

“I Am That I Am”

Symbols of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament

In this ancient record particularly, Jesus Christ must be sought or He might not be found.



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As Moses hid his face, the Lord's merciful words issuing forth from the burning bush must have rung with the echoes of eternity: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . ; for I know their sorrows; "And I am come down to deliver them. . . .

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"

"And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:7–8, 13–14).

Known to ancient Israel as the Lord Jehovah, the premortal Jesus Christ identified Himself as the source to which His people should look for redemption. Thousands of years later, the resurrected Jesus Christ reconfirmed His promise of deliverance to modern Israel with these words: "Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that *I am* the Son of the living God, that *I was*, that *I am*, and that *I am to come*" (D&C 68:6; emphasis added).

The scriptures, the words of life, are designed to point the children of God in every generation to Jesus Christ

for deliverance from sin and death and all our earthly problems. The Old Testament is no exception; as with every volume of scripture, it is intended to turn our hearts and minds to our Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. But in this ancient record particularly, He must be sought or He might not be found.

When searching for Christ in any book of scripture, it helps to constantly remind ourselves what we are looking for. Jesus Christ *is* the source of life! To the fatal problems of spiritual and physical death introduced by the Fall, Christ *is* Israel's eternal solution. Lehi declared, "He offereth himself . . . to *answer* the ends of the law" (2 Nephi 2:7; emphasis added). It is that answer—the Redeemer of Israel, the Great "I Am"—that we seek when searching the scriptures. Within the poetic and often archaic language of the Old Testament, however, the eternal problems—and Jesus Christ, the solution—are not always readily identifiable. Even so, Jesus Christ is there beneath the surface, waiting to be found in the ancient narratives.

As you keep in mind the name of the Lord shared with Moses on Mount Sinai—"I Am"—consider the many things that Jesus Christ *is* to those who put their trust in Him. The following examples are symbolic teachings from the Old Testament designed to turn our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus Christ for deliverance.

SEARCHING FOR JESUS CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The prophets, including those in the Old Testament, can be seen as "types and shadows of their Messiah," wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "It is wholesome and proper to look for similitudes of Christ everywhere and to use them repeatedly in keeping him and his laws uppermost in our minds" (*The Promised Messiah* [1978], 453).

The Old Testament was not designed simply to preserve a narrative history of God's covenant people. The stories themselves, along with their accompanying surface-level messages and morals, are of secondary importance to disciples of Christ. Consistently, the primary subject of the prophets' writing—and therefore the most worthy object of our study—is Jesus Christ!

Here are a few principles to keep in mind when searching for truths about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament:

1. All things created by God are like Jesus Christ (see Moses 6:63).
2. All things given from God to mankind typify Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 11:4).
3. All prophets are types, or symbols, of Jesus Christ (see Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* [1978], 451).
4. Repentance opens the door to learning about Jesus Christ through types (see Alma 26:21–22).

I AM . . . THE LAMB SLAIN FOR YOU
Animal Sacrifice and the Coat of Skins



Before Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, the Lord clothed them in the skins of an animal to provide a covering for them. In the Old Testament, the word *atonement*, in its various forms, appears 81 times. In 73 of those occurrences, the original Hebrew word is *kaphar*, which literally means “to cover.” After their expulsion from the garden, Adam and Eve were commanded to offer the firstlings of their flocks for an offering unto the Lord. An angel later instructed them that this practice was “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7).

Animal sacrifices continued under the law of Moses, along with the ritual covering of those participating in priesthood ordinances.

When we covenant with the Lord and receive His holy ordinances, His Atonement covers us so that we are no longer exposed to the full effects of the Fall of Adam. Jesus Christ is truly the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us so that we no longer have to be subject to the effects of sin and death.

Genesis 3:21; 37:3; Exodus 40:14–15; Ezekiel 16:1–12; Matthew 22:11–12; Galatians 3:26–29; 1 Nephi 11:21, 32–33; Alma 34:14–16; Moses 5:5–8; 7:47

I AM . . . THE BREAD OF LIFE
Manna



While Moses and the children of Israel journeyed from Egypt toward the promised land, they relied upon the mercies of the Lord for daily bread. The Lord provided them with a sweet “bread from heaven,” which the people called “Manna” (interpreted as “What is this?”). Those who gathered the bread daily and remained faithful to the Lord and His prophet had life continually throughout their journey in the wilderness. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life; He came down to earth from heaven to bring us life every day of our mortal journey. As we gather His words every day, we will experience the sweetness and vitality available through Him throughout our mortal journey.

Exodus 16:4, 12–21, 31; Deuteronomy 8:2–3; John 6:26–35, 48–58, 66–68; 3 Nephi 20:8

I AM . . . THE SOURCE OF LIVING WATER

Water from the Rock at Horeb



As the children of Israel thirsted for water in the wilderness, Moses turned to the Lord. Moses was instructed to smite a certain rock at Horeb (Mount Sinai) with the rod given him by the Lord. When he did, water gushed forth from the rock to sustain life for the millions of journeying Israelites.

Jesus Christ is the Rock of Israel; when He was smitten at Calvary, blood issued forth from His body. The blood of Christ brings us life! We can access the life found in the atoning blood of Christ as we follow prophets who have been given keys to bring forth living water from Him.

Exodus 17:1–6; Numbers 20:8, 11; John 4:10–15; 1 Corinthians 10:1–4; D&C 28:2

I AM . . . YOUR HEALER

Serpent Raised Up on a Pole



The difficulties of their journey caused the children of Israel to complain, murmuring against the prophet and the Lord. As a result, the Lord allowed poisonous serpents to bite them, bringing death to many. Moses prayed to the Lord to take away the serpents; instead, the Lord provided a way for the people to escape death when they had been bitten. The action required for them to be healed was to look upon a brass serpent that was affixed to a pole.

Jesus Christ was nailed to a pole—the cross—so that we might look to Him in our sufferings and not be overcome by them. Jesus Christ does not always take away our trials, but as our Healer, He can take the poison out of them through the blessings of His Atonement.

Numbers 21:4–9; John 3:14–16; 1 Peter 2:24; Alma 33:18–22; Helaman 8:14–15; 3 Nephi 27:13–15