

# ***Teaching Sound Doctrine***

## ***Old Testament and New Testament***

### ***Part 1***

As the most popular book in the world, the Holy Bible deserves one's attention and study. When one turns to its "Table of Contents," he notices that the Bible is divided into two sections: Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament consists of 39 books and the New Testament consists of 27 books.

The division into two testaments is based on the wording of Scripture itself. When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, he said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28; parallels in Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). In Paul's discussion of the change of covenants, he uses both "Old Testament" and "New Testament":

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life (2 Cor. 3:6).

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ (2 Cor. 3:14).

The layout of the Bible into two testaments is drawn from the teaching of Scripture itself.

#### **Three Periods of Bible History**

The Bible may be accurately divided into three periods of Bible history on the basis of these two testaments. These three periods of Bible history are:

1. **The Patriarchal Age.** The Patriarchal Age draws its name from the word "patriarch" (Heb. 7:4), the "fathers," drawn especially from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The term "Patriarchal Age" is used to describe the relationship God sustained with all mankind from the creation. There is no existing written law that reveals what was God's covenant with mankind before he revealed himself to Moses. However, sin as the transgression of God's law did exist; there was moral right and wrong; there were religious ordinances in place, but the details of that covenant are not revealed. The patriarchal age ended for the descendants of Jacob at the giving of the Law of Moses (approx. 1450 B.C.),

but continued for the rest of creation until Jesus' death on the cross.

2. The Mosaical Age. The Mosaical Age draws its name from Moses as the lawgiver. God called the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, into a covenant with him. He led the people out of Egyptian bondage and to Mt. Sinai where God revealed the Ten Commandments and other laws to Israel. Moses wrote the books of Genesis- Deuteronomy, which became known as The Law, the foundation documents for the Old Testament. As the years passed, other books of history, wisdom literature, and prophecy were added, until the Old Testament was completed in the fifth century B.C. This Law regulated the life of the children of Israel from the time it was given on Mt. Sinai until the death of Christ.

3. The Christian Age. The Christian Age draws its name from Christ as the lawgiver in this period of Bible history. However, he wrote none of the New Testament. Instead, he gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets of the first century who wrote the 27 books of the New Testament. This book is designed to govern all of mankind from the death of Christ until his second coming.

### The Old Testament Foretold the Coming of Christ in Types and Shadows

The Old Testament instituted a form of worship that foreshadowed the work of Jesus Christ. When one reads the worship instituted in the Tabernacle, he perceives that this worship foreshadowed the coming of him who is the true sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ. For example, John the Baptist describes Jesus saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The people immediately could understand how a one-year-old lamb without blemish was slain and its blood sprinkled on the altar as an atonement for sin. By John's comparison of Jesus to the "lamb of God," the common man would understand that Jesus is man's offering for sin. Paul describes Jesus as "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7). Israelites would remember the institution of the Passover at the time of the tenth plague in Egypt when the firstborn were slain. Every house in Israel was told to slay a lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts and lintels. When the Lord saw the blood, he would pass over that house so that its firstborn would not be killed. Christ is our Passover. His blood saves us from the judgment of death.

The types and shadows of the Old Testament are prophetic of the great atonement that was made in the New Testament. Consequently, Jesus could say about his work in fulfillment of the Old Testament, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). His coming was not to destroy the law and prophets but to fulfill them. One may compare this to an engagement and wedding. The wedding does not

destroy an engagement between a couple, although the wedding ends it; rather, the wedding is the fulfillment of the engagement promise. In a similar way, Jesus' death on the cross did not destroy the Old Testament, although it brought this period of Bible history to an end. Rather, his work was the fulfillment of God's divine purpose and plan to save mankind through his Son.

### The Change of Law Is Foretold in the Old Testament

The change of covenants was predicted in the pages of the Old Testament itself. For example, Jeremiah who worked in approximately 625-587 B.C. wrote as follows:

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: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

This passage foretells the "new covenant" that God would make and describes several things about the nature of the covenant itself. One will not enter the covenant by birth and then be taught to "know the Lord," as occurred under the Old Covenant when a Jewish boy entered the covenant of circumcision at eight days old and later learned to "know the Lord." Rather, under the new covenant, one must know the Lord to enter the covenant. God's laws must be written on the table of one's heart to be a member of the covenant community. The writer of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 and applies it to the New Covenant that Christ established with his disciples (Heb. 8:7-13). He concludes by stating that the Old Covenant has passed away: "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. . . . In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:7, 13). To state that the Old Testament is abrogated is to teach what the Old Testament itself foretold would occur.