

Two True Testaments

New Life by the Gospel of Grace

We have been given, not one, but two Testaments of scripture in the Bible. Obviously, we need them both and it would be a mistake to neglect either one. But it would also be a mistake to think that they can be read the same way. We who believe in Jesus have been brought into the new and “better” covenant which the New Testament contains. We read the Old Testament as believers in the New. Put your gospel glasses on, if you want to keep your understanding grounded with a proper perspective.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."
Matthew 5:17-19 ESV

A Pause to Clarify

You may be new to Christ, but you’ve probably been around long enough to see that the Bible is divided into two major sections. These are called either the Old and New Testament or the Old and New Covenants. This can get confusing for two reasons. The first problem is that there are at least seven covenants in the Bible—not two—which automatically spreads confusion whenever “Covenant” is used to describe the division.

The other problem is the use of “New” and “Old,” because this seems to give the first and largest section of the Bible an inferior, obsolete status. That “Old” section was the entire Bible for Jesus! He had nothing but great things to say about it (as in the quote above). Even the authors of our New Testament never thought of the Hebrew Scriptures as “old” in any sense other than ancient. For the sake of simplicity, I will use those terms here, if you promise not to think of the Hebrew Scriptures as old in the “out of date” or “no longer applies” sense of the word.



Gospel Glasses

The Great Reformer, [Martin Luther](#), said that we really shouldn’t read any part of the Bible without putting “gospel glasses” on first. We, who believe in Jesus, have received an enhanced revelation of God’s love and mercy which comes through faith and the New Birth. This revelation shines brightest wherever the core gospel message is the main element of a Biblical passage. But the Bible is a BIG book!



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There are vastly more passages in the Bible where the gospel is “hidden” than where it is blazingly revealed. Some of those passages can be downright scary; others are notoriously difficult to interpret. Luther’s point is that the gospel is the main message, the “good news” that God wants us to hear. It is the unchanging and highest revelation of God’s love for us, as well as being His plan for saving us. Nothing else in the Bible—*properly understood*—can contradict this ultimate revelation of God.

Without looking through those gospel glasses it would be easy to think that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures was a God of wrath, or that the New Testament is all about grace and the Old was only about law. Many people throughout Church history have drawn those wrong conclusions. In fact grace and law are suffused throughout both Testaments, just as God’s mercy is fully revealed in both.

The Dividing Line

The dividing line is Jesus. His birth inaugurates the division between the two Testaments, but it is more than a break in the time line. In a very real sense, the gospel glasses are a way of reading the scriptures through His eyes. Picture this: The One who spoke the Word (of the Old Testament) to Israel through the prophets has now come (through the New Testament) to give the definitive interpretation of that same Word.

Due to being born fully human, Jesus set His divine attributes aside and emerged into life on earth with an infant’s understanding. He even had to be taught Hebrew! However, He was raised on the Hebrew Scriptures with the “head start” of having the Holy Spirit inside Him from conception, enlightening His understanding (and no sin nature darkening it). By the time He was twelve He amazed Jewish leaders in Jerusalem with His wisdom and breadth of knowledge.

The Best Commentary on Scripture

His entire life is an audio-visual commentary on the scriptures. He lived by the Old Testament scriptures and He taught the Old Testament scriptures. Both His actions and His teachings, however, eventually brought Him into conflict with the Jewish people most dedicated to the Hebrew scriptures: the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. As we “listen” in to their discussions with Him, we “see” how Jesus read the Bible differently than many of the people around Him. This helps us gain eyes to see and ears to hear God’s Word from His perspective. Perhaps Martin Luther should have told us to read the Bible through “Jesus’ glasses”!

We see the Old through the apostle’s eyes too. Not only does the New Testament give us a commentary on scripture by the Word of God Himself, it also gives us fresh perspectives on, or re-interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures by the apostles. The upheaval of their mental/spiritual world caused by Jesus’ life, death and resurrection had them going over all that they once thought they knew about God and the scriptures. They had to bring the Word of God to the Light of Christ. Therefore, their writings also provide a New Testament commentary on the Old Testament: scriptures that interpret scripture!

An Invisible Shift

Something else happened which makes it imperative that we learn to “see” the truths of the Old Testament through a different set of eyes than those of people schooled only by the Hebrew

Scriptures and God's covenant with Israel. First of all, we are under a ["new and better" covenant](#) and need to know the terms of it. But more than that, a radical, life-transforming shift has happened for us who through faith-conversion have been re-born with the Holy Spirit living inside us. We now live a spiritual life that was outlined for us by physical Israel, but which they could neither imagine nor experience. This is huge! See [Two Realms of Habitation](#).

Israel lived in a natural reality that included a spiritual dimension. We live in a spiritual dimension that manifests at times through the natural reality. That is almost too big a thought to process or to believe, but let's give it shot.

1) Inheritance

The nation of Israel had a visible inheritance in the land and a future inheritance in God's coming kingdom. We have an immediate and real inheritance in Christ which includes access to the kingdom of God on earth and a position of being "seated with Christ" in the heavenlies.

2) Warfare

Israel fought visible enemies to claim their land, campaigning against the strongholds of fortified cities. Our battles are not with "flesh and blood," but with the invisible powers and principalities of the kingdom of darkness and strongholds they control which block the advance of God's kingdom.

3) Sacrifice

Israel had a visible religious system of priesthood, sacrifice, altar and temple. We are a royal priesthood, Jesus is the one and only sacrifice, our hearts hold both throne and altar, and our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

4) Righteousness

Israel could "see" the righteous and the wicked. In the Hebrew scriptures people were considered as being either wicked or righteous, based on their keeping or failing to keep the Law of God. We have been given eyes to see that the fallen nature is in everyone and that the Spirit of Christ can also be in anyone. The "wicked" for us to deal with are evil spirits: Any living person can convert and be restored to their true potential though faith-surrender to Christ.

These four glimpses of the transcendent "new reality" that characterizes our life in the Spirit are not meant to be final or complete. Put your gospel glasses on, read the Old Testament from the New Testament perspective, and see what you can see. Let the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to behold [the spiritual landscape](#).

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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