

# Lesson Two: The Old and New Testament

## **The Bible Has Two Parts: Old Testament and New Testament**

**The Old Testament** has 39 books and was given by God to guide one specific nation of people: The Jews or Israel

The word “testament” also means “covenant”. These first 39 books were the covenant agreement between God and the nation of Israel.

The first five books were given through Moses: Books of Law

Then come several books of history and poetry and prophecy.

In the Bible, the Old Testament is often referred to as “the law and the prophets,” the “law of Moses” or just “the law.”

## **The Law spelled out in detail what God expected from Israel in terms of religion.**

The Sabbath, circumcision on the eighth day, holy days, feasts, animal sacrifices to atone for sins, designation of the tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe, Aaron and his descendants as high priests, the Tabernacle (and later the Temple), tithing, etc.

## **The Law governed not only the religious life of Israel but it governed all aspects of life.**

There are laws about sickness and health, farming, inheritance of property, crimes such as murder or severe injury, slavery, business dealings, food, etc.

Even though the Law was given to Israel there are still important things to be learned by Christians from the Law. Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 10:1-11

Also the big principles of faith, obedience, perseverance, prayer, morality, mercy, justice, proper treatment of people, etc., are illustrated in the stories and teachings of the Law.

## **However, God never intended for the Old Law to be His final word to mankind.**

It was only for the nation of Israel. It prophesied of a Messiah or Christ to come who would establish a new all-inclusive kingdom. The Old Law itself prophesied of a time when God would establish a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah

## **Look at Jeremiah 31:31-34.**

Jeremiah was one of God’s prophets who wrote this prophecy about 600 BC.

This prophecy is repeated in Hebrews 8:6-13 to make the point that the old covenant was fading away and no longer valid. God’s new covenant which He made through Christ had taken it’s place. Compare Galatians 3:23-29.

## **A Breakdown of Key Elements of Jeremiah 31:31-34**

A new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers.....

I will put my laws in their minds and write it on their hearts

No more shall every man teach his neighbor “Know the Lord” for all shall know me from the least to the greatest

I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more

**Compare Hebrews 8:6-13 and notice the point the inspired writer is making.**

**The New Testament (or the New Covenant) is God's covenant with man today.**

We do not go to the Old Testament to find out how to worship and serve God today. We look in the New Testament.

What God allowed or commanded in Old Testament times is not necessarily what He allows or commands for Christians and the church today.

**Some things approved by God in OT times that are no longer valid today:**

Requirement of circumcision on the 8<sup>th</sup> day

Animal sacrifices for forgiveness of sins

Having to go through a human priest to approach God

Only one nation of people in covenant with God

Worship in a single location—the Temple or Tabernacle

Divorce for causes other than adultery

More than one wife

Instrumental Music used in Worship

Clean and unclean foods

Worship on Saturday vs Worship on first day of the week

**The New Testament tells us the exact moment that the Old Covenant ended and the New Covenant became effective. See Hebrews 9:15-17**

**Breakdown of Key elements of Hebrews 9:15-17**

He is the mediator of a new covenant by means of death

For the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant

That those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance

For where there is a testament (will),

There must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power while the testator lives.

**The Cross is the moment when Jesus died.**

His new will or testament became effective at the Cross.

The old will or testament became null and void.

Note: At the time that Jesus died on the Cross not a single word of the New Testament has been written down. The NT existed only in the mind of God at that time but God had a plan for giving us the New Covenant. Before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, the New Covenant exists in written form and is in the hands of men.

**The New Testament has four different kinds of books:**

Gospels (biography)

Acts (history)

Epistles (letters)

Revelation (prophecy).

**The Gospels are 4 different accounts of the life, ministry, death & resurrection of Jesus.**

They are odd biographies—they have very little about the early years of Jesus life. For all practical purposes they start with Jesus at age 30, the beginning of his ministry. The last half of all the gospels covers the last few weeks of Jesus life just before the Cross.

The closer in time we get to the cross, the more detail we get.

The accounts of the Last Supper, the arrest, trial and crucifixion give an hour-by-hour record of what happened.

This is God's way of telling us how important the Cross was/is to the redemption story.

**Acts takes up exactly where the gospels leave off.**

At the end of the gospels Jesus gives his disciples the Great Commission and then ascends into heaven. Acts starts at that very point and tells what happened in the 30 years following the Crucifixion, Resurrection & Ascension of Jesus.

It is called the Acts of the Apostles. The story focuses on what the Apostles of Christ did. They received the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised. They preached the gospel to lost people and made Christians and churches throughout the Roman Empire.

**Epistles** are the letters which the apostles wrote to the Christians and churches which were made when they preached. The book of Acts will usually give the details of how the churches which received the epistles came into being.

**Revelation** is a book of prophecy written for churches and Christians going through persecution at the end of the first century AD.