

## **LESSON FOUR**

### **GREAT BIBLE THEMES**

#### **A FURTHER STUDY OF RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH**

In our last lesson we noticed that the Old Testament, with its law of Moses, was written to the children of Israel and never was intended as a law to govern the worship of other nations. It might be leaving the wrong impression with you if we did not mention the fact that we have about 4,000 years of recorded history before Christ and that 2,500 years of this period were before the time of the law of Moses. This means that the children of Israel were under this law for about 1,500 years before Christ. Thus the Old Testament covers a much longer period of time than the 1,500 years in which the law of Moses was in effect. Actually, however, the first book of the Old Testament is the only portion of the Bible that is devoted to the first 2,500 years of recorded history. This means that 38 of the 39 books of the Old Testament are devoted to the giving of the law of Moses and the History of God's dealings with the children of Israel after this time.

The conclusions we have reached so far lead the inquiring mind to raise some further questions. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions: . . .

1. Does the fact that God gave his law through Moses to the children of Israel mean that he was not concerned about other nations who were in existence at the same time?

2. Our concluding statement in the last lesson was that the law of Moses was in force over the Jewish nation until the time of Christ's death on the cross. Does this mean that the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are really a part of the Old Testament?
3. Does the question above suggest two ways in which we use the terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament"? What is meant by the term "testament"? What is meant by the term "covenant"?
4. What are the two major covenants referred to in the Bible?

## **LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS**

From 900 B.C. to 600 B.C., Assyria was a world empire with Nineveh as its capital city. About 720 B.C., they overran Israel and carried ten tribes into captivity. The Old Testament prophet, Jonah, lived about 790 B.C. He was one of the earliest of those prophets. With this background in mind, we are ready for this question: Since God had chosen the nation of Israel for a special purpose and was in a great sense the God of the Israelites, was he concerned about the unrighteousness in other nations of that time? Let us notice Jonah 1:1-2. "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to \_\_\_\_\_, that \_\_\_\_\_ city, and cry against it; for \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ up \_\_\_\_\_." After Jonah preached to them, they repented. See Jonah 3:10, "And God saw \_\_\_\_\_, that they \_\_\_\_\_;"

Would you say that God was grieved by the wickedness of the

people of this great city and that he was concerned about their turning from their wickedness?

Some sixty years after this the prophet Nahum had a great deal to say about Ninevah; in fact, he devotes his entire book to a discussion of this city and its future doom because of its wickedness. Notice how God was concerned about their idol worship. See Nahum 1:14, “. . . out of the house of thy \_\_\_\_\_ will I cut off \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_; I will make \_\_\_\_\_; for \_\_\_\_\_.” Notice also 3:1, “Woe to the \_\_\_\_\_; It is full all of \_\_\_\_\_;”

Three of the major prophets devote several chapters each to the pronouncements of judgments on the nations that surrounded Israel. Why did God pronounce such judgments upon them? One answer to this question is found stated in each of the following verses from Ezekiel. (29:6). “And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that \_\_\_\_\_.” (29:9) “. . . and they shall know that \_\_\_\_\_.” (30:19) “Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that \_\_\_\_\_.” Notice, again, that God knew of the wickedness of all nations and was concerned about it. In Ezekiel 25:15 the Lord said that he would destroy the Philistines. In the verse before this he gave the reason for doing so. Notice this reason. “Thus saith the Lord God; Because the Philistines have dealt \_\_\_\_\_, and have \_\_\_\_\_ with a \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. We should recall that other nations were not included within God’s covenant with Israel, but these references show his interest in righteousness among all nations.

Two terms that are used a great deal in referring to the teachings of the Bible are “testament” and “covenant”. The latter term means a contract or agreement between two or more parties, in which each may be obligated to perform certain specified duties. The term “testament” means a solemn covenant. Sometimes the parties to a covenant or agreement are two individuals. For instance, in 1 Kings 20:34 we have the record of an agreement between Benhadad, King of Syria, and Ahab, King of Israel. Notice that the last part of that verse says, “Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with \_\_\_\_\_ . So he made \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, and sent him away.” In the New Testament we have the record of Judas who bargained with the Jewish leaders to betray Christ to them. Read Matthew 26:15 to see how the term *covenant* was used. “And said unto them, What will you give me, and I will \_\_\_\_\_ him unto you? And they \_\_\_\_\_ with him for \_\_\_\_\_ .”

Sometimes a promise of God is referred to as a covenant. For an illustration of this, see Genesis 9:11, “And I will establish \_\_\_\_\_ ; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more \_\_\_\_\_ ; neither shall there any more \_\_\_\_\_ .” Here God promised Noah that he would not destroy the earth by flood again.

Many other covenants could be mentioned, but there are two that are so prominent in the Bible that we commonly refer to them as "The Covenants." We have a reference to the first of these in Exodus 34:28. Moses spent forty days and nights on the mountain with the Lord, "And he wrote upon \_\_\_\_\_ the words of \_\_\_\_\_." We have repeatedly referred to the law of Moses, which is commonly called the "Old covenant" or testament. The prophets foretold a time when this would be replaced with another covenant. See Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will \_\_\_\_\_ with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; Nor according to \_\_\_\_\_ that I \_\_\_\_\_ in the days that I took them by the hand to bring them \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_." The writer of the book of Hebrews, in referring to this promise, said, (8:13), "In that he saith, A \_\_\_\_\_, he hath made \_\_\_\_\_. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready \_\_\_\_\_." In Hebrews 12:24, Jesus is referred to as the mediator \_\_\_\_\_. In Hebrews 9:15, he is referred to as the mediator \_\_\_\_\_. Thus we see that these two terms are used interchangeably. There is a third term that is sometimes used to refer to this testament. Read Hebrews 9:16-17, "For where a \_\_\_\_\_, there must also of necessity be \_\_\_\_\_. For \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is of force after \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_: otherwise it is of no strength at all \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_." What  
is it that one may make while he is living but which has no force  
until after his death? This four letter word is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Thus we refer to a last will and testament. Before we leave these  
verses in Hebrews 9, let us notice another point. In verse 15  
Christ is referred to as the mediator of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_. In verses 16 and 17 our attention is called to  
the fact that a testament is only in force after \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. These verses answer for  
us the question as to when the New Testament went into effect.  
It could have no force until after \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Christ. This is exactly the  
same conclusion we reached in our last lesson when we noticed  
that the old law was taken out of the way, being 'nailed to the  
cross'. At this time it had served its purpose and thus it was not  
destroyed, but it was fulfilled.

The first covenant then is a term that applied to the law given  
through Moses. It included the Ten Commandments as well as  
the many ordinances, ceremonies, and regulations that were to  
govern the Jewish nation from the time of Moses until the time of  
Christ's death upon the cross. You will find these things listed as  
a part of the first covenant in Hebrews 9:1. "Then verily the  
\_\_\_\_\_ had also \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, and a  
\_\_\_\_\_." In the following verses,  
mention is made of the tabernacle with its candlestick, its table of  
showbread, its golden censer, etc., as part of the first covenant.  
The term 'new covenant' refers to the entire system of Christian  
religion with its plan of salvation and many other promises related  
to it. Notice the contrast of this as set forth in Hebrews 8:6. "But

now hath he obtained a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, by how much also he is the mediator of a  
\_\_\_\_\_, which was established upon  
\_\_\_\_\_." The superiority of the  
new over the old is clearly stated in the following verses.  
Hebrews 7:19, "For the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, but the bringing in of a  
\_\_\_\_\_; by the which  
we draw nigh unto God." Hebrews 7:22. "By so much was Jesus  
made a \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_." The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews is devoted to  
faithful men of the Old Testament and what they did through  
their faith in God. But these faithful men of God could only look  
forward to the greater blessings that were to be provided through  
Christ. Notice the last two verses of this chapter, "and these all,  
having obtained a good report through faith, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_; God having  
provided \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, that they without us should  
not be made perfect."

There are many points of contrast which show the superiority of  
the blessings under Christ, and the new covenant over Moses and  
the Old. In fact, this is the very theme of the book of Hebrews.  
Our space is not sufficient to mention many of these contrasts,  
but we do want to notice one that should be of special  
importance to all of us since it deals with the very important  
subject of forgiveness of our sins. Under the old law many  
animals were offered as sacrifices. Notice Hebrews 10:3-4, "But  
in those sacrifices there is a \_\_\_\_\_  
made of sins \_\_\_\_\_. For it is  
\_\_\_\_\_ that the blood of bulls and  
goats \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.” But in Christ sins are not remembered year after year but they are completely forgiven. See Colossians 1:14, “In whom (in Christ) we have redemption \_\_\_\_\_ even the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.”

We have used the terms “testament” and “covenant” thus far today in the sense of an agreement or contract. We also see the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” to refer to the two major divisions of the Bible. Actually Christ lived under the law of Moses and, while he was on earth, he taught his disciples to observe carefully this law. You will recall references in our last lesson to this effect. It should be mentioned, also, that the great work of Christ on earth was to prepare for the coming of the new covenant. In so far as time is concerned, the first four books of the New Testament record events that happened during the last days of the old covenant. But, in so far as content is concerned, they contain many of the great truths upon which Christ was to build his kingdom in the hearts of the people of the earth.

## TEST

1. Only the first book of the Old Testament deals with the first (a) 4,000 years of history, (b) 1,500 years of history, (c) 2,000 years of history, (d) 2,500 years of history. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The term "covenant" and "testament" are used interchangeably. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_
3. The new covenant refers to: (a) the Mosaic law, (b) the Ten Commandments, (c) the gospel (will) of Christ, (d) the Old Testament prophecies. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The New Testament was: (a) not as good as, (b) better than, (c) as good as, (d) same, as, the Old Covenant. \_\_\_\_\_
5. God did not care about peoples of other nations than the children of Israel. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_
6. God (did, did not) send prophets to preach repentance to nations other than Israel. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The word "covenant" means: (a) an agreement or contract, (b) a suggestion, (c) commands from God. **Which one is not right?** \_\_\_\_\_
8. The new covenant came into effect: (a) during the personal ministry of Christ, (b) when John the Baptist began to preach, (c) after the death of Christ, (d) first in the City of Rome. \_\_\_\_\_

9. The Mosaic law made nothing perfect. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Sins are forgiven through: (a) animal sacrifices, (b) Christ's blood, (c) believing in God only, (d) living a good moral life. \_\_\_\_\_

**Score:** 10 points for each correct answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correct answers for questions in lesson number 3

1. (b)
2. (a)
3. (b)
4. (true)
5. (true)
6. (false)
7. (c)
8. (did)
9. (d)
10. (b)

List below anyone else who wishes to take this course.