

The BEACON



by the Newton church of Christ PO Box 893, Newton, 28658 Meeting at: 656 St. James Church Rd.
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The Bible—The Word of God

The subject of this article is certainly a broad one, and we could spend a life time studying it and still not have it exhausted. We simply want to notice a few interesting things about the Bible, that I believe, will aid us as we daily study this Holy Book. There is a very beautiful and thought provoking tribute that was written about the Bible by some anonymous penman. It reads this way:

"This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, Heaven opened and the gates of Hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be open at the judgment and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents."

Consider the meaning of the word Bible. It is from the Greek word biblos, which just means "book." We often refer to this particular book as the Holy Book" or "Bible", because it is the only book that man has that is from God.

Although the Word of God is available to us in one volume, as one book, it is actually a collection or library of books. It is composed of sixty-six books of varying sizes. There are two main divisions of the Bible. They are referred to as the Old Testament or Covenant, which is made up of thirty-nine books, and the New Testament or Covenant, which has twenty-seven books.

Old Testament

The Bible contains many different kinds of writing. In the Old Testament there are five books of LAW—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

These books, written by Moses, are sometimes referred to as the "Pentateuch", meaning "five volumes."

Genesis begins "in the beginning" and continues to tell us of such characters as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. They tell us of the Israelites in Egyptian bondage, and of their exodus and of the giving of the Law unto them at Mt. Sinai. By reading these books we can know the things that the Lord expected of these

people. This section of the Old Testament ends with the death of Moses, about 1500 years before Christ.

There are twelve books of HISTORY in the Old Testament. Beginning with Joshua and going through Esther, these books tell the history of Israel, God's chosen people, from the beginning of the leadership of Joshua to the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem in 444 B.C.

The Old Testament contains six books of POETRY—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. The book of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are also known as "Wisdom Literature."

There are sixteen books known as the PROPHETS—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. These sixteen books record the teaching of God to the people of Israel through the prophets. They cover a period of about 400 years, from about 800 B.C. to about 400 B.C.

New Testament

The New Testament has four books that we might classify as BIOGRAPHY.

The narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give the complete life of Christ. If you delight in reading about great men, you most certainly would enjoy reading these four books about the greatest one that ever walked the face of the earth. Jesus was the Son of God. He was Immanuel, "God with us."

There is one book of HISTORY in the New Testament—the book of Acts, the "Acts of the Apostles." This book tells of the establishment of the church and its spread under the preaching of the Great Commission, which had been given by Jesus: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mk.

16:15-16.) In Acts we learn what people during the lifetime of the Apostles did to become Christians and we learn what we must do to become the same. Acts, along with the rest of the New Testament, teaches us that all manmade religious organizations are wrong. Denominationalism is presented as sinful.

Many of these lessons are learned in the EPISTLES, or letters, written by the inspired men to congregations of the Lord and to individuals. There are twenty-one of them in all, beginning with Romans and stopping with Jude. Later we shall study some of the things concerning the New Testament, undenominational, church of Jesus Christ. In these letters we can learn such things as the worship, work, and organization of the church, and also the kind of life that Christians are to lead.

At the time when it was written, the book of Revelation told of future events that would shortly come to pass. It concludes the Bible with the picture of man at home with God.

"Inspired of God"

The writers of the Bible number about forty in all. They wrote under different circumstances in different ages and were, of course, men of varied occupations.

For example: Ezra was a scribe; Nehemiah, a cup-bearer to the king; David, a king; Peter, a fisherman; Matthew, a tax-collector (publican); and Paul, an educated Jew.

Moses wrote the Pentateuch about 1500 B.C., and the Apostle John wrote Revelation about 98 A. D. In round figures we could say that the Bible was written over a period of 1600 years. Even with all of this diversity, there is unity in the Bible. There is no contradiction in it. Though there are many books, in reality there is only one. The reason for this is that these men were inspired of God. They spoke only what the Holy Spirit instructed them to speak and write. (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.) They spoke only the words that the spirit gave them. (1 Cor. 2:13.)

Translations

The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language and the New Testament was written in Greek, the universal language at the time of Christ and the Apostles. It soon became necessary to translate the Bible into the tongues of other lands. The best known translation into English is the King James Version (Authorized by King James 1, which was completed by forty-seven of England's ripest scholars in 1611 A. D. at first for the Church of England. The American Standard Version was made by almost one hundred of America's finest scholars in 1901 A. D. There have been many other translations into English.

It should be remembered that the translations as well as the divisions of the Bible into chapters and verses was the work of uninspired men. This was done for our convenience, to aid us in our study of the Word of God.

When you find italics in the regular text of the Bible, it indicates that the word is lacking in the original, or cannot be readily expressed in English, so is included to complete the sense of the statement.

I hope that you find the things we have discussed useful as you study your Bible daily. In future issues we plan other articles that will further increase your understanding of the "Book of books."

The Dispensations in Which God Hath Spoken

This article is on the dispensations in which God has spoken and the way in which He has spoken. By "dispensation" we simply mean the "period" or "era" of time in which the Lord has spoken. God has spoken to many different people, and in many different periods of time. The inspired writer of Hebrews 1:1 says, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." This passage states that God hath spoken! He spoke by "divers" or "different" portions and manners.

Paul admonished the young preacher Timothy to "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, Handling aright the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15.) If one is going to be the kind of workman that the Lord wants him to be—not ashamed—it will be necessary that he be able to "handle aright the word of truth." It will be imperative that we understand just exactly what He has intended for us. Perhaps you're saying, "But, all of the Bible is for us." If you mean by that, that we are to study and learn all of it, then you will find us in perfect agreement, but if you mean that everything in it is applicable to us and must be obeyed by us, then we could not agree. For example: have you kept the garden of Eden? have you built an ark? Have you offered your only son Isaac on an altar? Have you kept the sabbath?

Have you offered animal sacrifices and burned incense? Certainly everyone understands that the command to keep the garden of Eden was given to Adam and Eve only, and that the command to build an ark was directed to Noah alone. You probably don't have a son named Isaac, and even if you did you would not attempt to offer him as a sacrifice, for you know that the Lord never commanded anyone but Abraham to do that. You know not to burn incense, offer animal sacrifices or keep the sabbath, because those were some of Jehovah's commands to the nation of Israel. The Bible teaches that God has spoken.

We generally divide Bible history into three main periods or dispensations. These three are the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian periods of time. This is done to aid us in placing the various Bible events and characters and because of the different ways that the Lord has spoken.

Patriarchal

The word Patriarchal means "the rule of the fathers." From the time of Adam till the time of Moses the Lord spoke to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others. The father in turn instructed his family. He offered the sacrifices for the entire family. The Patriarchal period is told about in the Bible from Genesis 1 to Exodus 19. During this period God dealt primarily with the family through the head of the house. God spoke in different ways in this period. He spoke direct to certain individuals. An example of this is found in Gen. 3:8-10 as the Lord spoke unto Adam and Eve: "And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden. And Jehovah God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself." In this passage we have record of Jehovah God speaking direct to Adam and Eve. This was one of the ways that the Lord spoke at that period. Not only did the Lord speak direct, but He also spoke in visions. In Gen. 15:1 we read, "After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Both in Gen. 18:2 and 19:1 we read of the Lord speaking through angels— once to Abraham and once to Lot. During the Patriarchal period God used these three methods to reveal His message unto the people: direct speaking, visions, and angels.

Mosaic

After the children of Israel went into Egyptian bondage and then came out under the leadership of Moses, about 1500 years before Christ, the Lord spoke unto the people of Israel through Moses. He first gave the Ten Commandments and later gave other rules and regulations, all of which are known as the Law of Moses. From about 1500 B.C, at the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, until the time of Christ, we have a period known as the Mosaic dispensation.

In the Old Testament—from the twentieth chapter of Exodus to the end of Malachi—this period is covered. John said, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) During that time the Lord spoke to the nation of Israel. He did not speak just to a family.

Neither did he speak to the individual only, but He gave a national law to a nation of people. The Law of Moses was both a civil law and a religious law.

What the Lord told Adam, Noah, Abraham or any other person under the Patriarchal dispensation was not directed to the children of Israel. Neither were any of the things that He spoke in either of these periods directed to us.

The things that the Lord requires of us today are not what He gave to Israel in the previous dispensation of time. Later in this same period, the Mosaical period, beginning about eight or nine hundred B. C, the Lord spoke through the prophets. Such men as Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Joel, and others spoke the word of the Lord unto God's wayward people.

Christian

We learned a moment ago from Hebrews 1 that God now speaks to us at the end of the Old Testament period through His son, Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews shows that Christ is a better messenger or speaker for the Father than were either the angels, the prophets, or even Moses. In the New Testament we also have the apostles of Jesus as spokesmen. Jesus promised the apostles that He would send to them the Holy Spirit after He ascended to the Father. You may read about His promises to them in John, chapters 14 through 16. In this present period we have both Jesus Christ and the apostles as speakers. We refer to this period, which is called in the Bible the "last days," as the Christian dispensation of time. Since the establishment of the church in the first century A. D. we have been in the "last days." (Acts 2: 15-17.) There will be no other period of time. The Lord has given us a full and complete revelation, which we will discuss in a future article. There is no need for another period in which the Lord shall speak. The full revelation was made by Christ and the apostles in the Christian dispensation.

In Matt. 26:28 Jesus said, as he instituted the Lord's supper, "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." Jesus shed His blood to dedicate the New Covenant or Testament. (Heb. 9.) The Christian dispensation is the period of the New Testament. The New Testament is the record of God's speaking to us today.

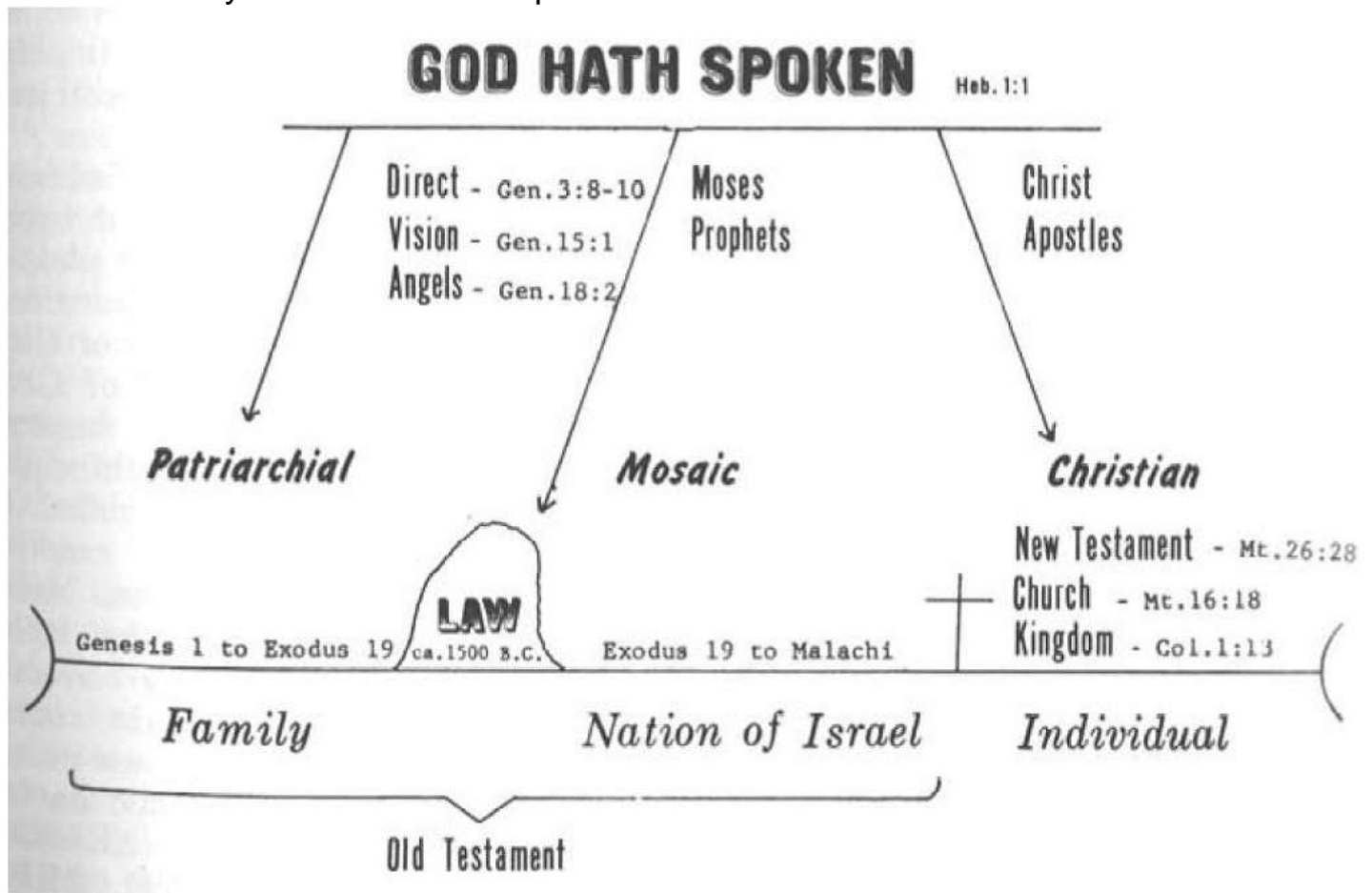
In this period of time we have the church. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18.) Jesus promised to build His church. He didn't say anything about any human institution or denomination founded by man, but said that He would build His church. If it belongs to Him, of course it should bear His name—the church of Jesus Christ.

The church is also referred to as the kingdom. Paul mentioned to the Colossians that God had "delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." (Col. 1:13, 14.) These Christians were in the kingdom of Christ. During this period of time God is speaking primarily to the individual. He is not speaking to a nation, nor is He speaking to the heads of the families.

Now it is a matter of "whosoever will." It makes no difference what others are doing about Christ and the gospel, you still have an obligation to receive and obey the things

spoken. You cannot afford to neglect them. Salvation is a result of God's grace and our obedience.

We have discussed only briefly the different dispensations in which God has spoken. The accompanying chart should prove helpful in illustrating this lesson, and guide you in further study of the Sacred Scriptures.



The Two Covenants

Much false teaching is done because Bible students fail to recognize the distinction made in the Bible between the Old and New Covenants. Men sometimes fail to rightly divide the Word of Truth. We want, in this article, to study the two laws that God has given to His people in the two different dispensations. We will study the PURPOSE of the first, its FAILURES, its ABOLITION, and the ESTABLISHMENT of the New Covenant.

A covenant is defined as "an agreement between persons or parties." (Webster.) "In civil law, any agreement under seal." (Encyclopedia Americana, 17:201.) One should remember that the covenant or agreement may have conditions, and if either party breaks the covenant the innocent party is no longer bound by the covenant. If the party making the covenant with another so desires, the covenant may be unconditional.

Covenant With Israel

In Exodus 19:1-8 we learn of the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. We can see the agreement when God said, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all

peoples" and the people answered, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." The Lord said, to paraphrase, "Here is my covenant. Will you keep it?" and Israel said, "Yes, we agree to keep it." Thus, we can see that the agreement or covenant was made. Exodus 20:1-17 records the giving of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments to Israel for a national law. The Ten Commandments, along with the many and various ordinances that we read about in chapter 21 to 23 of Exodus, were given only to Israel. They were not given to any other people. The individual had a place only as a member of the nation.

This covenant was confirmed or sealed after the ordinances were written, by Moses, in a book (known as the BOOK OF THE COVENANT). The book represented God's part in the agreement, just as an insurance policy that you may have represents the particular company with which you have insurance.

Exodus 24:1-8 relates how that Moses read the book unto the people, and how that they agreed to do all that the Lord commanded. He then confirmed or sealed the agreement or covenant between the two (God and Israel) by sprinkling the blood of animals (known as the blood of the covenant) on both the book and the people. (See also Heb. 9:18-22.) The first or Old Covenant was sealed by the blood of animals and was thus made official in that way.

Covenant Broken

It wasn't very long before Israel broke the covenant that they had made with God, even though they had agreed to keep all of the commandments. Moses said to Israel, "Ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which Jehovah had commanded you." (Deut. 9:16.)

Ezekiel, the prophet tells of their rebellion when he speaks for the Lord saying, "So I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and showed them mine ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live in them. Moreover, also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am Jehovah that sanctifieth them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in mine ordinances, which if a man keep, he shall live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned. . ." (Ezek. 20:10-12.) Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, tells us that the Lord said that Israel broke His covenant. (Jer. 31:32.) According to the definition of the word covenant, the Lord was now free of obligation to Israel. She had broken the covenant. The Lord was innocent and had every right to completely reject Israel.

The first covenant was likened unto a marriage. God is pictured as the Husband and Israel as the wife or the bride (just as in the New Testament, Christ is represented as the Groom and the church His holy bride). It would be very helpful if you would take the time to read Ezekiel 16, in which the Lord tells of Egypt and of His loving care and protection for her. At the "time of love" the Lord swore unto her and "entered into a covenant" with her. (V. 8.) Despite His great love for her, the bride played the harlot with the idols. She was a "wife that committeth adultery" with strangers. (V. 32.) We can clearly see that she had broken the covenant, thus according to our definition of the word covenant, He was no longer bound to keep her. God was faithful, but Israel was unfaithful. The charge against Israel in the book of Hosea is summed up in the

one word whoredom. She was an unfaithful wife. The Lord was patient with her, but when she would not return unto Him, He let her go.

The Lord's New Covenant

About 900 years after the making of the covenant at Mount Sinai, the Lord stated that He would make a NEW and DIFFERENT covenant, because Israel had broken the covenant that He had made with her. Notice now the reading of Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, 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 a husband unto them saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins will I remember no more."

Notice now some of the things stated by the Lord in that passage of Scripture.

He declared that He would make a new covenant that would not be like the one He made when He brought Israel out of Egypt. The covenant would be in the hearts and minds of people, rather than on tables of stone. All of those in covenant relationship would know the Lord. Under the Old Covenant, a child came into covenant relationship with the Lord at birth.

Circumcision, on the eighth day, was a sign of the covenant. The child was taught later. Under the New Covenant the people are to be taught first (this indicates that covenant relationship is for mature people), then they come into covenant relationship. You cannot come into covenant relationship with the Lord today unless you are first taught His will, and unless you agree, to do it. Under the Old Covenant there was a remembrance made of sins each year (Heb. 10:3), but under the New Covenant the Lord promises complete remission of sins. Sins and iniquities, once forgiven under the new covenant, are never remembered anymore. The inspired writer of Hebrews 8 quotes the passage that we have just quoted from Jeremiah 31, and shows that it has reference to the covenant that we are now under. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, just as Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant. The entire book of Hebrews presents the messenger of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, as being "better" or "superior" to the messengers of the Old Covenant.

The priest, covenant itself, and the sacrifice (of the New Covenant) are all presented as better than their type or shadow under the Old Covenant.

Old Covenant Fulfilled

We have shown that the Lord, Himself, planned for the Old Covenant to be done away and for a New Covenant to be made. It would be very profitable for you to study Galatians 4:21-31, where Paul presents the allegory of Sarah and Hagar and shows that just as Hagar, the bondwoman, was cast out, so also the Old Covenant was cast out. In 2 Corinthians 3 the apostle teaches the passing away of the Old Covenant. In Romans 7 he argues that the Jews were dead to the law.

Jesus is quoted as saying to the Father, "Lo, I am come to do thy will." The writer of Hebrews then adds, "He taketh away the first (covenant), that he may establish the second." (10:9.) A part of the work of Jesus on the earth was to take away the first or Old Covenant that He might establish a second or New Covenant. Someone says: But Jesus said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets." It will be necessary for us to complete the statement of our Lord in Matthew 5:17-18, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." True! Jesus did not destroy the law, but He fulfilled it. After the law was fulfilled there was no longer any need for it. John tells us that while Jesus was on the cross, "knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scriptures might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit." (John 19:28-30.) This passage states that Jesus knew that all things were finished, and that He said, "It is finished."

Jesus did not destroy the law; He fulfilled it.

Colossians 2:14 says, "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us; and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Jesus nailed the Old Law to His cross. His fulfillment of the Law made it no longer effective.

Ephesians 2:14-17 teaches that Christ abolished or took away in His flesh, the law of commandments.

What Is Value Of Old Covenant?

But someone says: What is the value of the Old Covenant to those under the New Covenant? In answer to that we simply quote what Paul said in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope."

The All-Sufficiency of the New Testament

The apostle Paul said, "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." (Rom. 1:14,15.) This great preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ said that he was in debt to all men. He owed them something.

We feel that we owe you something. We feel as if we were in debt to you, and as Paul said, "We're ready to preach the gospel to you also." We are so privileged to have this means of communicating with you. The reason that Paul was ready to preach to the Romans, and the reason that we are ready at any time to preach to you, is that stated in Rom. 1:16,17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, but the righteous shall live by faith." We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because in the gospel is revealed God's way of making man righteous or just. Without the gospel it would be impossible for man to know how to be made just. Last month we discussed the abolition of the Old Covenant that God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. This lesson is on the All-Sufficiency of the New Testament or Covenant. We simply mean by that, that the New

Testament, the Gospel of Christ, is complete and sufficient, so that man needs no other guide or creed in order to be saved.

The charge is sometimes falsely made that those who believe in strict adherence to the word of God are guilty of bibliolatry; that is, guilty of worshiping the book (Bible) itself. As I said, this is a false charge. We do not believe in worshiping the book. We do teach, however, that the words in the Bible communicate to us the mind of God, and that only by complying strictly to the commands of the Lord can we ever expect to be saved. I am strongly opposed to anyone buying a big expensive Bible and then letting it stay on the shelf or table to collect dust, or simply to keep family records or pictures in.

God intended for us to use the Bible.

Occasionally someone tells me how long he has been using the same Bible as if that were some great achievement. I would esteem any person more highly if he showed me the Bibles that he has worn out through proper use. Use the Bible! We will be held accountable in the day of judgment, not by the way we kept it dusted, but by the way we used and obeyed it.

Bible Claims Completeness

The Bible claims to be a complete and perfect book. The Old Testament tells, as we have studied, of the preparation for the New Testament. As one reads the Old Testament and finishes it, he feels that there is a vacuum or vacant spot there. It is not complete, it is still pointing to things that have not yet (at that time) come to pass. The New Testament is different. When we study it completely we see that there is no vacuum, but that it is a complete, all-sufficient revelation of God's will to man. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us of the all-sufficiency of every inspired scripture or writing. The passage says:

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." If a preacher is a "man of God" he will not need anything else to guide him except the inspired writings of God. The Scriptures are able to furnish us completely. If they furnish us completely, do we need anything else? Are you interested in some good work in the name of Christ?

The only way you will ever be able to do it according to the will of God, is to follow the Scriptures, for they furnish us completely unto every good work.

When a preacher or a religious body adapts for their use some book other than, or in addition to, the Bible then they are denying by the action that the Scriptures are complete and all that is needed by man. Why can't we understand that when God does a thing He does it well, and that man cannot improve upon it? If the Lord had wanted us to have our own doctrines He would have told us to do that, but instead He has condemned all human doctrines relating to man's salvation. Do you believe the Bible, the Word of God? It claims to be complete, lacking in nothing.

Peter states that God, by His divine power, "hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:3.) If we have in the Bible all things that pertain to life and godliness, do we need anything else? Certainly not! It is complete and there is no need for anything else.

Peter addressed his second epistle to "them that have obtained a like precious faith ..." The only way these people could have had a "like" or "common" faith was to have believed or had faith in the same thing, and it alone.

We don't have a like or common faith when one subscribes to one doctrine and someone else to another. In order to have a common faith we must agree on the Word of God. Jude refers to a "common salvation." They could not have had a "common salvation" unless they had all been saved the same way, and yet today we hear of all different ways of being saved. This is because men have not been content to teach the Bible just as it is, without taking away from, adding to, or changing it. Jude further states in the third

verse of his epistle, "I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." The faith, or the system of teaching that we have in the Bible was delivered only one time.

Paul said in Ephesians 4:4 that there was only "one faith," and Jude says it was "once for all" delivered. The faith was once delivered for all men, and for all time. The gospel of Christ, the one faith, is for all men, men of every race, tribe and tongue. It is for all time.

There will be no more revelations from God.

Christ Claims All Authority

Look now to Matthew 28:18-20 where we read, "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Jesus claimed for himself, ALL AUTHORITY. You know, if Jesus has all authority in religious matters that doesn't leave any authority for anyone else. When anyone does a thing contrary to the teaching of the Bible he is usurping or simply stealing authority from Jesus. It is imperative that we let Jesus have "all authority" and that we hold the One who is so powerful in proper esteem. Jesus said, "I have all authority." That leaves none for Moses or Elijah, Old Testament worthies. None is left for the angels. None is left for any of the Reformers.

If Jesus has all authority that leaves none for a vicar of Christ on the earth. Christ never instituted such an office as "vicar" or "Pope," and thus when one puts himself in that place, he is simply usurping authority that belongs only to Christ. Christ never authorized or delegated any authority to conferences, synods, councils, or conventions of men. He never left any authority to a human institution, or to any religious paper, nor to you or anyone else. He has all authority and what He has instructed we must do. Jesus did allow the apostles to speak His will, but they were only to speak the things that the Holy Spirit of God instructed them to speak. Any teaching contrary to the teaching of Christ and the inspired writers is false teaching. Jesus has all authority and the New Testament is a complete, all sufficient book.

Our Plea

If any person desires to speak anything about religion, we demand that he speak only what is written in the Word of God, because that is the only thing that can save our souls. Peter said, "if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11.) We are pleading with you to return to the Old Paths: to do Bible things the Bible way and to call Bible things by Bible names.

We are not using our time and effort making the plea just to be popular. It's not popular to follow the New Testament without any of the corrupting doctrines of men. We are not doing this for our personal glory, for there is none.

Our true motive lies in the passage that we quoted in the beginning of this article. We feel that we are debtors to the dying and sinful world, and we know that in the gospel alone is salvation to be found. We're asking you to follow God and disregard all human doctrines. We have no ill feelings toward the individuals who believe and practice false doctrines, but we hate the doctrines that they teach, because they are contrary to the will of God.

Perhaps you think that we are opposed to books written by humans. This is not the case. If this were so we would not be writing this in a book (magazine) for you to read. I have a personal library of several hundred volumes, most of which are books dealing with religious subjects, but the only book that I have that serves as an authority for spiritual affairs is the Bible—God's holy word.

Included among the number of books that I have are several books that are authorized by religious conventions and councils of men. I have before me, as I write, the creed books of three very prominent religious bodies of the world today.

In each of the books are conflicting doctrines, and all of them contain some things that are contrary to the teaching of the Bible. Good people, common sense tells us that all of these cannot be correct. They all claim to be right, but they disagree with one another.

Wouldn't it be a lot better if we all could agree to just follow the New Testament and nothing else. That's all we're asking you to do. Simply follow the teaching of Christ and His inspired apostles. We desire that you receive the things that we say with readiness of mind, having the same noble attitude as did the people of Berea, mentioned in Acts 17:11, "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." We desire that you examine the things we write, as well as the things you hear any preacher say or write, in the light of the Bible. Unless what we say, or what any preacher says, is found in the Bible it will do you no good to obey it. Only the truth will make you free from sin. (John 8:32.)

Conclusion

We plead with you to put your trust in the Word of God alone, and never in the doctrines of men. In conclusion, let me give you some statements about human creeds that you will do well to remember. If the creed to which you subscribe contains more than the New Testament, it contains too much. If it contains less, it has too little in it. If it contains the same as the One Faith, then there is no need for the creed— just be content with the Gospel. Will you take your stand to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent? (articles in this issue by Ferrell Jenkins 1960)

God's Plan of Salvation for all Mankind

Hear the Gospel *Rom. 10:17*

Believe *Rom. 10:10; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 11:6*

Repent of Sins *Acts 2:38; 17:30*

Confess Jesus as the Son of God *Acts 8:27-39; Rom. 10:10*

Be Baptized for Remission of Sins *Mark 16:16; Acts 2:48; Rom. 6:4-6; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21*

Live Faithfully *If you fulfill these commandments, you will be saved, and the Lord will add you to His Church (Acts 2:47). You'll be a Christian and are expected to serve God faithfully until death (Rev. 2:10)*

Your soul is important to us . If you would like to set up a study, or if we can help you in any way, please contact us..

**We meet at 656 St. James Ch. Rd. in
Newton, NC
Join Us
Sunday
Bible Study - 9:30 AM
Worship – 11:00 AM
Wednesday
Bible Study – 7:00 PM**

**Website:
www.WORDANDSWORD.com
contact@wordandsword.com
Phone:
(828) 465-3009
The Newton church of Christ
P.O. Box 893
Newton, 28658**