't it more plain?

- \* I have wondered why didn't God provide a theology book that made it clear? Made it black and white?
- \* Instead, in the Christian worldview, God sent himself in Jesus Christ—a relationship!
- \* Thus, it seems a priority is being loving in relationship—not being “right.”
- \* *The Mark of the Christian*, by Francis Schaffer  
<http://www.ccel.us/schaeffer.html>

# Who needs theology?

By Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson

Dogma	Doctrine	Opinion
Essential beliefs	Important without being essential	Interesting but relatively unimportant
Separates Christians from other religions	Beliefs important for a particular tradition or denomination	Simply a difference of interpretation; <i>adiaphora</i>
The Triune nature of God and the means of salvation (saved by grace through faith); creedal content	Such as beliefs about sacraments, free-will, predestination, Scriptural authority; some Holy Spirit	Such as views of eschatology; angels and demons; charismatic gifts

