

**“I’ve notice the Bible has two sections: the Old Testament and New Testament.
What are these, and what do they mean?”**

Chuck Northrop

There are three periods of Bible history: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the New Testament ages. The patriarchal and Mosaic ages are recorded in the Old Testament while the New Testament age is recorded in the New Testament as the name suggests. Though the Patriarchal age is recorded in the Old Testament, it is simply an inspired written account of historical events during this time period. Like all of the Old Testament, it was written to the nation of Israel. Basically, it lasted from the creation until the receiving of the Law of Moses on Mount Sinai. The Mosaic age began at the giving of the Mosaic code and ended with the death of Jesus. Thus, the Old Testament records two periods of Bible history but was written to those living under the Mosaic law.

The Old Testament was a covenant made with the children of Israel. Throughout the Patriarchal age, God prophesied of a covenant that He would make with the descendants of Abraham. He told him He would make of him a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3). This is what is often referred to as the Nation-Land promise. Later, this promise was renewed to Isaac, Abraham’s son through Sarah (Genesis 26:1-4), and to Jacob (Genesis 28:3-14) who was given the name Israel. Thus, the Patriarchal age is the history of events that lead to the establishment of the nation of Israel.

The Old Testament was written to descendants of Israel and was never intended for all men to follow. The first five books of the Old Testament are often referred to as the Law because it was God’s law given through Moses to the children of Israel (Exodus 19:3-6). Its purpose was to govern them as a theocratic nation.

However, within the pages of the Old Testament, a new and better way was prophesied and promised which was the New Testament age. Thus the Old Testament was the schoolmaster that leads to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Because it leads men to Christ, it revealed Him and His kingdom through prophecy. Many of the identifying marks of Christ such as His virgin birth, birthplace, home, forerunner, and death are revealed in the Old Testament. These identifying marks clearly identified Him when He came into this world. In addition, many identifying characteristics of His kingdom are also found within the pages of the Old Testament such as the city in which the Messianic kingdom would be established, a basic time frame (i.e. during the days of the Roman Empire), and the nature of His

kingdom such as its peaceable quality.

Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament was written for all men to follow. After His death, Jesus told His disciples to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). After being God’s chosen nation for so many years, this was hard to understand for many of the descendants of Abraham. After a vision, Peter went to the gentile Cornelius and said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

Just as the Old Testament was God’s law to Israel given through Moses, the New Testament is God’s law for all men given through His Son Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus is the mediator of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24) which came into force after His death (Hebrews 9:16-17) and took the old law out of effect (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14). Therefore, to return to the Law of Moses is to make Christ’s sacrifice of no value. If a person can have forgiveness of sins without the death of Christ, then Christ suffered for no reason. Paul said, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

What does all this mean? It means we live under the New Testaments and must obey its precepts and promises. Though the Old Testament still serves a purpose (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11), yet the New Testament is of force because the Testator, Jesus Christ, died and established a new law — the law of Christ.

Are you living according to the law of Him who died for you? If we can help you in your obedience, please let us know.