

Why do we have Old and New Testaments?

A great deal of the religious division and confusion in the world today is caused by general lack of knowledge about the purpose and intent of the two major divisions of the Bible, the old and the new testaments.

The Old Testament is revelation and law from God covering about the time from the creation of the earth to the time of Jesus' death on the cross. The New Testament is revelation and law from God covering about the time from Jesus' birth to His (future) second coming. It tells us that His Son, Jesus, came, lived, died, and arose so that believers on Jesus as the Christ might have eternal life. The New Testament also tells us, by both command and recorded example how we are to worship God today. The two portions of God's will are so closely related it can be said about them that the Old is the New concealed and the New is the Old revealed. The Old Testament was preparatory, temporary, and limited. The New is complete, eternal, and universal. The Old Testament promised a New Testament (Jer. 31:31). The prophet Isaiah spoke of the days to come when the new law would go forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul stated that the law of Moses had been given until the seed, which is Christ Jesus, had come (study Galatians 3:19-27).

The New Testament is the will of Christ, its seal is Jesus' blood (Hebrews 9:15-17). The testator of this will is Jesus, God's Son. The inheritance is heaven. The terms are faith and obedience. The period of probation is the Christian age which will end when Christ returns. The beneficiaries are all men who accept the terms, and the executors of the will are the apostles.

This will could not come of force until Jesus' death, "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it" Hebrews 9:16. Jesus' death marked the end of the old and the beginning of the new, for, "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second" Hebrews 10:9. Christians are discharged from the law and joined to Christ (Romans 7:4-6).

Since the time of the cross, even now in this Christian age, men live under the law of Christ rather than under the Law of Moses as in the Old Testament times. (John 1:17). Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant (or Law of Moses), nailed it to His cross and ended it there. (Study Luke 24:44 and Col. 2:14). Thus no portion of the Old Testament binds us today; even the 10 commandments have been replaced by better requirements. To illustrate this statement regarding the seventh commandment, where Jesus (during His sermon on the Mount) commanded, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart".

To return to the old law, that is, to bind parts of the old law on Christians is to say that Christ died for nothing (Study Galatians 2:21). It is to be severed from Christ and fall from grace (Galatians 5:4), it is to return to sin and death (Romans 8:2), it is to sink back into perdition (Hebrews 10:39).

The following are some comparisons between the Old and the New: Death versus Life (II Corinthians, 3:6-8). Bondage versus Freedom (Galatians 5:1). The Old was to Jews only (Mal. 4:4) while the New is to all men (Matt. 28:18-20). Temporal versus Eternal (Galatians 3:19 and Matthew 24:35). Carnal versus Spiritual (Hebrews 9:10 and John 4:23-24). Continued Guilt versus Pardon (Romans 8:2 and Hebrews 9:12-14).

If it has been taken away and no longer applies to modern man, then of what use is the Old Testament today? From it comes the inspired record of the creation, the history of man and his need for a Savior, and the wonderful prophecies of Christ. Christians are to recognize the Old Testament as the inspired word of God and use it for learning, for admonition, and for comfort, but they must not, however, use it for their law (study Romans 15:4, I Cor. 10:11). The law we are to follow today consists of Jesus' commandments, the Apostles' directions, and the examples of the early Christians as they lived under the direct tutorship of the inspired apostles.