
Walter Kaiser, Old Testament professor and president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, has written this book for preachers with the aim of recovering exegetical Old Testament preaching. Kaiser has written over forty books, including Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching; The Messiah in the Old Testament; and the Promise-Plan of God.

Organization, Summary, and Interaction with the Book

In chapter one, “The Value of the Old Testament for Today” outlines a number of insightful perspectives regarding the Old Testament. Kaiser lists a number of reasons for the value of Old Testament that is often overlooked and neglected in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church (p.15). His position is that there need to be a whole new evaluation on why there is an avoidance of the Old Testament.

His case is put forth in four major theses:

1. It Is the Powerful Word of God-There is divine authority. The word of God is life changing. The Old Testament is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. It points out that God's Word is supremely powerful (p.16, 17). God used people but it is His that reveals revelation to mankind.

2. It Leads Us to Jesus the Messiah-One of the tragic results of separating the Old Testament from the New is that the believing community fails to see that Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection were clearly anticipated long before the events occurred (p.20). We cannot make the mistake of believing that the Old Testament message is non-Christian. By making such a mistake, we fail to see The Messiah is at the heart of the message of the Old Testament. The author shares that “a significant portion of modern scholarship shares a skeptical attitude toward the messianic consciousness of the Old Testament writers” (p. 20-21). It is disheartening to imagine that some view the Old Testament messianic consciousness with doubt. How can people read, study, and preach the Old Testament and not see the Messiah’s coming? These Messianic prophecies were written centuries before the life of Jesus, which foretold a coming Messiah. Kaiser shares, “There is an organic system of messianic prophecy that can be found in the Old Testament.”

3. It Deals with the Questions of Life-Kaiser shares, “the Old Testament, covers everything from questions of human dignity and treatment of the environment in the
opening chapters of Genesis to the nature and purpose of marital love in the Song of Solomon and a theology of culture in the Book of Ecclesiastes” (p.23). The Old Testament is and has significance and it is relevant today. Preaching and teaching that goes against the Old Testament should be rejected.

4. It was used as the Exclusive Authority in the Early Church-Kaiser shares, “whenever the word “Scripture(s)” appears in the New Testament, it almost always points to the Old Testament (p.24). The Old Testament does not only serve as the backdrop, but the New Testament boast of its use of the Old Testament. God cannot and would not go back on the promises He made in the Old Testament.

Kaiser shares, "the Old Testament can stand on its own, for it has done so both in the pre-Christian and the early Christian centuries” (p.27). The value of the Old Testament is immeasurable for all believers. I believe that the Old Testament cannot be ignored. Its value is worthy of our time and study. It should never be discarded, overlooked or forgotten. I believe to do so would be a major flaw and error of the church. Those who say the Old Testament is meaningless and fruitless have ignored the words of Jesus Christ who said in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

In chapter two, “The Problem of the Old Testament for Today,” Kaiser opens up saying, “Instead of receiving the Old Testament with gratitude as a gift from God, all too many in the church view it as an albatross around the necks of contemporary Christians” (p. 29). He talks about the unity of Scripture. Its unity is remarkable evidence that proves its divine origin. The charge against the unity and connectedness of the text is that the material of the Old Testament is just too diverse. The Old Testament reveals the divine mind of God and brings together a multiplicity of themes. Kaiser says,” the theme can be referred to as the “promised plan of God” (p. 32). God had a plan and grasping some sense of the wholeness of God's plan will make it easier to teach and preach the individual part of this totality in the Old Testament. In bridging the two Testaments he shares his solution. He sums up this chapter saying, “That our teaching and preaching will always remain stunted if we fail to see that God has wholeness to his Word that embraces both testaments in one unified, single plan.” I believe as we explore the way of the Old Testament, it will reveal the promises and purposes of God. The Old Testament is always appropriate because it shows the intent of God for His people.

In chapter three, “The Task of Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament Today,” Kaiser opens with a thought provoking question. The question is, What is the worth of the Old Testament to contemporary Christians? He offers four main areas where the value of the Old Testament comes through:

1. Doctrine-A number of doctrines come to their fullest expression in the Old Testament.
2. Ethics-The character of Old Testament ethics meets us at almost every aspect of life.
3. Practical Living-The wisdom books speaks to the heart of living.
4. Preaching- Failure to preach the Old Testament and recognize the unity of Scripture led some to follow a false trail.
The Kingdom of God must understand without the input of the Old Testament in each of these four areas that the church will find itself bankrupt.

He proudly states, “Modernity has reduced the clear exposition of the Word of God in all of its power to little more than topical essays on safe topics that do not tend to offend anyone” (p. 41). This reduction has not gone without effect. If exposition of the Word is/has been reduced then God’s people have received a watered-down Word that has no real power. The question then becomes, why would we deny God’s people of the richness of His Word? Colossians 3:16, the apostle Paul wrote, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." To not preach it denies God’s people of the richness of inspiration and authority found in the Old Testament. If “All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may equipped and useful for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:14–15), then not teaching and preaching it would be a mistake in the development and aim of righteousness. I believe that the Old Testament is the infallible word of God and its truth must be searched and applied if we are to become the people that God desires.

In chapter four, “The Art and Science of Expository Preaching”, he lifts up vital principles for interpreting the biblical text and for creating an expository sermon. There is emphasis on the authorial intent of the text. We often miss how God was/is putting the entire Scriptural narrative together. The declarer of the Word is responsible for authentic biblical preaching. In expository preaching the sermon is designed to communicate what the text says. It does justice to the biblical text, which makes it clear that God works through his word to change people’s lives. The real goal must be to take the sacred text, explain what it means, tie it to other scriptures so people can see the whole picture a little better; and apply it to life so it changes, heals, instructs, and edifies. Through this process, the preacher is not left to guess the needs of his flock and he believes that God's word is God's comprehensive diet for his sheep.

**Expository Preaching as the Solution**

He shares, “teaching and preaching is so desperately weak at the present moment in the household of faith because scarcity of true Biblical exposition” (p.49). What a great indictment against preachers of the Word of God. If this indictment is true clearly preachers of the Word of God have a great work to do to turn the situation around. Offering assistance in turning it around begins with understanding what expository preaching is. Kaiser says that, “expository preaching is one that takes a minimum of a paragraph and allows the biblical text to supply both the shape and the content of the message or lesson from that text itself (p.49). Others have defined it as the presentation of biblical truth derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then, through him, to his congregation. — Haddon Robinson

Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God’s Word with due regard to the historical, grammatical, contextual and doctrinal significance of the given passage with the specific objective of invoking a Christ-transforming response. — Stephen Olford
At its core expository preaching is about the text itself. Nothing is added to the text and nothing is taken away from the text. The text is allowed to speak for itself and by itself. For this to happen, he writes “There is a lens we should use to read the Old Testament” (p. 50). He uses Sidney Greidanus, seven ways of moving from an Old Testament text to Christ (p.50-52):

* The way of redemptive-historical progression
* The way of promise-fulfillment
* The way of typology
* The way of analogy
* The way of longitudinal themes
* The way of contrast

The Bible was meant to be read forward, not backwards. To read it backwards is to end up with a flat Bible (p.52). The revelation is that expository preaching is not one of the optional luxuries of the pulpit. There are churches which give great attention to the Scripture, but there is no preaching that takes place. In other words, it is all lecturing about the Bible, but it lacks the essential element of pleading, urging, exhorting, and summoning the listener to respond to the Word of God.

In chapter five, “Preaching and Teaching Narrative Text of the Old Testament” (p. 63), Kaiser writes, “Narrative is the preferred genre of the biblical text”. In order to properly prepare for teaching or preaching on narrative, it is necessary to understand how narratives are put together and how they work. The Old Testament narrative literature offers a genre well suited to the preaching task. The reason is simple; people like stories. To this point he outlines the necessary elements of the narrative text: scene, plot, point of view, characterization, setting, dialogue, key-wording, structure, stylistic, and rhetorical literary devices (p.64).

In chapter six, “Preaching and Teaching the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament” (p. 83), Kaiser writes, “Proverbs abound in all of life” (p.84). In every aspect of reading and studying the Proverbs will be beneficial. The wisdom writings of the Old Testament include a wide variety of books that are often overlooked. People sometimes either misunderstand or misapply wisdom material, losing the benefits that God intended for them. Evangelical expositors have been reluctant to preach from Proverbs because they cannot find the announcement of the gospel in this book. It must be understood that issues involving morals, ethics, and personal character are all gospels concerns.

In chapter seven, “Preaching and Teaching the Prophets of the Old Testament” (p.101), Kaiser writes, “It has always been easier to read and apply the messages of the prophet than any other section of the Old Testament”. There must be openness to hearing what the words of the prophets mean in a contemporary context. The messages of the prophets must not be dismissed as a word for back then (the past). He lifts up certain guidelines that help in interpreting the prophets so that expositors are true to God’s intended purpose. True Biblical exposition helps the Bible teacher avoid the error of allegorical interpretation. It searches for the correct meaning of the Biblical text as meant by the prophets.

In chapter eight, “Preaching and Teaching the Laments of the Old Testament” (p.121),
Kaiser shares, “Biblical laments have been labeled as poetic genre.” The laments are birthed from the experiences of God’s people. They serve as testimonies of people’s personal encounters with a Holy God. Preaching the laments reveal a personal God who is concerned with whole life of His people. It is a deeply emotional book (p. 126). It addresses hurt, pain, frustrations, gladness, joys, ups, downs, feelings of being forsaken, and deliverances. When preaching and teaching from the laments the aim must be to show God and His relationship with His people.

In chapter nine, “Preaching and Teaching the Old Testament Torah” Kaiser shares, “a significant portion of the church tends to assume that the Torah is obsolete for Christians today” (p.139). A new call for preaching in the Old Testament is needed because three-fourths of God's revelation is at stake. Kaiser makes the observation, “we are in the midst of one of the most starved generations for hearing the word of God” (p. 178). Kaiser writes, “While preachers should preach prophetically, he must take care not to preach solely against institutional and cultural structures. Old Testament prophets made their primary appeal "to the individuals who made up those communities and institutions” (p. 187). Preaching that neglect this theory is not staying true to what God desires. The Torah was not meant to hurt us, but it was meant to give us guidance. Preaching and teaching the whole Bible begins with truly treating it as God’s Word.

In chapter ten, “Preaching and Teaching Old Testament Praise” Kaiser writes, “Praise must be a daily expression of affection to God” (p.160). He argues that Psalms must be our hymnbook. The majesty of God must be proclaimed until the ends of the earth. The psalms are filled with praise and with exhortations to praise God. To praise God means essentially to extol God for His attributes and actions. The believer must learn a lifestyle of praise through the preaching and teaching of psalms.

In chapter eleven, “Preaching and Teaching Old Testament Apocalyptic” Kaiser writes, “It is the strangest of all Old Testament genres. Apocalyptic is a specialized form of prophecy that focuses on events surrounding the second coming of Christ and the last things that God will do in history before He ushers in the eternal state” (p.161). Apocalyptic have distinctive theological ideas which deal with the relation between heaven and earth, the rule of God over both, and his ultimate victory over evil. Apocalyptic is distinguished from other forms of prophecy.

Appendix 1- He gives an explanation of his exegetical method, which is supported by a mention to Elmer Martens’ God’s Design. He suggests his outline of the exegesis process by looking at the canonical context before a study of the periscope. He presents five steps:

1. Contextual Analysis
2. Syntactical Analysis
3. Verbal Analysis
4. Theological Analysis
5. Homiletical Analysis

Appendix 2- He shares his criticism against the harms of the postmodern denial of theological and ecclesiastical influence. The heart of integrity has been undermined by intentional fallacy. In order to correct this, a new partnership and commitment between the church and seminary must
be created and improved. This covenant must be built of the Word of God and the proper studying of it, being first and foremost in the life of the church.

Writing Style: Does the Author Accomplish Purpose?

The structure of the book and the writing style is geared and aimed towards those studying the issue of preaching the Old Testament. The book encourages and reinforces that there must be a greater emphasis on the Old Testament. The content flows and is easy understanding. The author masters putting forth the argument for each method and then gives an explanation for using the method effectively in each chapter. I believe that the author remains true to the thesis of the book by writing out of his conviction and trusting in God’s Word. In a day when the Word of God is taken for granted and neglected, it is great to see an advocate who encourages understanding and properly handling of the Old Testament. I believe the author accomplishes his purpose in the book, by shedding light on the benefits and challenges in preaching and teaching the Old Testament.

Strengths of the Book

Dr. Kaiser is a supporter of the exegetical method. It upholds the authorial meaning from the Bible. In being a believer, I see a number of strengths that are helpful after reading this book.

First strength - Kaiser sees the lack of expository preaching and teaching as one of the reasons for the significant disconnect. The lack creates an environment that has little or no nutritional value, spoils the appetite, and leads to spiritual starvation. This not only affects God’s people, but it will affect the impact-fullness of the church. In undergrad, one of my teacher’s would always say, when the pulpit ministry lacks substance; the church is severed from the Word of God. Its vigor and authenticity is lost and has no affect. An expositor must develop a true desire and determination to present and explain the text. If the life and maturity of people depends on the proper preaching of the Word of God, then we must get back to proper exegesis of the Word. Kaiser declares, “the seriousness of the times and the authority of the Word of God demand that we strive with all the fervor of our being to see this skill develop in our ministries if we are to sense once again what God meant for the church to be and experience” (p.59).

Second strength - For those who are misguided or just fail to do so, Kaiser addresses the process of how to prepare expository sermons. This aides and serves as a roadmap to those who are not familiar with the format and development of expository. Expository preaching involves the exposition, or comprehensive explanation of the Word of God. In preparing an expository sermon, the preacher starts with a passage of Scripture and then studies the grammar, the context, and the historical setting of that passage in order to understand the author’s intent. Once one understands the meaning of the passage, he then crafts a sermon to explain and apply it. The result is expository preaching. The strength of Kaiser’s book is in its purpose to refocus and/or reinforce the power in and of expository. The end result being the text will get back to speaking for itself.

Third strength- Kaiser shares in great detail how to be faithful in preaching and teaching from the
Old Testament. He identifies, explains, and discusses each chapter with a passion for equipping readers of the book with the necessary tools to handling the text correctly. This provides for an easy and beneficial read. The author’s writing style, pattern, and format allows the reader to be engaged with the chapter’s content. It also provides the reader a guide to practice what is explained. Thank God for the mechanics of how to preach and teach different genres.

Fourth strength- Kaiser sends a rebukes to preachers and teachers who are neglecting Old Testament. Maybe that rebuke is justified in that too many preachers have busy schedules and often need to quickly put together a sermon or lesson. Being busy has created preachers who do not have time to dig deeply into the Bible. The busyness of life has prevented many from finding new truths in God’s word.

Recommendation/Conclusion

I would highly recommend Kaiser's book because it is a source of encouragement for advocates of the impact fullness of the Old Testament in preaching and teaching. In addition to the strengths mentioned, the reader of the book would appreciate his dedication to the exegesis process. Those who have a fondness for the Old Testament will find that love increased. Kaiser places great emphasis on the Old Testament being a priority in preaching and teaching. The Old Testament can stand on its own (p. 270). It tells us where we came from (Gen 1-2); why we are here (Eccl 12:13) and where we are going. The Old Testament lays the foundation for the New Testament and should not be forsaken. The Old Testament must be given some precedence.