



Old or New Testament, Which Should We Follow?

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The apostle Paul wrote, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The idea of "rightly dividing" is handling accurately. In "handling accurately the word of truth," we must recognize and understand the two basic divisions of the Bible — the Old and New Testaments.

As we consider the two covenants, some questions always come to mind. The one most frequently asked is "Should we live by the Ten Commandments?" The answers to this question and others like it must come from our only source of religious authority — the Bible.

To answer the question, "Old or New Testament, Which Should We Follow," we will examine some related questions concerning the Old Testament.

To Whom Was The Old Testament Written?

The Old Testament law was given to the children of Israel only. Notice the words of Moses in Exodus 19:3-6:

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

A gentile or non-Jew was never included as part of the Old Testament. He was not subject unto its laws. The Jews (ie. descendants of Abraham and Sarah through Isaac and through Jacob) made up the priesthood and kingdom of Israel. The only way that a gentile could be a part of that covenant was to become a Jewish proselyte. The Old covenant was given by God to govern Israel as a nation and as a Kingdom. If the Old Testament was still in force, it would still apply to the Israelites only.

What Purpose Did The Old Testament Serve?

The old covenant revealed the coming of a new and better way which is the New Testament. Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet, wrote in Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." This passage has its fulfillment in Hebrews 8:8-13. Here, the writer of the book of Hebrews points out the many "faults" of the old covenant and contrasts them to a new and living way with better hopes and promises — the perfect New Testament.

The old covenant revealed the coming Messiah. The many prophecies of that covenant pointed toward the many facets of the Messiah. It prophesied His birth (Isaiah 7:14). It revealed the Messiah's forerunner as "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40:3). It predicted the Messiah's zeal (Psalm 69:9), His miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6), and characterized His preaching (Isaiah 61:1-3). Also, it described the Messiah's betrayal by a friend and His death (Zechariah 11:12; Psalm 22). Further, the Old Testament prophesied the Messiah's resurrection and ascension (Psalm 2:7; 68:18; 110:1).

The old covenant revealed sin. Paul wrote, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

What Purpose Does The Old Testament Serve Today?

The old covenant was written as a shadow of a new and better way which is the New Testament. Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." The old covenant was written for our learning. In Romans 15:4 Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

The old covenant was written for an example and for our admonition. In 1 Corinthians 10:11 Paul wrote, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

When Did The Old Testament Go Out Of Effect?

The old covenant went out of effect after the testator of the New Testament died. Hebrews 9:16 says, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." The testator of the New Testament is Christ Jesus. Paul wrote, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14). Thus, the Old Testament went out of effect at the death of Jesus. The New Testament of the testator was made known at the first preaching of the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:22-40) on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem in AD 33 as was prophesied.

Why Did The Old Testament Become Of No Effect?

The old covenant could not take away sins. Hebrews 10:4 & 11 says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (11) "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins."

The old covenant contained faults. Hebrews 8:7 says, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second."

The old covenant was a shadow and not the real. Hebrews 8:5 says that the Old Testament priests "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Further, the Hebrews writer said, "the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things..." (Hebrews 10:1).

Since The Bible Teaches...

Since the Bible teaches these things concerning the Old Testament then we should not live according to the Ten Commandments or any other Old Testament mandate. To go back to the Old Testament is to go back to a time when sin could not be removed. Thus, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Since the law of Moses was a shadow, contained faults, and could not take away sins, why would anyone want to live under the Old Testament?

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