

Jesus Revealed

Dear Friends,

When we study God's personal dealings with His people in the Old Testament, we should keep Paul's words at the beginning of Hebrews fresh in our minds.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. (Hebrews 1:1 KJV)

God faithfully communicated with His children from the beginning, but we are supremely blessed that we live in the age of God's better means of communicating, "his Son." (Hebrews 1:2 KJV) We also have God's fuller revelation of Himself and His will and ways in writing in our New Testament. Given that the Holy Spirit directed the men who wrote the New Testament (Old as well), we should never imagine that the Spirit's testimony in our lives will ever differ from His revelation in Scripture. When I read Job and consider his life situation (He likely lived prior to Moses and the beginning of Old Testament writing), I marvel at his faith, despite his staggering on occasion. In the end, it was not Job's "Miserable comforter" friends, nor even the faithful friend who appears near the end of the book, but God Himself who appeared and spoke to Job.

How blessed we are to have our New Testament to affirm and to validate the true witness of the Spirit in our lives. I love the abrupt beginning of Mark's gospel. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1 KJV) The divinely revealed message of Scripture is not a convoluted confession of faith that reads as if written by lawyers who studied for years in the legal art of double-speak. It is a straightforward message that always focuses on God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Too many Bible students study their Bible

to learn sound Bible doctrine. Sound doctrine is an essential Bible teaching, nothing to be neglected or ignored. However, the Biblical model for our study is to study our Bibles, first, foremost, and always, to see Jesus first, and then doctrine. We need to train our minds. Study Jesus to learn doctrine, not study doctrine to learn about Jesus. This week's study begins with Job's final confession and moves forward into our "better" things we, as New Testament believers, have in faith. (Hebrews 11:39-49 KJV)

Lord help us to appreciate the blessing we have in Jesus,
Joe Holder

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I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. (Job 42:5 KJV 1900)

Bible scholars generally believe that Job lived prior to Moses. Little is known of Job outside what we read of him in the Book by his name in the Old Testament. Despite having no written record of God and His dealings with His people, Job had a powerful and unique experience with God. If one Bible book proves that God is quite competent to reveal Himself to and communicate with His people apart from human spokespersons, surely it is the Book of Job. When I consider that this man lived before our Bible was written and, so far as we know, apart from the worshipping community of the Lord's people whose history we read in the early books of the Old Testament, I am amazed at Job's faith and devotion to God. You and I have the complete Bible, plus association with the worshipping community of the church and gospel preachers, but do we manifest the same devotion to God—and faith in Him—as Job?

In this verse, Job acknowledges that he heard of God from others, “*by the hearing of the ear.*” His friends, miserable comforters though they were, had a sense of God and invested deeply and personally in their efforts to understand and help Job. But to hear about God from others fails to imbed God and His Word and teachings into our minds with adequate conviction to transform our lives. In the New Testament Book of Hebrews, Paul (I believe the inspired human author of the Book) wrote.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9 KJV 1900)

Paul “saw” Jesus on Damascus Road, but that was a one-time event in the past. Paul used “see,” a present tense verb, to refer to an ongoing perception of Jesus. He saw Jesus by revelation that enabled him to write inspired Scripture. No one today is so “Inspired.” The writing of Scripture is complete. Paul also used “we,” not “I” in this verse, including the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote this letter. How did they “See” Jesus? I suggest that the primary way in which they saw Jesus is the same way in which we now “See” Him, through the pages and revelation of Scripture. We have no location identity for these struggling persecuted believers, but the letter leads them through a delightful progression of teachings that, beginning to end, keeps our attention riveted on the most important “Revelation” of Scripture, Jesus.

All of Job’s life experience proved inadequate to prepare him for the ordeal that invaded his life. And, honestly, during most of the Book, Job didn’t react well to what happened to him. On occasion, he responded with strong faith and grace. For example, when his wife gave

way to the seemingly impossible challenge of his situation and told him he'd be better off just to give up.

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. (Job 2:9 KJV)

What was she thinking! When is it ever right to abandon one's godly (As taught in Scripture) lifestyle? Never! We live with integrity only to the extent we follow God's way revealed in Scripture. Though Job didn't have Scripture, he did have the Lord's indwelling Spirit that showed him the same way revealed in Scripture. Any time we consider abandoning the Lord's revealed-in-Scripture way to live life deal with its inevitable problems, we are looking at Job's wife, not at Job. A man's wife holds weighty influence over him. How did Job respond?

But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips. (Job 2:10 KJV)

In this moment, Job responded to his trial with wise grace. As the trial lingered, he grew discouraged, frustrated, and, at times, confused. It is never a wise choice to long for a time in which you could stand before the Lord and order (Argue as a lawyer) your cause, as if telling Him how He made a mistake in your life. (Job 23:1-5 KJV)

However, when the Lord appeared to Job and reminded him of that idea, how did Job react? (Job 42 KJV) And how do you and I come to that degree of uncompromising faith in God and trust Him through all our life's staggering trials? Yes, we need to study Job's trial, but, in the

end, our situation is not the same as Job's. We gain insight and healthy faith as we experience God, not our troubles, but how do we come to that experience and respond as Job did? I suggest we can only grow to that admirable faith in the Lord that directs us to trust Him as Job did only as we learn of Him and "See" Him through the 20/20 lens of Scripture. The Jesus we "See" through our imagination is never the true Jesus. It is an imaginary Jesus that fails to measure up. Those Hebrew Christians were not directed to their imagination as the antidote to their discouraged hearts. They were directed to the teachings of Scripture. Yes, Paul reminded them of their ancient Scriptures, our Old Testament, but he taught them those Scriptures through the clear light of Jesus, not through the fog of rabbinical traditions and human imagination.

When you read the Old Testament, what do you expect to learn? To see? Creation, yes, briefly. The early patriarchs, yes, their good and their bad moments. Moses and the earth-shaking revelation from Sinai? Fearfully, yes. But what should we anticipate and strive to see when we read it? What did Paul show the Hebrews from the Old Testament? From beginning to end, Paul taught the Hebrews and us about Jesus revealed in the Old Testament.

When Paul encouraged Timothy to keep his life bathed in Scripture, he reminded the young preacher of the Scriptures his mother and grandmother taught him in his youth, almost certainly the Old Testament, for the New had not been fully written, much less copied for general reading at that time. But what did Paul remind both Timothy and us to expect from our study of the Old Testament?

*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, **which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** (2 Timothy 3:15 KJV, emphasis added)*

Paul didn't suggest to Timothy that those Scriptures saved him, the populist teaching of the day. He rather wisely reminded Timothy that those Old Testament Scriptures were "**able**," competent, to "**make thee wise unto salvation**." And how were those old holy writings able to enlighten Timothy or us? "**...through faith which is in Christ Jesus**." Whenever the first century young Timothy or you and I, we "See" Jesus in the Old Testament only when we study those Scriptures through a unique faith "**Which is in Christ Jesus**." A man reportedly once asked Charles Spurgeon how he seemed to turn to any section of Scripture and find so much rich teaching. Spurgeon wisely responded, "Wherever I turn in my Bible, I study that lesson and then head straightway to Calvary." Amen! Sadly, too many of us read one of those Old Testament passages and head straightway to Sinai. And a visit to Sinai, whatever it may teach us, never shows us Jesus or makes us wise to the salvation that is in Him.

You occasionally hear misguided Christians say that the best way to encourage a new inquirer or believer is to "Take them to Sinai before you show them Jesus." What! That idea not only contradicts Spurgeon's point, but, far more important, it contradicts New Testament teaching. In the Hebrews passage cited above, Paul took the Hebrews directly to Jesus. Instead of frightening the Hebrews with the smoking shaking Sinai, Paul reminded them of Jesus throughout the Old Testament as God's solution to the judgment depicted in Sinai.

We first "See" Jesus in the teachings of Scripture that always filters and refines our personal ideas of Him. But our sense of Him will never rise to that life-transforming, blessing sense of God that we see in Job 42 unless we also follow Job's example.

*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. **Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*** (Job 42:5-6 KJV, emphasis added)

An emotional or intellectual sense of God should prompt us to a deeper sense of Him that always urges us to repent, profoundly in a life-changing way. The sense we have of God when we abhor self instead of worshipping self, of thinking more of God and His way than our own ideas, includes the logical and compelling step of true life-transforming repentance. In our present self-centric, pride-driven world, far too many believers retain such pride that they refuse to acknowledge their personal need to repent. After all, that would require confessing that they are actually wrong about something. Biblical repentance requires our honest confrontation and acknowledgment of our sins, plus changing our conduct so that we do not continue to repeat those same sins. To confess that we have sinned, followed by yet more of the same sins, is not Biblical repentance. True Biblical repentance requires a change in our thinking and in our personal conduct, so that we curb those sinful ways and replace them with habitual godliness. If we embrace a wise Biblical outlook, we should likely find some degree of repentance every day, but not regarding the same sins as yesterday. Godly repentance leads us to an ever-increasing closeness to the Lord—and to His people—in both our affections and our conduct. Study Hebrews 12:5-16. Our right response to the Lord's chastening is repentance that will cause us to lift up hanging-down-discouraged hands and to strengthen feeble knees that stagger through life.

If we wisely and correctly regard Scripture as the Lord intended, we shall find in its pages the wise and detailed instructions for how to conquer our pride, regard our God higher than we regard self, and grow ever closer to Him, to His ways, and to His people.

Biblical Christianity is not merely a good philosophy. It is a devoted lifestyle that “Sees” Jesus and takes deliberate steps to draw ever closer to Him. We should long to see Him today more clearly than we saw Him yesterday. To walk more closely with Him today than we walked yesterday. Lord, help us to begin that walk today by a renewed and deeper study of Scripture than we’ve ever engaged.

Elder Joe Holder