

## **Making Sense of Old Testament Stories**

### **Introduction**

**Judges 3v12-30** – How would you teach this passage?

Every passage of the bible is..... Different passages may teach the same truth, but they do so in.....

*“If you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish you feed him for life!”*

The aim is to develop a method to ..... any Old Testament story, so that when we teach.....  
.....because we bring out its unique message.”

The essential starting place:  
for any Bible understanding    **Begin with** .....

### **Tool 1: The most important Tool**

John 5v39: Jesus says to the Jews:

*“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”*

**The whole Bible is all about** .....

(Other texts that teach this are Luke 24v25-27, Luke 24v44-47, Acts 17v2-3, 2Cor 1v20 and Colossians 1v24-28. In this last passage Paul’s work v25 is to “present the Word of God in its fullness.” In v26 the “fullness of the Word of God” is a “mystery” and in v27 “the glorious riches of this mystery, is Christ in you the hope of glory.”

So if the riches of this mystery is “Christ in you, the hope of glory”, the mystery itself is Christ – Jesus Christ. So the whole of the Word of God is about Jesus!)

Picture illustration:

Note two things:

- 1) Not every passage in the Old Testament points forward directly to Jesus. But every passage teaches something about Jesus. Perhaps it teaches about God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) or about our need for Jesus, perhaps about his church or how to proclaim his gospel. Jesus is always central.
- 2) The Holy Spirit delights in bringing glory to Jesus. So if we teach the Old Testament without reference to Jesus, we cannot expect the Holy Spirit to be at work. But if we preach Jesus from the Old Testament we can expect the Holy Spirit to be at work.

**Examples of Jesus in the Old Testament**

**Genesis 3v14-15**

.....

.....

**Genesis 3v7,21**

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.....

**Genesis 18v1-2**

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.....

**Tool 2**

Exercise: Read each of these passages and ask:

**Who was the Old Testament written for?**

**What are we taught that the Old Testament does?**

**2 Timothy 3v15-16**

.....

.....

**1 Corinthians 10v6,11** (Note:“These things” refers to the history of OT Israel)

.....

.....

**Romans 15v4**

.....

.....

The Old Testament is a .....book and was written to .....,

.....and .....New Testament believers.

**Example: Psalm 46**

.....

.....

.....

A big problem: How are we to be ..... in our understanding of the O.T. so that we teach Jesus and Christian truth faithfully from the O.T.?

### **Tool 3 – .....interprets Scripture**

#### **New Testament Control:**

How a New Testament writer understands the Old Testament is

..... and so gives a .....for that Old Testament passage.”

*(Note: New Testament controls are not always present.)*

#### **Old Testament Control:**

How an Old Testament writer (eg psalm / prophet) understands an Old Testament story is correct and also gives a main point of understanding for that Old Testament story. *(Note: Old Testament controls are not always present.)*

#### **Examples:**

##### **A person: James 5v10-11.**

This is the only reference to Job in the entire New Testament and it thus gives the main point of the whole of Job.

Job is “an .....in the face of suffering”. And of how God blesses those who persevere.

##### **A place: Sodom**

Sodom is mentioned in Jude7, Luke 10v12, Romans 8v29 and 2 Peter 2v6.

**What is the main lesson to learn from the story of Sodom in Genesis 19?**

.....

.....

##### **A quotation: Genesis 15v1-6**

**What is the main message of Genesis 15v1-6? (See Romans 4v3,22)**

.....

.....

##### **A direct reference: Galatians 3v15-16 with Genesis 12v1-3**

**Who according to these verses were the promises spoken to?**

.....

Note an extensive list of New Testament controls is available on the LWU website [www.livingworduganda.org](http://www.livingworduganda.org)

**Example of an Old Testament Control**

**Isaiah 9v4**

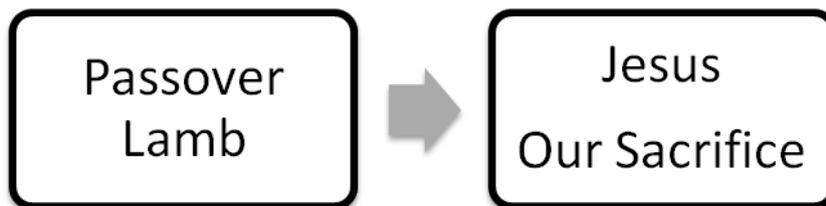
What does the “day of Midian’s defeat refer” to?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Tool 4 – Patterns (Typology)**

Typology is the study of types. A type is “..... that in some sense..... something greater that comes, or will come in at some future point. This greater reality is called the antitype.”

**Example: The Passover Lamb**



**Type**

**Fulfillment**

Passover Lamb      \_\_\_\_\_> The Passover Lamb (Jesus)

Passover Day      \_\_\_\_\_> Good Friday

Lamb dies or you will die      \_\_\_\_\_> Jesus dies or you will die

## **A Common Error:**

“Allegory” – Giving .....to a text which doesn't exist.

**Example:** “When David killed Goliath he took five stones from the stream. These five represented prayer, bible reading, fasting, service and evangelism and if you want success in the Christian life like David you must have these five things!”

The trouble is we don't know which stone killed the giant!

The problem is knowing how to ..... our understanding, how to know what is a type (pattern) and what is not.

The answer is the control of the .....

## **The New Testament controls typology in three different ways:**

**1) Through a specific.....**

**Example: Numbers 21v4-9 with New Testament control .....**

The .....is a type of..... making this a great text for evangelism.

**2) Through what the New Testament teaches about an Old Testament person, event, place, position of responsibility etc.**

**Example: John 2v18-21**

**What does Jesus teach about the temple in John 2v18-21?**

.....  
**What is the significance of the temple in the Old Testament?**

.....  
 .....

**So what is Jesus saying when he describes his body as the temple?**

.....  
.....

**3) A recurring pattern without .....**

**Example:** The pattern of suffering servant and saviour, as shown by Joseph in Genesis 37-50, patterning Jesus as “suffering servant and saviour.”

Think about the similarities with Jesus in this summary of Joseph’s life:

“Despite rejection by those who should have welcomed him (his brothers -Gen 37) Joseph remains faithful to God despite great temptation (from Potiphar’s wife -Gen 39) and suffers as a result (in prison -Gen 39v20).

Joseph becomes great because of his supernatural ability (that of interpreting dreams – Gen 41) and as a result becomes the ruler of people who come from all over the world. These people come because he alone has food during a dreadful famine (Gen 41-42). In the end, even those who reject him acknowledge him as saviour and worship him (Gen 47v25,31). Joseph is thought to be dead (by his father) (Gen 37v33) but then “comes back to life” (Gen 48v11) and then Joseph declares that it was Gods will for him to suffer, because in doing so he saved many people (Gen 50v20).”

**Exercise:**

READ Genesis 22v1-18

**Is this offering of the Son by the Father as a sacrifice a type or pattern of the Son of God being offered as a sacrifice by his Father?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Tool 5 - ..... Truths**

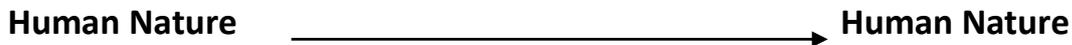
A “timeless truth,” is a truth that is taught in the Bible as not changing over time. For example because God’s character never changes what we learn about God’s character at one point in history is true for all time.

**Old Testament Teaching about**

**Application Today**



Human nature, the people of God and the enemies of God, do change over time, but there remain lines of application for us today, because truths about these things remain that don’t change between the Old Testament and today:



..... changes



..... understanding



From this are four useful questions to ask of any Old Testament narrative to identify “timeless truths”:

**Example** (in small groups): **1 Samuel 7v2-13a**

**1) What do we learn about God?**

.....

**2) What do we learn about human nature?** (Except for the very beginning and very end of time, sinful human nature doesn't change)

.....

**3) What do we learn about the relationship between God and his covenant people? What do the people of God do, both good and bad?** (Translate the application remembering the covenant changes)

.....

**4) What do we learn about our enemies? How should we fight them?** (Translate the application remembering the spiritual understanding we now have.)

.....

Once a "timeless truth" has been identified, a good question to ask is: Is there a "type" here? (Is there a recurring pattern without contradiction?)

**Are there any types in 1 Samuel 7v2-13a?**

.....

## **Avoiding danger using typology (patterns)**

Once the riches of typology begin to be appreciated, the danger is to start to see types in every other passage of Scripture, when they may not actually been there!

### **Example: Genesis 22v1-18.**

Is there a type here? Is this offering of the Son by the Father as a sacrifice, a type of Jesus, the Son of God being offered as a sacrifice by his Father?

Three helpful questions to ask:

- 1) **In applying the pattern, am I stretching the text to get a new meaning not ever found in the rest of the bible, or am I adding light to the truth taught elsewhere so deepening our depth of knowledge of it?**

Genesis 22:.....

- 2) **Does the Old and especially the New Testament refer to this passage of Scripture? If it does what is its interpretation of the text?**

Genesis 22:.....

- 3) **Are there any problems with following through the pattern in the passage or are there any major details which do not fit?**

Genesis 22:.....

.....

## Examples of Old Testament Shadows / Patterns of Jesus

	OT Shadow of Christ	OT Reference	NT Interpretation
<b>OFFICE</b>	Prophet	Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 3:22-26
	Priest	Leviticus 21	Hebrews 9:11, 10:11-13
	King	Psalms 2	Hebrews 1:1-5; Acts 4:23-31; Acts 13:30-39
	Kinsman-Redeemer	Leviticus 25:48; Ruth 4:4-8	1 Peter 1:18
<b>PEOPLE</b>	Aaron	Exodus 28:1-4	Hebrews 5:4-6
	Adam	Genesis 3	Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45-47
	David	2 Samuel 7	Acts 13:34-39
	Isaac	Genesis 22	John 3:16; Hebrews 11:17-19
	Joseph	Genesis 37-46	Acts 7
	Melchizedek	Genesis 14; Psalm 100:4	Hebrews 5-7
	Moses	Deuteronomy 18:15-16	Hebrews 3:3
<b>EVENTS</b>	Noah's Ark	Genesis 6-9	2 Peter 2:5-9
	The Exodus	Exodus-Deuteronomy	1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:15-19; 1 Corinthians 10:4
	The Promised Land	Exodus-Deuteronomy	Hebrews 4:8-11
	OT Sacrifices	Leviticus 17:11	Hebrews 9:11-15, 25-28; 10:1-12
	Lamb	Isaiah 53:7; Exodus 12:1-13	John 1:29; Revelation 5:6-13; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:17-21
	Aaron's Rod	Numbers 17	Hebrews 9:4
	Bronze Serpent	Numbers 21:5-9	John 3:14-16
	Rock in the Wilderness	Exodus 17:5-7	1 Corinthians 10:4
	Noah's Ark	Genesis 6-9	Matthew 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20
	Cities of Refuge	Numbers 35	Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 6:18-19
	The Veil of the Tabernacle and Temple	Exodus 26:37; Leviticus 16	Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 9:3; 10:19-20
	<b>FESTIVALS</b>	The Passover	Exodus 12-13
Unleavened Bread		Exodus 12:17	John 5; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
First Fruits		Exodus 23:9-14; Jeremiah 2:3	1 Corinthians 15:20-23
Day of Atonement		Leviticus 16	Hebrews 13:11-13

## **Tool 6 – Literary Context**

If you are struggling to understand a bible passage this usually contains the answer!

There are three levels of context:

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ **Context** – This asks: How does this particular verse fit into this passage of Scripture? Are there words or phrases that are used again in the nearby verses?
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ **Context** – This asks the question: What is the aim of the whole book? How does the passage I am studying fit into the whole book? And does my understanding of the passage fit with that?
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ **Context** – How does the passage fit in with the whole of the bible? Where does it fit in with God’s plan of salvation in the whole of history?

## **Book Context**

The key is to ....., ....., and ..... in order to understand the purpose of the book.

In particular as we read we should look out for four things:

- 1) ..... that tell us purpose or structure.
- 2) .....
- 3) Recurring .....
- 4) Things that don’t fit.

## **Structure of Exodus**

**1-18 – The God who delivers** – Note key verses e.g. 3v7,10

1-2 – Need for deliverance

3-11 – Obstacles to deliverance

12-13v16 – The celebration of deliverance

13v17–17 - The experience of deliverance

18 – *A chapter that don't seem to fit!*

**19-24 – The God who demands**

**25-40 – The God who dwells**

We are meant to notice passages that don't seem to fit. Ask why are they here?

Exodus 18:

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## **Some further examples of structure:**

### **Joshua**

See Chapter 21v43-45. Key verses for the book:

**Chapters 1-21 – Great is God's faithfulness (in assurance, grace, power, wrath, wisdom etc)**

**Chapter 21v43-45 – Central Verses**

**Chapter 22-24 – Need to keep God's first commandment**

Note the order. In light of chapters 1-21, so chapters 22-24. It's like Exodus in light of chapters 1-18 so chapters 19-24; or Romans, in light of Chapters 1-11, so chapters 12-16.

### **Ezra- Nehemiah** (One book originally)

Ezra 1-6 – The New Temple

Ezra 7-10 – The New Rule

Nehemiah 1-6 – The New City

Nehemiah 7-12 – The New Society

Nehemiah 13 – Doesn't fit! Why the depressing end? (Because it is a type, not the real thing!)

## **Tool 7 - and Context**

This asks questions in three main areas:

**1) What was situation of the people of God?**

(At what time in history is this passage? What was the political situation? Who was the king / leader at the time? Were the people of God being persecuted or was it a time of peace? Were the Israelites being obedient or sinful? Were they under bad teachers or good teachers?)

**2) Is there any important geography in the passage?**

(Is this happening in Israel or Judah or somewhere else? Is there an important mountain, river or town in the passage which is mentioned elsewhere in the bible?)

**3) Who were the original hearers of the passage?**

(What was their historical context and so understanding? e.g. when the Jews in David's time thought of salvation, they thought of the exodus not the cross, because that hadn't happened yet.)

**Example: Ruth 1v1 – Note the setting.**

.....

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**Example: Genesis 22v2-3 – Notice the geography.**

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## Tool 8 – The Details of the Text

Six questions to ask of O.T. passages:

- 1) **What is the ..... of the passage?**  
(Think scenes in a film)

Example: 2 Chronicles Chapter 12:  
Structure:

- 2) **Is there a .....?**

The importance of this: The “teaching point is at the..... point.

Example: 2 Chronicles 12. **Where is the turning point?**

- .....
- 3) **Are there any “authors’ comments” or “theological statements?”**

.....

Example: 2 Chronicles 12. **Are there any “theological comments”?**

.....

- .....
- 4) **Is there important .....? (Particularly from God)**
- .....

5) Is there .....

.....

6) Is attention given to .....

.....

Mainly detail is given to add to the story and make it come alive. However there are other purposes with detail:

a) .....

.....

b) .....

.....

c) .....

.....

Example: 2 Chronicles 12

**What is the important speech in this passage? What does God says through his prophet?**

.....

**Is there repetition? What is being taught through this?**

.....

.....

**Important details are often found at the turning point. Which specific detail is important in this passage?**

HELP: What are we told here that we don't really need to know for the purposes of the story? Why do you think this detail is given?

.....

**Now put everything together for 2 Chronicles 12. Ask: What are the "timeless truths" are central to the passage?**

.....

.....

**Write the theme of this passage in one sentence in preparation for a sermon.**

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## **Summary Method for Understanding Old Testament Stories**

Never forget that the aim of all Christian teaching is: **To glorify God and stir up a love for Jesus Christ, revealing him as the centre of all the Scriptures.**

**Begin with begging.** (Prayer is essential throughout!)

Next **read, read and re-read again.**

As you read, ask and note down your thoughts:

**What is the structure of the passage?**

**How do the parts fit together?**

**Does anything not fit?**

**Does anything surprise you?**

**Is anything memorable?**

**Where is the turning point (if there is one)?**

**Is there important speech?** (Does God (or his prophets) say anything?)

**Is there repetition?**

**Are there any “theological comments”?**

**What is the historical context?** (Where is this passage in the history of the bible? Are there any significant places / tribes etc. mentioned? Do these places / people etc. come in other texts of the bible? Ask a friend for help or look these up in a bible dictionary.)

**What is the literary context? –Immediate, book and whole bible?**

(Need to work hard here)

**Scripture interprets Scripture: Is there a reference to this passage in the New Testament or later in the Old Testament?** (Ask a friend/study bible/www.livingworduganda.org)

**What are the timeless truths? – What does it teach about God? What does it teach about mankind? What does it teach about our relationship with God /our enemies?**

**Are you sure these truths are timeless?** (Is the “truth” taught elsewhere? Is it contradicted elsewhere?)

**Are there any types?**

**Are you sure that this type is correct?** (Does anything not fit with the type?)

**How does this passage point to Jesus?** (His character/works, our need for him, our response to him etc? Is your understanding God centred? Is God the hero? Or is it focused instead on man & our needs?)

Finally:

**Write a “theme sentence” to summarise the teaching of the passage.**

**Write an “aim” sentence to summarise the aim of your teaching.**

## **Worked example: Judges Chapter 3v12-30**