

Free! Take one!

That They all May Be One

John 17:21



Chapter eleven

The Old Testament in New Testament Times

Clarence W. Fell

The New Testament Church

Everyone makes some sort of distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Church of Christ is the church of the New Testament. Some people mistakenly think this means that the Old Testament has been thrown out. Actually, the Old Testament is held in high esteem and we study from it frequently. Being a New Testament congregation means we derive our authority for religious practice and organization from the New Testament. In the course of this chapter we will clarify this matter in greater detail. Our aim is to learn what distinction the Bible makes between the Old and New Testaments, and then to respect that distinction in our practice and organization.

Old and New Testaments

Most people realize the Bible is divided into two parts, an Old Testament and a New Testament. These names were chosen for a reason. A testament is a covenant. In the Bible there are two covenants. The old one and the new one that replaced the old one. Both are preserved in the Bible for us to read and study. We believe

Under the Old Testament it pleased God to...

Require animal sacrifices

Impose dietary laws

Establish a Levitical Priesthood

Require people to observe the Sabbath and various feast days

Forbid Jews from marrying gentiles

Is the fact that these things pleased God in the
Old Testament proof all these things please God today?

that the New Testament replaces the Old Testament and that God's people today must follow the New Testament. Let's look into why we hold this belief.

The Old Testament Foretells Its Own End

Deuteronomy 18:18, 19

The Old Testament was not designed to be a permanent covenant. In fact, the Old Testament foretells its own end. Let's start with Deuteronomy 18:18, 19 where God speaks to Moses saying, *"I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him."* Moses tells the people that one day a new prophet will rise up and there will be a change in leadership. At that time they will no longer be under the Old Law . In Acts 3:22-26 Peter refers to Deuteronomy 18:18 and tells us

Moses and Christ Deuteronomy 18:18, 19

Moses

**Spoke Directly with God
(Ex. 33:11; Deut 34:10).**

**Led people out of
Egyptian captivity
(Ex. 3:4-10).**

**Was the lawgiver
(Deut. 4:44).**

Jesus

**Speaks Directly with God
(John 8:25-30).**

**Leads people out of the
captivity of sin
(John 8:31, 32).**

**Is the lawgiver
(James 4:12).**

that Jesus is the prophet God spoke about. Peter said, *“For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”*

God told Moses another prophet would rise up and God would require people to follow this new prophet. Peter said that Jesus is that prophet. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus shows Himself to be this prophet when He said, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”* Today we follow Jesus. He is our leader. The days of the Old Testament ruling in the lives of men are gone. Today we under the authority of God’s new Prophet and His New Testament.

Jeremiah 31:31-32

The temporary nature of the Old Testament is brought out with even greater clarity in Jeremiah 31:31-32 where God says, *“Behold the days are coming says the Lord, when 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, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.”*

The Old Testament clearly foretold its own end. It directly states that the new covenant will be different from the one that God established with Israel. In other words, the Old Testament was designed to expire. It had a specific job to do and when that job was done, it

expired and the New Testament would replace it (see also Hosea 2:11; Hebrews 8:7).

Jesus and the End of the Old Testament

In Matthew 5:17-19 Jesus taught, *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Jesus did not intend to sabotage the Old Testament or to work against it, but to fulfill its purpose. Jesus himself would complete the mission of the Old Testament, bring it to its intended end, and replace it with the New Testament (see also Matthew 28:18-20; Heb. 1:1, 2).

Jesus said until the old covenant was fulfilled, it would stand firm down to the smallest jot and tittle (jots and tittles are comparable to the dot above an *i* and the cross mark on a *t*). Jesus warned that anyone who broke the least commandment of the Old Testament prior to its expiration would not go unpunished.

About 30 years after Jesus gave this warning, the apostle Paul said, *“neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything”* (Gal. 5:6; I Cor. 7:19). In the Old Testament circumcision was more than just a jot or a tittle, it was a major point of the Old Testament (Gen. 17:14). Yet, Paul taught that this part of the Old Testament was gone. Why did Paul do this? Why did Paul teach people they were no longer under the Old Testament? Paul taught this new doctrine because Jesus told him to do so (Gal. 1:11, 12).

Not only did Paul dismiss circumcision, he dismissed the dietary laws, feast laws, and even the Sabbath law (Col. 2:16,17). These were all important parts of the Old Testament, yet Paul teaches that obedience in these things is no longer required.

Let's reason this out. Jesus said that anyone who broke the least law of the Old Testament and taught others to break the law would not go unpunished. Next, under the direction of Jesus, Paul declares the Old Testament is no longer binding. Either Paul is a false teacher or something has changed. We believe that something changed. We believe that Jesus succeeded in His mission to fulfill the Old Testament. Jesus brought the Old Testament to its intended conclusion and replaced it with a better testament, the New Testament.

Paul to the Galatians

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul explains the temporary design of the Old Testament. Let's look at some of the things Paul wrote to the Galatians.

In Galatians 2:18, 19 Paul said, *"For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God."* There are two questions that arise from these verses that we need to consider.

First, what things did Paul refer to as having been *"destroyed"*? The answer is found in Galatians 2:11-17, specifically verse 16 where Paul wrote, *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."* The things Paul destroyed were the various laws of the Old Testament. In other words, Paul taught that the days of Old Testament authority were gone. The

Old Testament no longer rules over the lives of men. Today men are subject to the New Testament. The New Testament rules over the lives of men. When God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30), He does not call them to the Old Testament, but rather to the New Testament that was confirmed by the blood of Christ.

The second question we ponder is, how did Paul die to the law through the law? This simply refers to the fact that the old law was designed to expire. It was a temporary law. If the Old Testament is truly respected and followed, it leads a person to transfer his loyalty and obedience from the old to the new. That was the goal of the Old Testament. This point is further established in our next Bible passage.

In Galatians 3:23-25 Paul wrote, *“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come we are no longer under a tutor.”* Paul points out that the old law was to last until the time of Christ, and then it would be replaced by the new law.

If you have the time, read the book of Galatians once a day for a week or so. As the message of this little letter becomes more and more familiar to you, you will find Paul’s point concerning the end of the Old Testament easier to grasp.

Paul to the Ephesians

In the Ephesian letter, Paul teaches about the ending of the Old Testament. Paul teaches, *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile*

them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity” (Eph 2:14-16).

The “two” that have been made one in Jesus is explained in Ephesians 2:11-13. A reading of that passage shows that the Jews and Gentiles were the two that are now one in Christ. Galatians 3:27, 28 teaches, *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul clearly defines the “*wall of division*” and the “*enmity*” in Ephesians 2:14-16, Paul calls it the “*law of commandments contained in ordinances.*” In other words, the Old Testament. This is the enmity that Christ put to death. Christ brought the Old Testament to its intended end (see also Col. 2:14-17). This is a blessing and freedom that had not been known prior to the end of the Old Testament. Paul said, “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage*” (Gal. 5:1).

The Hebrew Writer

Hebrews 1:1, 2 teaches, “*God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.*” From these verses we learn that God talks to us today through Christ. This is what Moses referred to in Deuteronomy 18:18, 19 (see page 2 of this chapter). Jesus is our law giver. He has all authority (Matt. 28:18-20). We follow His will revealed in the New Testament.

Hebrews 8:7 makes one of the most profound statements concerning this subject. In Hebrews 8:7 we read, “*For if that first*

covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.” Two separate covenants are mentioned, and the second one replaces the first one because the first covenant was not faultless. In other words, the New Testament replaces the Old Testament.

Hebrews 7:12-14 teaches, *“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”* The message is simple. Because Christ is from the tribe of Judah, not the Levite tribe as the Old Testament requires, there must be a new covenant. Christ could not be a priest if the Old Testament is still in force.

Beginning at Deuteronomy 18:18, 19 and going through the verses studied in this chapter, we learn the Old Testament was designed to be temporary. When it fulfilled its purpose of being *“our tutor to bring us to Christ”* (Gal. 3:24), it was replaced by the New Testament.

What is the Role of the Old Testament Today?

We now come to the question, since the Old Testament has been replaced, what is its role in religion today? Let's build a solid book, chapter, and verse foundation to answer this questions and to learn the role of the Old Testament in New Testament times.

The Old Testament Verifies Christ

One important function of the Old Testament is its pointing to Jesus. In Luke 24:25-27 Jesus said, *“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to*

believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” Jesus used the Old Testament to show these disciples that He was the Christ the Old Testament foretold (see also John 3:14 with Numbers 21:9).

Paul (also known as Saul of Tarsus), Apollos, and Philip used the Old Testament in this manner. Consider their use of the Old Testament in the following verses:

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:35). The Scripture that Philip used was the Old Testament passage of Isaiah 53:7,8.

“But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:22). We believe that Paul, like Apollos, used the Old Testament Scriptures to confront the Jews.

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). The Bereans used the Old Testament to verify the accuracy of the message Paul preached.

“For he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28). When Apollos refuted the Jews, he used the Old Testament to show them that Jesus is the Christ.

In addition to verifying Christ, the Old Testament provides a foreshadow of the blessing revealed in the New Testament. In Hebrews 10: 1 we read, *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer, continually year by year, make those who*

approach perfect.” In Colossians 2:16, 17 Paul wrote, “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

The Old Testament is for Our Learning

Paul wrote, *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Rom. 15:4). The Old Testament is a valuable resource for Christians today. When we study the lives of David, Ruth, Esther, and other Old Testament characters we learn important basic life principles.

In I Corinthians 10:11 Paul wrote, *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come.”* Paul used Old Testament examples to teach the Corinthians the importance of obeying God. Paul tells us to study the Old Testament and learn the lessons Israel would not learn. The Old Testament provides many excellent examples illustrating the importance of obedience (Nadab & Abihu, Lev. 10:1-3; King Saul, I Samuel 15:20-24; The Young Prophet, I Kings 13:11-24).

In II Timothy 3:16, 17 Paul wrote, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* When Paul says that the Old Testament is *“profitable for doctrine”* he does not mean that we can practice anything we desire out of Old Testament. Paul cautioned, *“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully”* (I Tim. 1:8). We use the Old Testament for doctrine in such things as creation, the wisdom of Proverbs, the character of God, and the book of Daniel where we learn

about God's providence with men and nations. The Old Testament is a priceless source of information for man today. To ignore the Old Testament would be to disobey the New Testament. However, we are no longer under the regulations, requirements, and restrictions of the Old Testament.

Informative, But Not Over Us

This brings us to the next question, what is the extent of the Old Testament's role today? Once again we appeal to a solid book, chapter, and verse foundation for an answer to this question.

In Galatians 5:4 Paul wrote, *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace."* Paul is not saying that the Old Testament is useless, rather he is teaching that the leadership of the Old Testament has expired. Today

God's Plan of Salvation

Hear the Gospel: Romans 10:14-17

Believe: John 3:16; Hebrews 11:6

Repent: Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30,31

Confess: Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32,33

Be united with Christ in baptism: Romans 6:3-5

None of the above steps save in and of themselves. It is the grace of God that appointed these as steps leading to the saving blood of Jesus. To get to the saving blood each step must be taken just as it is presented in the Bible. These steps only have value because God's grace has so granted. Without God's grace these steps would be worthless. Have you followed these steps to the saving blood of Jesus?

we are under the rule of Christ. To go back to the Old Testament is to betray Christ (see also Gal. 3:1-25).

This illustration will be helpful. When you were in public school, you were under the school's leadership. They told you when to arrive, when to eat, and when you could leave for the day. After you graduated and went on to college, or work, you were no longer under the authority of the public schools. You had a new authority over you and you followed that new leadership, but you still used the lessons learned in the public school. Being under a new authority does not mean that the lessons you learned in school are no longer valid. All you learned about history, English, math, science, and even what you learned about respecting those in authority over you, all these lessons are still valuable. Graduation did not annul your education, but it did end the school's authority over you.

When the "graduation" from the Old Testament to the New Testament occurred, it did not annul the lessons of the Old Testament, but it did end the Old Testament's authority over man and replaced it with Christ's authority (Matt. 28:18-20).

The history of the Old Testament is still true. The wisdom of the Old Testament is still wise. The moral lessons of the Old Testament are still valuable examples. But, the authority of the Old Testament to lead us in worship, to authorize religious practices such as circumcision, dietary laws, feast day, Sabbaths, sacrifices, candles, instrumental music, priestly robes, incense, and other such things, that authority has expired. Today we follow Jesus' leadership. He tells us what to do to be saved and how to worship. Those who return to the Old Testament have fallen from grace just as Paul taught in Galatians 5:1-6.

Not a Buffet

The Old Testament is not a buffet line we can go through and pick out the parts we desire to carry over into the New Testament. We are not authorized to create our own customized blend of religion by mixing the Old and New Testaments to suit our personal taste. Paul pointed out the disaster of trying to mix the covenants together. He warned, *“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them”* (Gal. 3:10). In other words Paul is saying, those who continue in the Old Law must continue in **ALL** of it. The Galatians wanted to practice just the parts of the Old Testament they desired, but Paul says their plan won't work. Paul further warned, *“And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law”* (Gal. 5:3).

Ironically, those who claim to honor and respect the Old Testament by clinging to parts of it, actually disobey, disrespect, and dishonor the Old Testament. They further dishonor the Old Testament because they do not actually follow it as it is written.

For example, some people cling to the Old Testament practice of the Sabbath, but they do not respect the Old Testament teachings concerning the Sabbath. Under Old Testament a person could not do any work on the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14). A person could not buy merchandise or food on the Sabbath (Neh. 10:31). A person could not carry a burden on the Sabbath (Jer. 17:21, John 5:10) A person could not kindle a fire on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:3). Violating the Sabbath was a capital offense (Ex. 31:14, 15). Those who claim to observe the Sabbath actually observe a modified form self-designed to fit their own ideas. This does not show honor or respect for the Old Testament. It is merely following a man-made doctrine that somewhat resembles an Old Testament law.

Another example concerns those who use the Old Testament as authority for instrumental music. They claim to follow the Old

Testament, but they don't respect the Old Testament regulations concerning the use of instrumental music. In II Chronicles 29:25 we read, "*And he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets.*" The playing of musical instruments was limited to the Levites. An open invitation was not extended to every musically talented Hebrew inviting them to join the Temple band. God was very specific about who could serve in this manner. Under the Old Testament, merely possessing

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musical talent did not qualify a person to use his or her talent in the worship service. Those who claim the Old Testament as their guide for instrumental music are actually following self-designed guidelines. They are not showing honor or respect to the Old Testament. They are merely following a man-made doctrine that somewhat resembles the Old Testament.

Sadly, many who claim to love, honor, and respect the Old Testament actually disobey, disrespect, and dishonor it. They actually abuse the Old Testament by treating it as though it were a buffet line for them to pick and choose just the things they desire.

What About the Ten Commandments

People are often uncomfortable when we tell them that man is no longer under the Ten Commandments. Such a statement sounds outright blasphemous to many modern religious people. So, what do we mean when we say man is no longer under the Ten Commandments? Does this mean man is free to practice everything the Ten Commandments forbid? No! Absolutely not! Today we are under the law of Christ (I Cor. 7:19; 9:21). His law includes nine of the Ten Commandments (Jesus did not include the Sabbath in His law). Today we abstain from murdering, adultery, stealing and lying because we are under Jesus' law.

This point can be illustrated by comparing the laws of America to the laws of England (or whatever country your ancestors came from). When our forefathers left England the laws there forbade murdering and stealing. When our forefathers came to America, the laws of their new nation also forbade murdering and stealing. Now, when these new citizens of America abstain from murdering and stealing, is it because they are under the authority of England or America? Obviously, it is because they come under the authority of American laws. Even though the laws

of both England and America forbid the exact same acts, we still recognize that two different sets of law exist. There is nothing difficult about making this distinction. The fact that there are similarities in the laws of the two nations does not mean that American citizens can combine the two sets to suit their own personal taste. American citizens, living in America, are under the laws of the United States of America. This is an easy point to see when comparing the laws of two countries. But, when we turn our attention to the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament, some people find it difficult to get a mental grasp on it. They fail to see that it is just as simple as understanding changing citizenship from one country to another, or just as simple as the graduation example used earlier in this chapter.

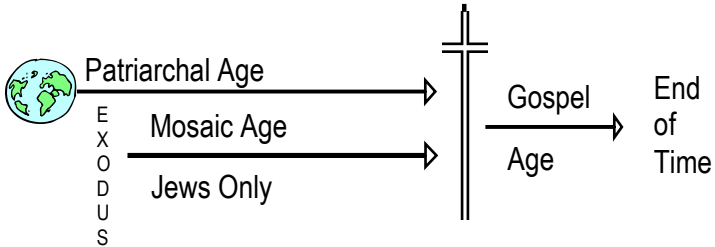
When Christians abstain from murdering and stealing it is because of New Testament authority, not the Ten Commandments. Even though some of the Old Testament laws and New Testament laws are the same, we must recognize that two different covenants are involved. Christians are under the authority of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). Christians live the way they do because Jesus so directs (see also II Cor. 3:7-16).

Proper Respect for the Old Testament

While we emphasize the New Testament, we encourage respect for the Old Testament. We must not discard, doubt, or belittle the Old Testament. The Old Testament is no longer the authority that governs our religious practice or our reconciliation with God, but it is still from the mind of God. It is still valuable for man today (II Tim. 3:16, 17). So, while we are no longer under the Old Testament, that in no way implies disrespect anymore than graduating from high school and moving on to college implies disrespect for the high school. In fact, college verifies and validates what the high school taught. Moving on from high school

Who do you follow, Jesus or Moses?

God is the ultimate author of both Testaments. He set up the first, and He took it down. He speaks to us today through the New Testament and tells us that we are to follow Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20; John 14:6; Heb. 1:1, 2).



Patriarchal Dispensation

Began at creation

God spoke to the head of the family
 Genesis 6:13
 Genesis 12:1
 Genesis 26:1-5
 Genesis 28:13-15
 Genesis 31:29

All mankind was under this system

Mosaic Dispensation

Jews Only

Jews entered this covenant after the exodus from Egypt (Deut. 5:1-3)

This covenant was temporary (Jer. 31:31)

Covenant was added because of transgression (Gal. 3:19)

Covenant was a tutor (Gal. 3:24)

Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:1-4)

Christian Dispensation

For all mankind (Acts 17:30)

Confirmed by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:16-22)

Enter into by... Faith

Hebrews 11:6

Repentance

Luke 13:5

II Peter 3:9

Confession

Romans 10:10

Baptism

Mark 16:16

Acts 2:38

Acts 22:16

Galatians 3:27

I Peter 3:21

We Can't Follow Both Testaments

We can't follow both Testaments 100% at the same time. This puts us in a rather awkward position. Moses forbid any deviation from the Old Testament (Deut. 12:32; 27:26). Likewise, the Lord condemns any deviation from the New Testament (Gal. 1:6-9; 3:15; Rev. 22:18,19). We can follow one or the other, but we can't follow both. It's impossible. If we try to blend the two together we immediately violate the

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COMING NEXT CHAPTER

That They all
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John 17:21



Chapter Twelve

Premillennialism and the end of time

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