

Seeing Christ in All of Scripture, edited by Peter A Lillback, Westminster Seminary Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2016 (18 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. The Promise of the Coming Messiah.

The Old Testament is not primarily a book about ancient history or culture, though it contains many things that are historical that describe ancient cultures. Centrally, the Old Testament is a book about Christ, and more specifically, about his sufferings and the glories that will follow—that is, it is a book about the promise of a coming Messiah through whose sufferings God will establish His glorious, eternal kingdom. To say this is simply to repeat what Jesus told the discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus. [page 2-3]

2. The Bible’s Main Author Is God.

Christians should treat the Bible in harmony with its actual character: it is the Word of God. Non-Christians do not share this commitment. This makes a difference because we must pay attention to the intention of the author if we are to interpret his work correctly. The Bible has human authors, of course, but its main author is God himself. [page 10]

3. All Texts Have Their Being in God.

Based on Christian presuppositions, we engage in transforming the very idea of what texts are and what interpreting text mean. All texts whatsoever live and move and have their being in the presence of God, the God of truth and power and beauty. [page 10]

4. The Bible Is Our Guide for Hermeneutics.

Thus, we need the Bible as the guide to enable us to transform and purify our hermeneutical principles. The circle from the Bible to systematic theology to hermeneutics to the Bible is not a vicious circle, but a spiral of growth and progress, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit in illumination. [page 12]

5. The Bible’s Central Message is Clear.

The Bible says that its central message is clear and that God has in fact designed His Word with skill. Scripture helps those who begin in darkness by leading them into the light:

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the *simple*. (Ps. 19:7)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps. 119:105)

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. (Prov 4:18)

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have *the light of life*.” (John 8:12)

I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. (John 12:46) [pages 12-13]

6. Scripture’s Authors Received Aid from the Holy Spirit.

The authors of Scripture received the aid of the Holy Spirit. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, they inwardly wanted to do whatever God wished them to do. And the Spirit is God himself, who is the source of infinite creativity. His presence and his special work in inspiration do not make human beings less human. Rather, He transforms sinful humanity toward humanity as God originally designed it. More than that, the authors’ humanity is transformed into the image of Christ, who is the perfect man, the last Adam. This transformation took place in a measure even in the Old Testament, because the Holy Spirit even then was the same Holy Spirit who is one with the Father and the Son. He acted in mercy and grace toward human beings on the basis of the atonement that Christ was yet to accomplish in the future. [page 13]

7. God Did Not Say Everything at Once.

God caused the Bible to be written over a period of more than a thousand years. As Lord of history and Lord of revelation, He spoke “at many times and in many ways” through the prophets (Heb 1:1). Theologians call this process “progressive revelation.” God did not say everything at once. The earlier communications take into account the limitations in the understanding of people at earlier times. The later communications build on the earlier. What is implicit in the earlier often becomes explicit in the later. The climax to this process of revelation comes in Christ: “in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He created the world” (Heb 1:2). [page 14]

8. God is Consistent with Himself.

God is one God. He is consistent with Himself. So the earlier and the later harmonize, as do the poetic song and the historical narrative and the proverb and the prophetic vision. At the same time, God as Lord of redemption and Lord of history unfolds his purposes gradually, and we need to listen respectfully to the intentionally sparse communications at earlier points. [page 15]

9. Christ Is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

God made us and has come to save us in Christ. His words are therefore accessible through the mediation of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ whom the ascended Jesus has poured out on His people (Acts 2:33). Knowing God is truly the path of “the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day”

(Proverbs 4:18). Or, as Jesus says, “I am *the way*, and *the truth*, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). [page 15]

10. Christ’s Sufferings to Establish His Kingdom.

The Old Testament is not primarily a book about ancient history or culture, though it contains many things that are historical that describe ancient cultures. Centrally, the Old Testament is a book about Christ, and more specifically, about his sufferings and the glories that will follow—that is, it is a book about the promise of a coming Messiah through whose sufferings God will establish His glorious, eternal kingdom. To say this is simply to repeat what Jesus told the discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus.

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24: 25-27). [page 17-18]

11. The Bible Is the Message of the Gospel.

Thus, when we interpret the Old Testament correctly, without allegory or artificial manipulation but in accordance with Jesus’ own teaching, the central message on every page is Christ. That does not mean that every verse taken by itself contains a hidden allusion to Christ, but that the central thrust of every passage leads us in some way to the central message of the gospel. [page 19]

12. The Prophets Spoke Accurately of the Future.

Part of the Lord’s claim to uniqueness among the gods of the Ancient Near East is the fact that He alone spoke the future accurately through His prophets (Isa 45:18-21; Amos 3:7). Indeed, one of the scriptural tests of a prophet’s authenticity is the fact that the words he speaks are fulfilled (Deut 18:22); such a test of course requires fulfilled predictions. Those predictions that came true in the short term were intended as encouragements to believe the promises of God that had not yet been fulfilled. [page 20]

13. God’s Purposes Made Clear through Christ.

As Numbers 12:6-8 reminds us, prophecy by its nature is often dark and obscure, unlike the Lord’s clear word through Moses. In particular, some aspects of God’s purposes in Christ necessarily remained veiled throughout the Old Testament period, only to be clarified through the coming of the Son. [page 20]

14. Old Testament Saints Were Saved by Faith.

The gospel of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow was clear to Old Testament readers from the earliest days, even if only in outline and sometimes

obscure form. This is crucial to affirm, since the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ just as we are and not by some other method of salvation. In order to maintain that notion, it is necessary to affirm (as Paul does), that the gospel message was genuinely visible to the eyes of faith in the Old Testament long before its revelation in fullness in the coming of Christ. [pages 22-23]

15. Points All to Christ's Sufferings and Glories.

Many things that were concealed during the Old Testament period have now been revealed in the light of Christ's appearing. Some things will remain partially hidden from our eyes until the consummation. Nevertheless, the consistent and plain message of the gospel runs throughout every page of God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible's message of the gospel repeatedly points to saints of all ages and generations back to the sufferings of Christ and the glories that will follow. [page 23]

16. Validating a Biblical Interpretation.

The following questions should be addressed in order to validate or show the probability of a proposed interpretation:

1. Does the interpretation fit well in the context of the passage?
2. Is the interpretive idea in harmony with the rest of biblical revelation and theology?
3. How well does the proposed interpretation compare illuminate the parts of the passage?
4. How does the proposed interpretation compare with competing interpretations offered by other commentators?

The best interpretation honors and incorporates the various details of the passage. If one interpretation seems to relate well to a paragraph of verses save one verse, and another interpretation makes good sense of all the verses, than the latter interpretation is better. [page 26]

17. Read the Unclear in the Light of the Clear.

One eminently important hermeneutical principle is that Scripture should be used to interpret Scripture. This hermeneutical principle is often called the "analogy of Scripture." Passages in Scripture, especially unclear passages, are to be read in light of other passages that speak more clearly on the same topic or develop the same idea. [page 27]

18. Some Presuppose that the Church Is the True Israel.

The New Testament sees some Old Testament prophecies about Israel being fulfilled in Christ and the church. This would be a wrong interpretation of these prophecies unless

one understands the presupposition that Jesus sums up and represents true Israel, and that the church is also understood as true Israel in her union with Jesus. [page 30]