

An open scroll with Hebrew text, flanked by two wooden rollers, with the title 'BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION' overlaid in orange text.

**BIBLICAL  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION**

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- ◉ The Bible serves as the cornerstone of theological foundations and as the prolegomenon of the historical foundations of Christian education. As such, Scripture is regarded as the primary lens through which Christian educators perceive and prescribe the character of Christian education.
- ◉ The main reason for placing such emphasis upon the Scriptures is the claims of revelation and inspiration made by the Bible. It is a special revelation of God, and the Christian educator is compelled to formulate a model of Christian education consistent with it. As Paul contends, Scripture "was written for our *instruction*" (Rom. 15:4 nasb; 1 Cor. 10:5-11; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Knight, 1996).

# BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Scriptures are saturated with educational implications and imperatives. The promotion and preservation of the faith are common themes throughout Scripture, but the means employed to fulfill these tasks are distinctive between the Testaments. Within this lies the caution that some models and methods of education in the Scriptures are by nature **culturally specific**. While the biblical principles are undeniably essential to Christian education, the specific methodology *may* have to be assessed in light of relevance to contemporary culture.

# OLD TESTAMENT

Teaching in the Old Testament was not primarily done to impart a skill or competency, but to **help hearers to live a faithful life** (Deut. 11:19). While this remained constant throughout the life of Israel, after the exile education took on the character of restoring the faith of Israel and Judah (2 Chron. 17:7-9; 34:29-31; Education in the Old Testament took place both through socialization and nonformal means, with **few formal approaches to education** (such as synagogue schools). |

# *TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

- ◉ GOD
- ◉ FAMILY
- ◉ PROPHETS
- ◉ PRIESTS
- ◉ SAGES
- ◉ COMMUNITY

# *TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

Israel's first teacher was **God** (Job 36:22; Exodus. 35:34). Throughout the Old Testament God's revelatory acts, in both deed and word, demonstrate His place as the teacher of the faith community. This explains the centrality of God within the life of the nation (Exodus 20:1-7; Judges 2:10-15).

Perhaps his most significant revelatory act was the giving of the **Torah**, which was used by all the Old Testament prophets and teachers.

# *TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

Educational responsibility was placed primarily on the Hebrew **family** (Exodus 12:26-27; 20:4-12; Deut. 4:9-10; 6:6-7; 11:19-21; Ps. 78:2; Prov. 6:20). Both parents were to be involve (Prov. 1:8), as well as other family member; making education within the family an intergenerational matter.

# TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- The **prophets** constituted perhaps the most vocal and obvious group of teachers in the Old Testament (Mic. 6:8; Zech. 7:12). Moses served as the paradigm for future prophets (Exod. 18:2( 24:12; Deut. 4:14; 6:1; 31:19). The prophets did indeed make use of the Mosaic law in their instruction (Isa. 8:16; 42:21, 24; Jer. 9:13; 16:11; Zed 7:12).
- The "school of the prophets" (2 Kings 2:3-5; 4:38; 6:1; 1 Sam. 10:10; 19:20) should not be misunderstood as a contemporary formal education; institution. The actual phrase is not "school" of prophets, but the "sons" [*ben*] of the prophets," indicating a discipling or nonformal approach to instruction rather than an institutional one.

# *TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

Not only did **priests** receive formal education but they also provided instruction to the community (Hag. 2:11; Mal. 2:7). Like the prophets, they made use of the Torah in their instruction. In fact, Deuteronomy 31:9-14 indicates that priests were to read the Mosaic Law to the assembly of Israel for the instruction of the Hebrew nation including "aliens living in your towns."

# TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Another group of Old Testament teachers are the wisemen or **sages** (13:14). Not to be confused with the magi of Persia, these were men versed in the Torah and readily able to make application of it.

Similarly, emerging near the close of the Old Testament, but frequently mentioned in the New Testament are the **scribes, rabbis, or doctors of Law** (Neh. 8; Jer. 8:8). Ezra, who is described as a scribe and teacher, serves as a model for this category of teacher (Ezra 7:10).

# TEACHERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The idea of **community** as a teacher in the Old Testament is often neglected. Israel, being theocracy, reflected within its very culture a spiritual and religious sense. Community life itself was a teacher.

As people came in contact with the culture of Israel they received instruction regarding the very nature of God and his dealings with **humankind**. For example, **the reasons for festivals, memorials, worship sites, and activities of public assemblies** all had educational implications (Josh. 8:30-35; 2 Chron. 17:7-11).

# EDUCATIONAL TERMINOLOGY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

תּוֹרָה, *tôrâh* is used over two hundred times in the Old Testament. It is typically translated "law," but literally means "instructions" or "guidance," placing emphasis on God's role as the teacher of Israel.

*Hanak* ("to train or instruct") has a root meaning "to dedicate" or "to consecrate" (Prov. 22:6).

*Lamad*, meaning "to teach" or "instruct" (Hos. 10:11).

*Musr* is primarily used in the Wisdom literature (especially Proverbs), and is translated "instruction" or "discipline" (Prov. 2:17).

# *TEACHERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*

**God** is described as teaching the community of faith (Titus 2:11-12). His instruction is primarily conducted through his acts of grace and revelation. As in the Old Testament, he is the primary teacher of his people through deed and word.

# TEACHERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Among other titles, **Jesus** is called "teacher." As Mark 10:1 reminds us, it was Jesus' custom to teach. Hence, the Gospel writers refer to Jesus with a variety of instructional titles: *didaskalos* ("teacher," 35 times), *rabbi* ("teacher," 13 times), *rabboni* ("honored teacher," 2 times), *master* (7 times), and *leader* (once used in educational context) (Zuck, 1995, 25).

# TEACHERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ◉ Discipleship was his instructional con-text and method. The term "**disciple**" is used 142 times in Synoptics, adequately demonstrating this fact (Matt. 28:20; Mark 6:30; Luke 12:12).
- ◉ Jesus' former pupils assumed the task of teaching through instruction, preaching, and writing. Acts depicts the **apostles** as completing Jesus' mission (Acts 1:1) by making disciples for Christ (Acts 14:21). Doctrine assumes a crucial role in the church through the apostles' instruction (Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:2; 17:19).

# TEACHERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ◉ As the church expanded, leaders were selected for newly planted congregations. **Elders** were indeed far more than teachers; however, among their qualifications the only "ability" listed is that of being "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). The ability to teach is essential for leadership, and hence a qualification for eldership. The pastor-teacher of Ephesians 4:11 would exemplify this task.
- ◉ The church body introduced and reinforced the formation of faith through exposure to and involvement in the community (Acts 2:42-47). Likewise, the place and function of the **teacher is regarded as a gift of God** (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:27-31; Eph. 4:7-13, 5:15-20; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

# EDUCATIONAL TERMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ◉ *didasko* ("to teach"; Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:16)
- ◉ *didaskalos* ("the teaching"; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)
- ◉ *paideuo* ("to provide guidance or training"; Eph 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:16)
- ◉ *katecheo* ("to be informed"; Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21; Rom. 2:18; 1 Cor. 14:19; Gal. 6:6)
- ◉ *noutheteo* (lit. "to shape the mind"; 1 Cor. 4:14; 10:11; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16)

# EDUCATIONAL TERMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ◉ *matheteuo* ("to disciple" is used predominately in the Gospels)
- ◉ *oikodomeo* ("to build up"; 1 Cor. 3:9; 8:1; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Peter 2:5)
- ◉ *paratithemi* ("to commit"; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim.2:2)
- ◉ *ektithemi* ("to expound or explain"; Acts 11:4; 18:26; 28:23)
- ◉ *hodegeo* ("to guide"; John 16:13; Matt. 15:14; 23:16, 24; Rev. 7:17)

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