CHRIST – THE CENTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
by Armand J. Boehme

-Everything in red are Old Testament books/prophets.

Jesus said that Moses had written of Him (John 5:46). Jesus said that all of the Old Testament Scriptures “testify of Me” (John 5:39). Before His ascension, Jesus again taught His disciples everything “in all the Scriptures” that spoke of Him (Luke 24:27).

Jesus exposition of all the things “In the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms” that spoke of Him and His saving work was a Bible class that assisted the disciples in their ability to understand and comprehend how the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection.

Christ also taught them the need to evangelize the world with the gospel message of salvation from sin in Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44-48).

Here follows some glimpses of the portrayal of Christ in the Old Testament:

Genesis

proclaims Jesus the “Seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:22-23), our Creator God (Genesis 1; John 1:1-5), the Descendant of Abraham in Whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 22:18; Acts 3:24-26; Galatians 3:8-9; 27:29).

It is Christ Who passes through the sundered parts of the animals and brings down on Himself the curse of the animals and brings down on Himself the curse of sin (Genesis 2:15-16; 3:19; John 1:29; 2:22-25). She is Boaz’s mother & great grandmother of David.

I Samuel speaks of Jesus the King anointed by the Holy Spirit (I Samuel 16; Matthew 3:13-17).

II Samuel

reveals that Christ the Messianic King will be descended of David. He is our Rock, Deliverer, Horn of Salvation & Savior (II Samuel 7:4 & 22; Matthew 11:1-11; Luke 3:20-75; John 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

I Kings speaks in prophecy of Jesus as the kingly descendant of Solomon (I Kings 4:25; 8:16; John 1:13-22), and of John the Baptist as the Second Elijah Who speaks in prophesy of Jesus as the kingly descendant of David (I Kings 17-22; Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 11:7-15). Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). Their prophetic work pointed to the Messiah with whom they appeared with on this holy mountain.

II Kings portrays Christ as the Prophet Who having completed His work ascends into heaven (II Kings 2:1-14; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11). The Messiah’s work of saving even Gentiles is seen in the healing and conversion of the Gentile soldier Naaman (I Kings 3:19-19; Matthew 8:5-13; John 3:16; Acts 10; Romans 3:9-4:25; 15:7-13). I Chronicles shows the Messiah to be the promised Descendant of David Who would have an eternal throne (I Chronicles 17; Luke 1:30-33). II Chronicles proclaims Jesus Christ as the faithful

kingly descendant of David in contrast to the imperfect kings who sat on Judah’s throne. Unlike Josiah who was murdered because of his sins (II Chronicles 24:23-25), Jesus was crucified, died, and His death saves sinners from their sins (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29; Luke 23:6-32; 38; John 18:33-19:22). We also see mourning like the mourning at Jesus’ death (II Chronicles 35:23-25; Luke 23:48; Zechariah 12:10-14).

In speaking about the temple rebuilt in Jerusalem, Earth’s instruments of salvation, was to come from the Jews in Jesus Christ (Job 1:22). Thus working through Esther & Mordecai, God delivered the Jews to bring salvation to all (John 3:16). II Samuel of the Messiah Who is our living Redeemer, the One Who is able to raise us from the dead (Job 19:23-27; John 11:1-44; Galatians 3:13-14; I Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 5:1-14). In the sufferings of Job we also see the sufferings of Christ.

The Psalms

proclaim Christ as our Good Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:1-18), the Crucified and pierced One for Whose robe lots were cast, the One Who cried out “My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?” (Psalm 22; Mark 15:34; John 19:24, 33-37). He is the Priest like Melchizedek (Psalm 110; Hebrews 1:1-2; 6:7-8; 21), the One who like David was betrayed by His good friend Aithiphel – but Jesus was betrayed by His Friend Judas. Just as Aithiphel hanged himself when his plans came to naught, so Judas hanged himself in despair over his sin (II Samuel 15:10-17; Psalm 49:5; Matthew 26:47-50; 27:3-5; Acts 1:16-20). Jesus is prophesied to be the Messiah Who would rise, Whose body would see neither corruption nor decay (Psalm 16:5-11; Acts 2:25-33; 13:26-39). Jesus is the Lord’s Anointed against Whom the heathen would wage war (Psalm 2; 132:10-14; Acts 4:28-24).

The Song of Solomon reveals Christ as the Husbond to His Bride the Church. It also reveals the blessedness that we possess to have existed and will exist, which is to reflect the perfect love Christ has for His Bride the Church (Ephesians 5:21-33; I Corinthians 13).

Isaiah is often described as the Gospel of the Old Testament because it prophetically reveals so much about Jesus – HisVirgin Birth as Immanuel the God-Man Who is with us (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23). His being God’s Son, the kingly Prince of Peace Who sits on David’s eternal throne (Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33; 2:14). Jesus is seen as the Stone of stumbling and the Rock of offense (Psalm 22:21-24; Matthew 21:14-19; Romans 9:32-33; 2 Peter 2:7-8). Jesus ministry in Zebu- lon & Naphthali are prophesied in Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:12-16. Jesus is described as the Root of Jesse Who will be anointed by the Holy Spirit and will save even Gentiles (Isaiah 11:1-16; Matthew 3:13-17; Romans 15:12; Revelation 5:2; 20:21). We see Christ as our Suffering Servant, the Man of Sorrows Who carries our sins and sorrows and is acquainted with our grief’s, the One by Whose stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:12-33; Luke 18:17; Matthew 26-28; Acts 8:30-40). Jesus is the Light to enlighten the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; Luke 2:27-32; Acts 13:46-49).

Jeremiah reveals Christ as the Righteous Branch, the Lord our Righteousness, Who will pardon sinners from their sins (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-15; Matthew 5:6; Luke 23:47; Romans 5:18-19; I John 2:1-2).

Lamentations reveals the Christ Who weeps over Jerusalem as Jeremiah wept for that same city.
Lamentations 3:48-49; Matthew 23:37-38). It is only by God’s abundant mercies in Christ that come to us now every morning that we are redeemed rather than being consumed in our sins (Lamentations 3:22-26, 58; Ephesians 2:4-7; Hebrews 4:14-16).

Ezekiel reveals Christ as the true Shepherd Who will provide His flock (Ezekiel 34:13-11; John 10:1-18). Our resurrection from the dead is seen in the resurrection of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Ezekiel reveals the loving God Who performs heart surgery on sinners – removing from them the dead stony heart of sinful unbelief, and giving sinners a living heart that beats with the joy of faith in the Messian (Ezekiel 36:24-28; II Corinthians 3:2-3).

Daniel reveals Jesus as the Son of Man Who rules with the power of the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 26:39; 17:9-22). The Prophet “like man” is also used to refer to the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8:17). This phrase is also used to identify the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:3, 9, 11, 16). These references point to Christ’s prophetic office (Ezekiel 36:25-28; Romans 2:29; II Corinthians 3:2-3), and to Him being the Son of Man (Matthew 8:20; 12:8, 32, 40, 16:13). Just as God delivered His servants Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego from the fiery furnace to us, we are delivered from the fires of hell by the grace of our God and Savior Jesus Christ (Daniel 3; Revelation 20:4-5).

Hosea refers to Jesus as the beloved Son Who is called out of Egypt (Numbers 21:8; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15-18). Christ’s redemption of His Bride the Church is seen in Hosea’s redemption of his faithless wife, Gomer (Hosea 1:3; Ephesians 5:21-23).

Joel speaks about the promise of the Messiah to send the Holy Spirit in His fullness to His Church (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-21).

Amos speaks of the Messiah Who raises up the fallen Tabernacle (Amos 5:24-25) and forgives Gentiles to His Church (Amos 9:11-15; Acts 15:13-18).

Obadiah points us to the deliverance and salvation God provides on Mount Zion through the kingly Messiah (Obadiah 17 & 21; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 21:22).

Jonah points to the Messiah Who dies, rests in the tomb for three days and then arises again (Jonah 1:17-20; Matthew 12:39-41). Jonah also proclaims the Messiah Who is the Savior of all, even terrible Gentile sinners like the Assyrians, the Samaritan woman, Roman soldiers, and even of publicans and tax collectors (Jonah 3 & 4; Luke 7:1-10, 34, 39-50; 15:1-2; John 4).

Micah prophesies about the Savior’s birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-11). Micah also portrays the Messiah as a God of mercy Who in compassion pardons His people (Micah 7:18-19; Romans 15:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; Hebrews 5:1-2).

Nahum speaks about the beauty of the feet of those who bring the Gospel of peace in Christ to the nations (Nahum 1:15; Acts 10:15).

Habakkuk is known as the prophet of the Reformation for he speaks emphatically about justification by grace through faith in the coming Messiah (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:37-39).

Zephaniah speaks about the Christ Who comes to judge with zeal over the rebellious and the sinner (Zephaniah 2:9; Jeremiah 9:24; 25:1; Lamentations 2:1-2). The prophet seeks to see the righteousness that can only be found in the Messiah (Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 5:6; 6:33).

Haggai speaks about the Messiah as the Desire of the nations Who will come and fill the rebuilt temple with His glory (Haggai 2:7; Luke 2:25-35). Zerubbabel, a descendant of David who rules as governor, is described as the signet ring, the seal of God to reassure His people that the promises about the kingg Messiah and Descendant of David’s Descendant Who is to come are still in effect and that all those promises will come to pass (Haggai 2:20-23; Matthew 1:12-13; Luke 1:67-79).

Zechariah is the most Messianically dense book in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit led Zechariah to provide a “Reader’s Digest” condensed summary of all previous Old Testament prophecy which then is seen fulfilled in the New Testament books. Christ’s work as the High Priest who cleanses His people from the filthy robes of their sins and dresses them in His righteous white robes is seen in the cleansing of Jewish Tabernacle (Zechariah 13:1; John 19:13-34). We receive cleansing from sin in the waters of Baptism and in the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:11-14; Matthew 26:26-28; I John 5:6-9).


Jesus is the Shepherd Who is stricken and the sheep are scattered at His death (Zechariah 13:7; John 10:11; Matthew 26:31 & 56). The Messiah will be the King of all the earth (Zechariah 14:9; I Timothy 1:17; Revelation 19:16).

Malachi proclaims the coming of the Second Elijah, John the Baptist, the messenger who prepares the way before the Messiah (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:17-15). Matthew speaks of his prophetic gifts as the Messiah who speaks of Righteousness Who arises with spiritual healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2; Matthew 17:1-2); Acts 26:12-18; Revelation 1:16; 21:23; 22:5 Romans 11:16-17; 3:21-26; I Corinthians 1:20; II Corinthians 5:21).

Luther and Althaus on the Christological nature of the Old Testament: “There are some who have little regard for the Old Testament. They think of it as a book that was given to the Jewish people only and is now out of date, containing the prophecies of past times. They think they have enough in the New Testament…But Christ says in John 5:39, ‘Search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness to me.’ St. Paul bids Timothy attend to the reading of the Scriptures [I Tim. 4:13], and in Romans 1:2 he declares that the gospel was promised by God in the Scriptures, while in I Corinthians 15 he says that in accordance with the Scriptures Christ came of the seed of David, died, and was raised from the dead. St. Peter, too, points us back, more than once, to the Scriptures. They do this in order to teach us that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are not to be despised, but diligently read. For they themselves base the New Testament upon them mightily, proving it by the Old Testament and appealing to it…”The ground and proof of the New Testament is surely not to be despised, and [the Old Testament] is to be highly regarded. And what is in the New Testament but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ? ‘In order that those who are not more familiar with it may have instruction and guidance for reading the Old Testament with profit, I have prepared this preface to the best of the ability God has given me…Here [in the Old Testament] you will find the swaddling clothes and the staff of the true Shepherd, and to whom the angel points the shepherds [Luke 2:12]. Simple and lowly are these swaddling clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.” [Luther’s Works – Volume 35 - Word and Sacrament (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 235-236]

“[I] the Old Testament not only offers to lead men to Christ but is itself already filled with Him. This is true first because Christ is always present in the God of the Old Testament, in his activity and promises, and in his relationship to the godly…These promises, ultimately, are not promises of Christ. The God who was, is, and will be is the God who is already at work fulfilling them and saving the world through Christ…Christ is promised in the prophets, in the Psalms, and in the well-known Messianic passages of the historical books—but also in many places beyond these. Like the prophets, the Psalms are filled with prophecies of Christ, his person, his suffering, his death and resurrection, his ruling as king, the gospel, the kingdom, and Christianity, or the church. Not only the Psalms, however, are to be interpreted of Christ. The Old Testament is filled with Christ, so much in the historical accounts of the Old Testament and in the books of Moses…for he ‘prophecies powerfully of Jesus Christ our Lord’...the Old Testament [also] offers figures of Christ and of his church.” [Paul Althaus, Theology of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 93-95].