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## The Christocentric Focus of all Holy Scripture

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The Bible is unique in human literature. There is not a second book like it, in which the Creator of heaven and earth has revealed Himself and His will for mankind in the way of promise and fulfillment, as outlined in the Old and the New Testaments. The Bible is basically a spiritual book because God, who discloses Himself in it, is Spirit. Man, originally created in God's image and likeness, has fallen away from God in futility of thinking and distrust of God's revealed word. Paul describes the mental, moral, and religious destitution of fallen men:

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts (Ephesians 4:18; cf. also 2:1-3).

No wonder that Jesus Christ pointed out to Nicodemus, a leading interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures in Jerusalem, that one "cannot see the kingdom of God"—that is, one cannot understand the nature or share the blessedness of God's kingdom—"unless a man is born again" (John 3:3). Christ explained that rebirth is not the result of man's own doing but a supernatural act and gift of God: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (John 3:6). Christ thus taught that man's experience of *rebirth* by the Holy Spirit is an essential condition for the understanding of the Old Testament in its true, spiritual intent, in its theological message of salvation and the kingdom of God.

Peter reminds us that the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures originated, not in the prophet's own foresight or invention,

but “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The Old Testament prophecies possess, therefore, a moral purpose: salvation through the Messiah.

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns *and the morning star rises in your hearts* (2 Peter 1:19; emphasis added).

The bright Morning Star is Christ (Revelation 22:16). This christological focus of the Hebrew Bible in its two dimensions of a suffering Servant-Messiah and of the exalted royal Messiah is not obvious or plain to the natural mind, as Jesus’ rejection by the Jewish leaders shows. One should not conclude from this that the Old Testament does not sufficiently reveal the truth of the Messiah’s atoning suffering and death or that Christ proclaimed a Kingdom and a Messiah which were completely different from what the Jews expected. The problem was not the darkness or incomprehensibility of the divine revelation in the Hebrew Scriptures, but rather the stubbornness of the unspiritual mind. Jesus reproved even His own followers:

How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

This Old Testament explanation by the risen Christ brought a new vision of messianic truth to the Jewish mind, which resulted in a new love for God. The disciples testified, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and *opened the Scriptures to us?*” (Luke 24:32; emphasis added). Christ “*opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:45; emphasis added). We conclude, therefore: because Jesus Christ is the divine Interpreter of the Old Testament, He must open the Scriptures to us; by Him our minds must be opened to see the messianic light in Israel’s Scriptures. This conclusion implies that faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of Israel’s prophecies, is an essential qualification for the Christian interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures.