

SEEING JESUS THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT



**A Study of the Old Testament
and the Work of Christ
by Pastor Joe Meyer**

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INTRODUCTORY STUDY

SEEING JESUS “THROUGH” AND NOT “IN” THE OLD TESTAMENT

For many, many decades, Christians and their Pastors have “seen Jesus IN the Old Testament.” By that I mean, when there is a figure in the Old Testament narratives that is clearly God appearing to humans in some way, shape or form, they automatically say “That’s Jesus!” And I understand why they do that. But...that’s actually not true. This study aims to remind you that while Jesus wasn’t “in” the Old Testament, you can nonetheless see Jesus “through” the Old Testament, and in fact, that’s its purpose!

Okay then, with that caveat, why is that important? Check **Matthew 1:18-25** for the birth of Jesus foretold. In other words, when you read the birth narrative, Jesus...the Christ...had an actual “date of beginning” in Bethlehem’s stable. Check **Mark 6:1-6** in that regard.

Having said that, what do we do about the “Christ-part” of Jesus? For that information, check **John 1:1-5**. Though the “flesh guy” Jesus had a birthday, the Christ-part of Jesus is one with the Father and the Spirit and has been one with the Father and the Spirit from all time and eternity. Check **Romans 9:1-5** but especially **Colossians 1:15-20**.

Consider a very important verse in regard to the Jesus AND Christ discussion: “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.” **Acts 18:5**

If the above is true, what do we do with **Jude 1:1-5**? Sure sounds like Jude, the Lord’s brother, thinks “Jesus” was in the Old Testament. How do we reconcile that passage? Once discussed, consider what Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:1-5**. How does that text help?

Okay...so when there's a "God-sighting" in the Old Testament, what do we call that "God-sighting" if it's not "Jesus"?

1. Some are what would simply be called "The Angel of the Lord": Read **Joshua 5:13-15; Exodus 3:1-6** (Exodus 3 is actually both).

1. Others are a "Theophany" or a moment of seeing "God Showing Up": Read **Genesis 18:1-8; Exodus 13:17-22; Daniel 3:8-30**.

With all of that set straight, this study has as its aim looking into stories that point to the work of Jesus in our world. The Old Testament, while sometimes giving us "Theophanies", more importantly points to the work of Jesus the Christ in our world. Remember what Jesus said about the focus of the Old Testament in **John 5:39**. In other words, Jesus can be clearly seen through the stories of the Old Testament. Some of stories will contain actual "Theophanies" and some will not, but all will deepen our understanding the the work of Jesus in our world through the narratives found in the Old Testament as we pursue "Seeing Jesus through the Old Testament."

STUDY ONE

NOAH AND THE BIG BOAT

GOD'S SAVING WORK THROUGH WATER

Read Genesis 6:9-22 and write down three thoughts about the text:

1)

2)

3)

As an aside, how old was Noah when he began the work on the Ark? Check **Genesis 5:32** over-against **Genesis 7:6** for a clue. Why is that important for us to remember as Christian people? What difficulties did Noah likely face during that lengthy time it took to construct what God commanded him to build?

This very familiar story reminds us of God's heart and His desire to save in the midst of sinfulness. It's interesting that the Lord said, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Genesis 6:13. While the Lord did just that through the flood...what else did God do? Let me put it this way, did God put an end to ALL flesh? Check **Genesis 6:17,18** again. Why is that important for our purposes?

Okay, but what about the Christ-connection? Well, first of all, and perhaps most clearly, Peter speaks about Baptism in connection with the ark in **1Peter 3:18-22**. While this isn't a direct "Jesus through the OT" part of the Noah story, it does get at the Christ-connection with Noah and Baptism. Look at a couple of other passages in that regard: **John 3:1-5**; **Romans 6:1-4**; **Galatians 3:23-29**. One other possible pre-Jesus baptismal reference can be found in **Ezekiel 36:22-27**. In what way then is baptism, which Peter tells us Noah points to, connected to Christ? See **Romans 6:1-4**. So indeed, the water of the Noah story does have baptism and Christ implications.

To get at that, what about Noah himself? Later in these studies we'll consider Moses as what we call a "type of Christ" or an individual that points to Christ because their actions point to the work of Christ. What about Noah, could he be considered the same? Check **Hebrews 11:7** and consider first, what is said about the world of all time in **Romans 3:9-20** and then what Jesus did for us as recorded in **Romans 5:1-11**.

STUDY TWO

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE SUBSTITUTE

Read **Genesis 22:1-14**

When you read or perhaps re-read this story, what questions come up in your mind?

1)

2)

3)

Consider the importance of Isaac to the overall plan of God: Read **Genesis 17:15-21**.

With that information, why in the world would Abraham get so close to actually sacrificing his son and “The son of the Promise” no less? Read **Hebrews 11:8-12 & 17-19**

So, in what way does this well-known story point to Jesus? Let me ask this: Is Isaac himself what we would call a “Christ-Figure” in the Old Testament? You could even ask, “Did Isaac die?” Read **John 3:14-18** and remember **Genesis 22:2**. From those passages, we must admit, that as much as the Abraham/Isaac story seems to be a mirror image of the Father sending His only begotten Son...Isaac is not a Christ-figure.

Okay...If Isaac's not the “Christ-Figure” here, who/what is? Look at Abraham's own words in **Genesis 22:8**. So...who/what is the Christ figure? Consider that truth through the words of **Isaiah 53:4-6**, **2Corinthians 5:11-21** and **1Peter 3:18-22**

Thinking through this story then, Abraham's words take on new meaning and give further application to the Christ-Story...namely: “So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The LORD will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the

mount of the LORD it shall be provided.” **Genesis 22:14**. What “mount” is that text pointing to? See **John 19:16-22** and then consider, in connection, the words of **Isaiah 2:1-5**.

STUDY THREE

MOSES AND THE EXODUS

GOD'S REDEEMER FOR THOSE SUFFERING OPPRESSION

Read Exodus 3 and put down three things about how you think you'd feel if you personally experienced this event:

1)

2)

3)

As we've already explored, sometimes, a "Theophany", is preceded by an appearance of the Angel of the Lord. Check **Genesis 16:7-16; Judges 6:11-27**. So specifically at the burning bush, why did the Lord would do this in this particularly in this instance? Let me ask it this way: YHWH is going to save the Israelites from Egypt...but how is He going to do it?

Of course we know that YHWH does show up because of what He says, namely, "And he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." **Exodus 3:6**. In what way does that statement from the LORD point to the work of Christ in our world? Check **Matthew 22:23-33** and tie it to **Luke 16:19-31**.

We'll get to Moses ultimately obeying God and going to Egypt to be used by God to deliver the Israelites, but Moses was initially an "unwilling" or "reluctant" "savior", yes? In what way would the Bible tell us that this is NOT just like Jesus? Check **Hebrews 10:1-10** and **Matthew 26:36-46**.

God promises Moses that He'll empower Aaron to be the mouthpiece for his brother, but Aaron never does take the lead...that we know of, of course. Instead, Moses is in fact "the deliverer" for YHWH. This is a good point to stop and remind ourselves that God empowers people to bring His message...even unskilled, unwilling people. Moses thought he couldn't do it but God empowered him to do so and He did so in a way that went far beyond anything that Moses could've imagined. For other instances of God empowering humans, look at **Exodus 31:1-11** and **Matthew 10:16-20**. What does that say to you?

Ultimately Moses does come to Egypt and brings with him not only the authority of YHWH, but as mentioned the power of YHWH in order to deliver His children as well. Three things about the deliverance then:

1. Through Moses, YHWH was destroying the so-called "gods" of the Egyptians through the plagues. How does that point to the work of Christ? Look at **Acts 17:22-34** and also apply it to our day and time.
1. Through Moses, YHWH would deliver His children from the oppression of an overlord...in their instance, Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. In our instance...Jesus does what? See **Acts 26:12-18**.
1. Through Moses, YHWH would lead His children towards and ultimately into the Promised Land (of course Joshua would fulfill this). What about us? What's our "promised land"? Check **1Peter 2:9-12**.

All that said, we do have to admit one more thing...there is a Christ-figure (or image of Jesus) other than Moses in the narrative of the Israelites, Egypt and the Passover. Look first at **Exodus 12:1-13** and then remember John the Baptist's proclamation in **John 1:29**. One other thing in that regard...during what Festival was Jesus crucified? Check **Matthew 26:17-25**.

STUDY FOUR

BOAZ AND RUTH

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

Read Ruth 3

Some of what we read here is unusual and specific to the context that Ruth and Boaz lived in. What questions come up for you as you read this segment?

1)

2)

3)

At the outset of this story from God's people, we encounter a very practical issue, namely, these women were all left as widows in a time when being a widow was precarious at best. But their terrible situation is a moment when we can remember the provision of the Lord for just such things...even if some of His provisions we don't understand completely. Look first at what is called "levirate law" in **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**...what do you think about that law? For a good reference to the "levirate law" look at **Matthew 22:23-33** (as an aside the term "levirate" comes from the Latin word "levir" which is "brother-in-law". It's not a Biblical term.). This gets at the amazing love our Heavenly Father has for all of us, but particularly the hurting: See **Psalms 68:4-6; Psalm 146:5-10; Matthew 25:31-46** and **James 1:27**.

God is indeed a merciful, loving and gracious God as seen above, but the story of Ruth gets at that in yet another way He takes care of the poor as well. In chapter two we find out about Boaz's protection over Ruth. Now, admittedly, it could be that he knew she was single and perhaps she was also beautiful and so Boaz was simply looking for a wife. Having said that however, while we need to be reminded that Ruth stood out among the other women, more importantly, God was also looking out for her: Check first **Leviticus 19:9,10** alongside **Ruth 2:1-13**.

When we come to chapter three then, we find out God's ultimate goal in the life of Ruth and Naomi, namely, that Boaz would redeem them. Be sure to understand that Ruth wasn't doing something inappropriate at the threshing floor since uncovering Boaz's feet was simply saying "I'm available to marry if you'd like to marry me." In order to do that however, Boaz had to be her "kinsman redeemer"...a person who was not only related, but willing and able to redeem her. Read **Leviticus 25:47-55** and **Ruth 4** for that information.

Of course it's in that "kinsman redeemer" aspect of this story that we most clearly see Jesus and His work for us. Jesus was like us, "related to us", and He was both willing and able to redeem us. Look at **Hebrews 2:14-18** and **Hebrews 4:15**. In that connection then, remember **Romans 8:1-4**; **Philippians 2:1-11**.

STUDY FIVE

DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH

THE MESSIAH RESCUES HIS ENEMY

Read 2 Samuel 9

What three questions does this narrative from the Bible bring up in your mind?

1)

2)

3)

As we jump into this story, it's important to consider the relationship between King David and King Saul as recorded in **1Samuel 18:6-16; 1Samuel 20**. David ran from Saul...his enemy/king...for 13 years!

Just before the story of David and Mephibosheth however, Saul along with David's best-friend and Saul's son, Jonathan, die in battle. Read **1Samuel 31**. Once they are gone, David is anointed King in Saul's place, first over Judah and then over the whole of Israel. So, David is now reigning over the kingdom and family...of his enemy. Let me say it this way: Mephibosheth was of the house and lineage of David's enemy!

That truth is what makes this story so rich and so beautiful, pointing directly to the heart of YHWH. Remember what is said about YHWH's heart in the Psalms: **Read Psalm 146**. Thankfully then, for Mephibosheth, David was "a man after God's own heart", see **Acts 13:13-23**. With what you know about King David...what does the description "a man after God's own heart" mean?

Why was it important for Mephibosheth that David was favorably disposed to his family? What did Mephibosheth understand? Go back and look at **2Samuel 9:8**. What did Mephibosheth understand about his relationship to this new king? What did David do for him? Look at **2Samuel 9:7**! Wow!

Okay, why is that important for us? Well, in the narrative of David and Mephibosheth, David is a clear image of Christ and Mephibosheth is a clear image of all of us who are God's children, welcomed by Christ to "eat at the King's table"! Consider **Romans 5:1-10** along with **John 1:1-14**, but then remember what is said by Jesus in **Luke 14:12-24** and what John wrote in **Revelation 19:6-10**.

STUDY SIX

ESTHER AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

RIGHT PLACE AND RIGHT TIME TO RIGHTLY REDEEM

Read Esther 4

With what you know of the book of Esther as a whole, why do you think this story was placed into the Bible (name three reasons if you are able)? After all, it is forever known as the only book of the Bible which never speaks about God or the name of God directly!

1)

2)

3)

We'll get at the similarities of Esther's story and the Christ story, but are there any differences in the story of redemption known as "Esther" and the Christ story? You bet there are! The most glaring being Esther was a common-woman who became queen and Jesus was the King of kings who became a "commoner". Remember the famous words from **Philippians 2:1-11**.

Furthermore, look at what Jesus said about His life as recorded in **Luke 9:58** and what is said about Jesus in **2Corinthians 8:9**. How does that deepen our love and affection for what Christ has done for us?

Having said that, the Lord placed Esther in her exalted role for, as Mordecai said it, "such a time as this." What this means is that the Lord does in fact orchestrate historical events and use people in the process, for His glory and for His saving work. In fact, look at a very similar story through the narrative of the rise of Joseph (the son of Jacob), found in **Genesis 41**. Then consider what is said about God orchestrating history (alongside an explanation of the work of Jesus) as found in **Galatians 4:4-7**.

While again, Esther is the only book of the Bible that does not contain a direct

reference to God, it nonetheless screams out the work of God! Consider what is said about the Lord in **Psalm 34** and apply that to Esther's story of redemption.

In saying all of that, how does this narrative connect to the Christ-story?

- Esther put her life on the line for the whole: Read **Esther 4:12-17** alongside **Romans 5:6-9**.
- God's Children were rescued by her actions: Read **Esther 7 & 8:15-17** alongside **Romans 8:31-39**.

STUDY SEVEN

DANIEL AND THE BOYS

GOD SHOWS UP TO RESCUE HIS CHILDREN

Read Daniel 3:13-30 and Daniel 6:16-24

When you read these two very familiar “Sunday School” stories are wonderfully helpful as we consider Christ’s work in our lives, especially when we face “fire” and “lion” situations. Besides your salvation, name some times that the Lord has rescued you:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

It really is wonderfully heartening to know that the Lord sees us in our difficult situations and doesn’t ignore us, but instead, comes to deliver us. Consider what Paul wrote in **2Corinthians 11:24-29** with an important explanation of those trials and tribulations found in **2Timothy 3:10-17**. The fact that God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego along with Daniel, from very real and seriously life-threatening situations, should remind us of the amazing love of our God for His children (and we should be thankful): See **Acts 12:1-19**.

Of course it is also important to remember that the Lord doesn’t always rescue us from tough situations...that’s a difficult truth...but He does promise something important in that regard: Read **Acts 18:5-11** and remember Christ’s words at the end of **Matthew 28:16-20**.

While we’re talking about it...why does the lousy stuff happen to us as Christian people? Is it God’s fault? There are two answers to that one question: 1) God sometimes “tests our metal”: **Read James 1:2-4**. 2) God never promised we’d have a worry free, difficulty free, life. In fact, the opposite is true: Read **Genesis 3:17-19** and **2Timothy 3:10-12**.

What else do these two narratives from Daniel tell us about the Lord and specifically what makes them a story of seeing Jesus in the Old Testament?

1. “Fiery Furnace”: Jesus endured hell for us and we are rescued “without even the smell of smoke”! Consider **Isaiah 53:4-6** what happened to Jesus, that He went through “hell” on the cross (remember, this is not the “descent into hell” from the Apostle’s Creed)
1. “Lion’s Den”: While God rescued Daniel by an angel, the narrative points to the fact that Jesus rescued us and pulled us from the jaws of “the lion’s mouth”...consider **1Peter 5:6-11**.

STUDY EIGHT

JONAH AND THE SAILORS

SELF-SACRIFICE IN SERVICE TO OTHERS

Read Jonah 1

As familiar as this narrative is for you, there are probably some things here in chapter one you'd missed before. What was surprising or even interesting information for you?

1)

2)

3)

Similar to other studies we've done so far, we need to first recognize the divergence between Jonah and Jesus. Jonah, a prophet, who heard the very voice of God, heard His command and disobeyed...what's going on here? Jesus on the other hand, being both God and man, obeyed the voice of God at every turn. Consider these passages: **Matthew 4:1-11**; **Luke 22:39-46**; **Hebrews 4:14-16**.

Since we brought it up, was Jesus even able to sin or disobey God? Why or why not? What was Jesus called? See **Matthew 1:18-25** and remember **Romans 9:5**.

Having said that, while the prophet disobeyed God at first, Jonah does in fact do the right thing on the ship in the midst of the storm. Recognizing he'd caused the problem, Jonah volunteers to be thrown overboard to save the other men: Re-read **Jonah 1:7-16**. Compare that truth to **Galatians 2:15-21**. Do you think we sometimes minimize what Christ did for us? Kind of the...Good Friday is the reminder of the reality of Christ's death for us, but through the year it's something akin to "Jesus died for my sins...ho hum."?

Jonah's willing sacrifice certainly points to the cross of Christ! But so does the big fish! While the Lord often does things in "threes", the three days in the belly of the big fish is particularly significant. Re-read **Jonah 1:17-2:10** and then compare it to **Matthew 12:38-42**.

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