

Old Testament & New Testament What should we understand about the Bible?

LESSON ONE

The dividing of the Scripture into two segments, the Old Testament and the New Testament, has been accepted by Christians for centuries. This acceptance is uncritically accepted without any questioning whether this is indeed biblically correct.

Why is this important?

First, as Bible believers we want to embrace what the Bible teaches.

Second, the very title "Old" Testament has led many to believe that the entirety of Genesis – Malachi is not for Christians as it is old, done away, and replaced with something new.

Third, a faulty view of this will lead to a faulty understanding of the word of God.

The first recorded time this kind of designation (Old Testament and New Testament) was used was by Melito of Sardis in the late second century (recorded in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 4.26.14; available online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.ix.xxvi.htm>)

One writer who believes the division is not only proper, but biblical, says, "Yet they [those who date the beginning of this usage from Melito of Sardis] fail to observe the obvious fact that in several books, they are called just that: Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:1-4, 15. So instead of admitting that the earliest Christians MUST have referred to their collection of books as the New Testament as the Bible itself documents, they ignore this and base their opinions strictly on extant historical information."

It is one thing to give Bible references to support your position. It is imperative though to make sure the references actually support one's position.

Is the assertion that "*the earliest Christians MUST have referred to their collection of books as the New Testament as the Bible itself documents,*" in fact, what the references mentioned actually teach?

What is the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament"?

Old Testament - The relationship God had with the nation of Israel - the Mosaic law - made up of civil, ceremonial, and moral laws.

New Testament - The relationship God has with individuals

Our next lesson will look at the different verses that were referenced, as well as others, to determine what the Bible teaches about the Old Testament and the New Testament.

LESSON TWO

As we saw in Lesson One about the use of the Old and New Testament:

One writer who believes the division of the Bible is not only proper, but biblical, says, "Yet they [those who date the beginning of this usage from Melito of Sardis] fail to observe the obvious fact that in several books, they are called just that: Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:1-4, 15. So instead of admitting that the earliest Christians MUST have referred to their collection of books as the New Testament as the Bible itself documents, they ignore this and base their opinions strictly on extant historical information."

Again, it is one thing to give Bible references to support your position. It is imperative though to make sure the references actually support one's position.

Is the assertion that "*the earliest Christians MUST have referred to their collection of books as the New Testament as the Bible itself documents,*" in fact what the references mentioned actually teach?

So, we begin this lesson by looking at the different verses that were referenced, as well as others, to determine what the Bible teaches about the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We start with the first reference in the Bible where we find the phrase New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- 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:*
- 32 *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:*
- 33 *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.*
- 34 *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.*

Luke 22:20

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

1 Corinthians 11:25

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

Hebrews 8

- 6 *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*
- 7 *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*
- 8 *For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:*
- 9 *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.*
- 10 *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*
- 11 *And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.*
- 12 *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*
- 13 *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.*

Hebrews 9

- 1 *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.*
2 *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.*
3 *And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;*
4 *Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;*
- 15 *And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

2 Corinthians 3:6, 14-15

- 6 *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.*
- 14 *But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.*
15 *But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.*

LESSON THREE

What should we call the Bible?

Scripture(s) 2 Timothy 3:15-16 (there are 53 verses where either **scripture** or **scriptures** is used)

*And that from a child thou hast known the holy **scriptures**, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

*All **scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

It is never referred to as the Bible (although there is nothing wrong with the term)

Is it correct to refer to the "Old Testament" as the "Jewish Bible"?

"Jewish Bible" is certainly better than "Old Testament," but it is not entirely correct as the "New Testament" is also the "Jewish Bible," (Romans 3:1-2).

Romans 3

1 *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?*

2 *Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of Go*

When talking with a Jewish person, who rejects the canon of the "New Testament," this usage is acceptable.

What is the best terminology for the "Old Testament" (i.e. Genesis to Malachi)

TeNaCH The Bible used by Jesus and the apostles

LAW Torah

PROPHETS Neviim

WRITINGS Ketuviim

See Luke 24:44; Matthew 23:35 (Genesis 4 and 2 Chronicles 24); Acts 13:14-15; 15:21.

Luke 24:44

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

Matthew 23:35

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Genesis 4 The story of Cain murdering Abel is found in this chapter of Genesis.

The first book of the Bible

2 Chronicles 24

20 *And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.*

21 *And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.*

The last book of the Bible (as used by the Jewish world and Jesus and the apostles).

Acts 13:14-15

14 *But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.*

15 *And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

Acts 15:21

For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath.

CONCLUSION

“Old” and “New” Testament are misnomers. We have one continuous revelation - Genesis through Revelation - 66 books. The “Old Testament” is the Mosaic Law, the relationship God had with the nation of Israel. The “New Testament” is the relationship individuals have with God through Messiah Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. We have the earlier revelation (the “old testament”) and the later revelation (the “new testament”).