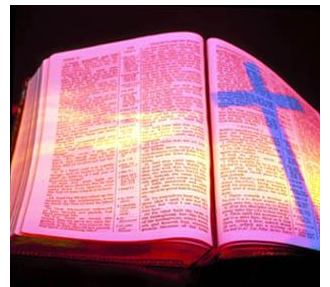


# Guidelines For Interpreting the Old Testament

## **The Old Testament is Open to the Future**

Taking our cue from Irenaeus and Chrysostom, (*i.e. two really smart Christian Fathers from long ago*) we can liken the Old Testament to a painting which God is sketching on the canvass of history. As long as the painting is incomplete, it can be developed in various ways—that is, it is open to various interpretations. But when the painting has received its definitive shape and hues with New Testament teachings about a first and second coming of Christ, the ambiguity inherent in the Old Testament is resolved. Now every part of the Old Testament must be seen in its relation to the complete picture; every part must be seen in its relation to Jesus Christ.



## **A Single Redemptive History Underlies Both The Old and New Testament**

As taught before in Sunday School, Women’s Bible Studies and Sunday Morning worship, the Old Testament points forward to Jesus. We see the Gospel of Jesus as early as Genesis 3:15. We see the Gospel yet again in Genesis 12:3 and so forth. The Old Testament attempts to progressively reveal to us God’s plan of redemption. This is most certainly confirmed as we see the authors of the New Testament pointing back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob essentially saying, “Look they believed in the Messiah!” Thus we need to keep in mind that the scriptures are one coherent book that centers on God’s narrative of sending Christ to redeem mankind. This is apparent from both the Old and the New Testament.

## **Jesus Christ is the Link Between the Two Testaments**



Jesus Christ is the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament speaks of promises. The New Testament speaks of fulfillment. God’s revelation reaches its climax in the New Testament—and this climax is not a new teaching or a new law, but a person, God’s own Son.

## **The New Testament Writers Fused Their Writings With The Old Testament**

In writing their Gospel and letters, the writers of the New Testament did not abandon the Old Testament as if it was irrelevant or not a part of the Christian faith. The New Testament writers deliberately connected their work to the Old Testament. Depending on the criteria used, the number of quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament ranges from 250-600, and the number of allusions from 650-4,000. In addition, the New Testament authors carried forward into the New Testament countless images and concept from the Old Testament. Clearly they saw the Old Testament as the book of God’s promises, which find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

## **The Old Testament Must Be Interpreted From The Perspective of the New Testament**

The two testaments are not two books but one! And this conclusion, in turn, leads to the equally fundamental interpretive conclusion that the Old Testament must be interpreted not only in its own context but also in the context of the New Testament. What this means is that every message from the Old Testament must be seen in the light of Jesus Christ. Therefore, one can really understand the Old Testament passages only in the light of the New Testament and its testimony of Christ. But the reverse also holds true; one cannot really understand Jesus Christ until one knows the Old Testament.

