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The Christian and The Old Testament

By Harold Turner

Many of the problems that exist between religious people today are related to our relationship to the Old Testament. Within most churches there are beliefs and practices which are supported solely by the Old Testament. Many people believe that Christians are to live by both the Old and the New Testaments, while others hold only to the New. In this article I want to present several questions about this problem, and hopefully present the answers from the Bible.

WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The Old Testament is the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel when He delivered them from Egyptian bondage. In Heb. 8:7-13 the writer quotes from Jer. 31:31-34, where God had promised, "I will make a new covenant . . . 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 . . . In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old." According to Deut. 4:13, 5:1-22, and 1 Kings 8:9 this covenant with Israel consisted of ten commandments written upon two tables of stone. In 2 Cor. 3:7-15 Paul shows that the Old Testament was given through Moses; that it was written and engraven in stones, and that when Moses delivered it to the people he had to place a veil upon his face. In the comparative reading of this event in Exod. 34:27-35 Moses declared, "And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

In addition to this set of commandments, the writer of Heb. 9:1 states, "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." The sacrifices and services of the people in worship at the Temple were also considered a part of the Old Testament. For the most part, the writings, which we refer to as the Old Testament, reveal the history of God's people living under this covenant.

WITH WHOM DID GOD MAKE THE OLD TESTAMENT?

While many hold the view that the Old Testament was for all people, this is not supported by the Scriptures. Notice again Heb. 8:7-13. The covenant was made with Israel. Too, in Deut. 5:2-3 we learn, "And Moses called all Israel, and said

unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." Moses then listed the ten commandments. In Eph. 2:11-12 we see that the Gentiles were not included in this covenant. Paul said, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Within the teachings of the Old Testament, God had forbidden Israel to associate with the Gentiles. In Acts 10:28 the apostle Peter referred to this law, saying, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." He continued to show that such was not true under the New Testament. But the Old Testament was for the nation of Israel, and for no other.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The covenant had basically two objectives. The first being that of providing the people with a knowledge of sin. In Rom. 3:20 Paul states, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." In Rom. 7:7 he stated, "I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." In Gal. 3:19 he wrote, "Wherefore then serveth the law, it was added because of transgressions." The second objective for giving this covenant was to prepare the people for the coming of Christ. In Gal. 5:24 Paul said, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith."

The law could not meet man's greatest need; the removal of sin. In Gal. 3:11 Paul declared that, "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God . . ." In Heb. 11:4 he showed, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Only through Christ, his sacrifice, and the covenant that God made with us through Him, can our sins be forgiven.

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The Christian Life

By Richard England

The word Christian means "Belonging to Christ", and appears three times in the New Testament. Acts 11:26 says, "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." In Acts 26:28, "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The third passage is 1 Peter 4:16, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

From these three passages we see a number of important points. First notice that the word Christian was not just a designation for any and all good moral people. It was for "disciples" or followers of Jesus. The great commission, as recorded in Matt. 28:19, says, "Teach all nations." In the American Standard Version it says, "make disciples of all nations." Literally it means to disciple them. How did they do this? By teaching and baptizing them. Thus, when we speak of Christians, we are speaking of baptized believers. In that Agrippa said he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, it is obvious that this was a common name for the followers of Christ. To be a Christian has not always been popular. Many in the early church were put to death for being called a Christian. What a wonderful heritage and blessing to be associated with Jesus Christ and all the saints, who have lived before us, suffering for the name of Christ. (Why would so many in our day want to be called by all the various religious names that are so popular that they do not even relate to "Christian"?)

The new convert, one who has been born anew, is a "Babe in Christ." "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. 2:2). The first obligation for a Christian life is to GROW. Proper growth demands a good environment. In 1 Cor. 15:33 we learn, "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners." Being around the right kind of people helps and encourages one to do right. Too, growth requires good wholesome food. The spiritual food (the milk and meat) is the word of God (Heb. 5:12-14). Also, keeping free from the disease of sin is necessary. This is why the text of 1 Pet. 2:1-2 states to put aside all sin first, then desire the milk. As in the physical world,

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The Christian Life (Cont.)

growth demands exercise, so also in the spiritual world. "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness." (1 Tim. 4:7).

The Christian life is a daily activity. It is how we work, worship, play, and conduct ourselves at home. The principles are laid down throughout the New Testament. Here are a few verses that tell us how to live: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22-23). "... Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Tim. 6:11). "Flee youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Tim. 2:22).

For most people, the Christian life is just the beginning of doing what they have known to be right all along. There are some things we do not fully know or understand, but what a wonderful world this would be if all were living exactly by the standard already known to be good. We're like the farmer, who did not want to take the advice of the county extension leader about how to improve his farm. He said, "I'm not farming half as good as I know how already." We must apply ourselves to being approved before God. This is the idea of 2 Tim. 2:15, "Study (ASV: 'give diligence') to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Christian living is first becoming a Christian, then worshipping God as directed in the New Testament, and living daily so the people around us can see Christ in us. (Gal. 2:20).

"For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it." (Prov. 8:11)

Keeping Back A Part

By James Knight

I am sure that most religious people are familiar with the story of Ananias and Sapphira; as recorded in the fifth chapter of Acts. This event took place shortly after the church was established in Jerusalem. A great host of people had come to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost, and had remained there after their conversion to be taught more about the Christian life. Many of these that had remained in Jerusalem had not brought sufficient supplies for this extended time, and their provisions were running out. Since most of them had no way to provide for themselves, the converts who lived in Jerusalem and the surrounding area helped provide for their needs. In order to do this, some sold their land and houses; bringing the money to the apostles and letting them distribute it as the needs arose.

One couple in the church, Ananias and Sapphira, sold a piece of land and brought the money to the apostles. However, the Bible says that they kept back a part of the price thereof, and in so doing lied to the Holy Spirit and to God.

This was a terrible sin to commit, and we are made to wonder why they would do such a thing. But I wonder how many of us are guilty of the same sin today. Yet someone may ask, "How can we be guilty of this sin now?" I want to point out how it is possible for us to be guilty and to be condemned before God for this sin today.

God gives each of us 168 hours in a week. He asks very little of us as far as public worship is concerned. However, the Bible teaches us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). Now, a great number of Christians attend only one service each week, while the church, as a rule, meets at least three times each week. Brethren when we only attend one service out of three, are we not guilty of keeping back a part of that which should be given to God? Are we not saying that one hour is all that I have to give back to You? Are we lying to God? And if so, will we not be condemned for such?

The Bible teaches us to lay by in store as we have been prospered by the Lord. In 1 Cor. 16:1-2 the apostle Paul said, "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." He also wrote in 2 Cor. 9:6-7, "But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in

his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Therefore when we give to God less than we should, are we not keeping back a part? And are we not guilty of lying to God?

We are taught in the word of God to teach others the gospel of Christ. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15). In Matt. 28:19, Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The gospel is the only power that God uses to save the lost world. We, as Christians, have been given the gospel to preach to others. We are fellow labourers with God in snatching sinners out of the fires of hell. If we do not preach the gospel are we not keeping back a part of that which belongs to God? If we say that we don't have the time to teach others, are we not lying to ourselves, and to God?

We are also taught to study God's word. In 2 Tim. 2:15 Paul wrote: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." When we fail to take the time to study God's word, are we not keeping back a part of that which belongs to God?

Each one of us has been given talents by the Lord, and He intends for us to use these in His service. We learn from the parables of the talents and the pounds that God expects us to do all that we can in His service. There is coming a time when the Lord will return to receive His own with usury. If we have not used our talents to gain others for Him, we will be found guilty of keeping back a part, and of lying to God. How are you using your talents?

It will be a terrible thing in the day of judgment to be found guilty of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, that of keeping back a part of what rightly belongs to God. I pray that you will give to God that which is due unto Him.

"For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:6)

"Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil." (Prov. 3:7)

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Prov. 3:5)

Is The Church Unconcerned?

By James Knight

There are several writers in religious circles, who are forecasting the demise of the church. The reason they give for this belief is that "The church is unconcerned about things of real value." The things of real value they tell us are: social injustice, inadequate housing, and more help for those in need. They are telling us that the church simply no longer relates to people in these modern times. They feel that the church is just no longer in the main stream of things; that the church is just not concerned about the right things.

Is the church unconcerned? Is the church unconcerned with social injustice? Is the church unconcerned that people are living in inadequate housing? Is the church unconcerned with those who are not as well fed and clothed as they ought to be?

I believe that the church is concerned about the above mentioned things. Someone is heard to ask, "What then is the church doing about them?" When we understand the church and its purpose in the world, we can easily see what it is doing in these areas.

What is the purpose of the church in the world? The church is to make known to all men the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10-11). Jesus commissioned the Apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person (Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15). However, what does this have to do with being concerned with the things mentioned above?

The gospel, when preached, believed, and obeyed, will bring a change in the life of an individual. He stands at a right relationship to God, and a different relationship with his fellowmen. The gospel will remove prejudices toward others. The gospel will make a man's heart bleed for those who are less fortunate. The gospel will make a man work for the betterment of the society in which he lives. However, it will not make him a "radical". It will not make him feel that he can break laws that he feels are unjust. It will not make him feel that he can destroy the system of government under which he lives. It will not make him deny and belittle the church for which Jesus died (Acts 20:28, Eph. 5:25).

The real problem that is faced by society in this present world is sin. Sin is the problem behind all social injustices. Remove sin and most if not all of today's problems will be solved. This is the very thing the church is trying to do. This can be done only by the preaching of the pure, simple gospel as revealed in the

What Is The Perfect Thing In?

1 Cor. 13:10?

By Clovis Ragsdale

When Christ sent the apostles to teach the good news of salvation to all men, he gave them power to work signs and wonders as proof to the hearers that God was with them, and to establish the authority for what they spoke. In Mark 16:20 the Bible declares, "They went everywhere preaching the word, the Lord working with them, confirming the word by the signs that followed." Also, in Hebrews 2:3-4, when the writer speaks of our salvation, he adds: "Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by the manifest powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will."

We must remember that when the apostles went forth to teach and to preach they had no Bible from which to read and quote as the authority to prove that they were speaking God's will. The signs and wonders did prove that God was with them.

With the passing years, these inspired apostles wrote letters, which contained the will of God for the followers of Christ, and with the death of these men, these letters became our New Testament. Since this word had already been confirmed through the apostles, it was no longer necessary for signs and wonders to be used.

In 1 Cor. 13:8-10 these miraculous signs and wonders are spoken of as being "in part". Paul wrote, "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The word "perfect", as used here, is translated from the Greek word 'teleios'. The meaning is: completed; fully developed; full grown.

James speaks of the same in James 1:22-25: "For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and is not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a

Bible. The church is concerned, not only with man's needs now, but with his needs for the future. The church still meets, and always will meet the needs of modern man. Yes, the church is very much concerned.

hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing." The PERFECT in James 1:25 is the PERFECT in 1 Cor. 13:10. Notice too, that Paul speaks of this as a mirror, "For now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know fully even as I was fully known." (1 Cor. 13:12).

The PERFECT in 1 Cor. 13:10 is the New Testament, fully developed and complete, as we have it today. In 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Paul stated, "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The parts were the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were necessary to reveal and confirm the word. When the word was completely revealed, confirmed, and written, there was no further need for the parts. They were all done away. Today, there is no need for people to speak in tongues, teach without study, raise the dead, restore withered limbs, give sight to the blind, and etc. We may simply turn to the written word, study, believe, and obey it, and be saved.

Those who claim to have these powers, such as healing, are doing great harm to the cause of Christ. Their failures are so glaring that a skeptical public turns against all Christian teaching. One illustration of this is seen in a famous "faith healer", who was having surgery for a serious heart condition. While in surgery, another famous "healer" was in the operating room praying for the other, yet she died.

Signs and wonders were necessary during the infancy of the church, but the church is now grown, and must put away childish things, and function as an adult, preaching the gospel to all the world.

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." (Prov. 1:5)

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Prov. 1:7)

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." (Prov. 3:13)

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. 4:7)

"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life." (Prov. 4:13)

The Christian and the Old Testament
(Cont.)

IS THE OLD TESTAMENT BINDING TODAY?

In Matt. 5:17-18 Jesus stated that he was "Come to fulfill" the law and prophets. He then added, "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." He came to fulfill it, and not one small part would pass from it until it was all fulfilled. If Jesus did what He said He would do, fulfill the law, then it was all completed in Christ. It did not pass away in parts, but in whole. In Col. 2:14 we learn that he "Took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." In Gal. 3:24-25 Paul pictured the Old Testament as a schoolmaster, which was to bring the Jews unto Christ, but he continued to show that since Christ has come, "We are no longer under a schoolmaster."

One of the greatest challenges faced by the apostles was to convince the Jews that the Old Testament was no longer in force for Christians. In Heb. 10:9, speaking of the two covenants, the writer stated that "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." In Heb. 8:13, "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." In Gal. 4:22-31 Paul pictures the two testaments in allegory. The two wives and sons of Abraham represent the two covenants. Hagar and Ishmael are pictured to represent Israel and the Old Testament. In Gal. 4:30 Paul showed that the Old Testament was to end with Christ, saying, "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." He continued with the appeal, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

CONCLUSION:

The Old testament was the contract between God and the nation of Israel, and did not include the Gentiles. It's purpose was to instruct the people of sin, and of the coming of the Saviour. It fulfilled its purpose at the crucifixion of Christ, and passed out of the way, making way for the new covenant, which could free man from sin.

Today every religious practice is to be governed and supported by the New Testament. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (2 John 9). Christ has all authority, and is the head over all things to the church (Matt. 28:18, Eph. 1:22-23). Christ gave us a covenant far better than that which was given to Israel. Every principle required to please God is

Some Basic Facts About God

No. 4

By Leslie Leonard

Theologians attempt to arrive at an understanding of God by a study of the creation, and by reason. The word, theology, is derived from two Greek words: theos, meaning God, and ology, meaning study. A far better, and safer way to learn about God is through the study of his revelation, the Bible, rather than to depend upon our own fallible reasoning. We need to let God's word tell us what He is like, and give us an insight into the way God thinks and feels about various things.

A study of such incidents as: Adam and Eve in the garden, Cain and Abel offering sacrifices, the worship of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3), and King Saul's disobedience (1 Sam. 15), would give us a better understanding of the way that God thinks. These incidents should suffice to teach us that there is one thing that God requires, and that is obedience. The wise person finds out first what God wants, and then does it without question, even though he may not understand why God wants it done. If a person uses only his ability to reason, he may, like many theologians, err.

Let's consider the lesson of king Saul in 1 Samuel 15. When Israel was in the wilderness, Amalek fought against them, and God swore to blot out Amalek (Exod. 17:14, Deut, 25:17). However, nothing was done about Amalek for 372 years. God selected king Saul to destroy these wicked people. In 1 Sam. 15:3, God instructed Saul to go "And smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

King Saul, like so many people, must have reasoned from the human point of view. Surely, God didn't mean everyone and everything, because Saul spared the best of the sheep and oxen along with Agag the king. Only that which was "Vile and refuse" was destroyed.

When Samuel, speaking for the Lord, rebuked him, Saul had an excuse. He blamed the people for taking the sheep and oxen to offer in sacrifice to God. Samuel told him that "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Because of his failure to obey, king Saul is rejected of God. I'm sure that he thought that offering a sacrifice (worship) to God was better than

bothering to do exactly what he had been told.

But isn't this a problem that people still have? Many overlook the importance of obeying, and use their power of reasoning to arrive at other things. They have reasoned that God doesn't require attendance at the assemblies (Heb. 10:25), that immersion (baptism) is unimportant, that observing the Lord's Supper isn't important, that singing only (without instrumental accompaniment) isn't important, and that the organization of the church can be changed. But these are things that men do because they reason that obedience isn't important. They make the same mistake that king Saul made.

By studying Saul's mistake we have learned something about God. God's revelation tells us that God will reject all who will not do what He has said, and in the way that he has said for it to be done.

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taught in the contents of the New Testament. Let us stand fast in the Liberty wherein Christ hath made us free.