

Reading the Bible (Old Testament vs. New Testament)

By: Daniel Orona

One of the most important things for a newer Christian to understand is how to read the Bible and the best place to start with understanding is to talk about the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The beginning of understanding in looking at the Scripture is that everything points Christ, His crucifixion and His resurrection. From the creation story to the end of Revelation, all of everything points to Christ. This needs to be your foundation for understanding when you begin to read the Scripture. John explains this in relation to Christ in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

With that being said, the Bible is divided into two distinct parts, The Old Testament and the New Testament. There is a distinct difference between the two and that difference is Christ. In the Old Testament Jesus Christ has not been born and is not in the flesh while in the New Testament He is. It's important to realize that the Old Testament is a shadow of the New Testament while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

When starting on your relationship, it is important to start with the New Testament Scripture. This is the dispensation we are in now and it's important to start in the book of Romans so that we can understand what we have been redeemed from. This allows us to see the grace of God first and then fill in the backstory as we grow a little more. The letters of Paul represent a journey in our own lives. This will be covered in a future book, but Romans forms the foundation while 1 Corinthians deals with our carnality as we grow in Christ. It's important to understand this journey from the beginning all the way through Jude. Each epistle builds upon the other to round us out in the different aspects of Christ.

After reading this and understanding a little more about Christ, we need to take a look at His life and focus on the gospels. Here you can read the teaching He taught and also about the acts that He did. Along with this you can see how the apostles were indued with power from the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. All of this explains the fullness of Christ and how He is and how His work on the cross is the singular most important event in human history. Without the knowledge of the Scripture around Christ, it is very easy to be led astray from false teaching. The Scripture must form the foundation of the relationship with Christ and anything that you hear from any preacher.

In contrast to the New Testament, the Old Testament, while pointing to Christ, shows the judgment and severity aspects of Christ. It's important to understand that after the book of Exodus the rest of the Old Testament was governed by the Law of Moses. This is where the Ten Commandments come from along with the total 613 laws that governed the children of Israel. During this time, God was showing mankind that it could not live up to His standards and in doing so it resulted in numerous aspects of judgment and severity which is the opposite of His grace and mercy.

By reading the New Testament first, we can understand through the writings of Paul that there are two sides to God and put the Old Testament into its appropriate context. While covering multiple dispensations, the Old Testament puts the framework and purpose behind the work of the cross and is still valuable today. However, we should not conflate the Old Testament as how God deals with those that have received salvation from Him. We are not governed by rules of do's and don'ts, but rather by our relationship with Christ and the work of His cross in us by the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament and the law is reserved for those that do not believe that they may pass through judgment into the grace of Jesus Christ by their faith.

The most important part of Scripture is to make sure that we are putting in the work. This means reading and studying. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15-18, "Study to show thyself approved unto

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God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babbling: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” We must study the Scripture in the correct context to guard ourselves against others that are twisting the Scripture to meet their ends and not rightfully dividing the word of truth. But you have to put in the work. Pray about what’s being taught. The Holy Spirit will show you if it’s true. Line it up with Scripture. If something is being taught that doesn’t line up with Scripture throw it out. Finally, find a mentor that you can trust. They will help you grow and will help teach you to build the foundation that you can build upon.