

Know Your Bible

BY GENE TOPE

LESSON

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

I. UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Many believe that the Bible cannot be understood. But God has given us the Bible for this very purpose. “Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). Even children can understand something of God’s word: “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” (2 Tim. 3:15).

The fact that you have enrolled in this course is evidence of your desire to know more about the Bible. We commend you for such a desire and encourage you to complete all six lessons. Your reward will be a greater knowledge of God’s will. Since it is the Bible that will judge us in the last day, we need to know as much of it as we can (John 12:48).

BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH THE BIBLE

Let us begin our study in a simple way by noticing the two major parts of our Bible. They are: (1) The Old Testament. (2) The New Testament. A consideration of these divisions and the differences that exist between them will be a primary aim in this first lesson. The Bible consists of 66 books; 39 of these are found in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The books of the Old Testament may be divided into four parts:

Law—5 books
History—12 books
Wisdom Literature
(Poetry)—5 books
Prophets—17 books

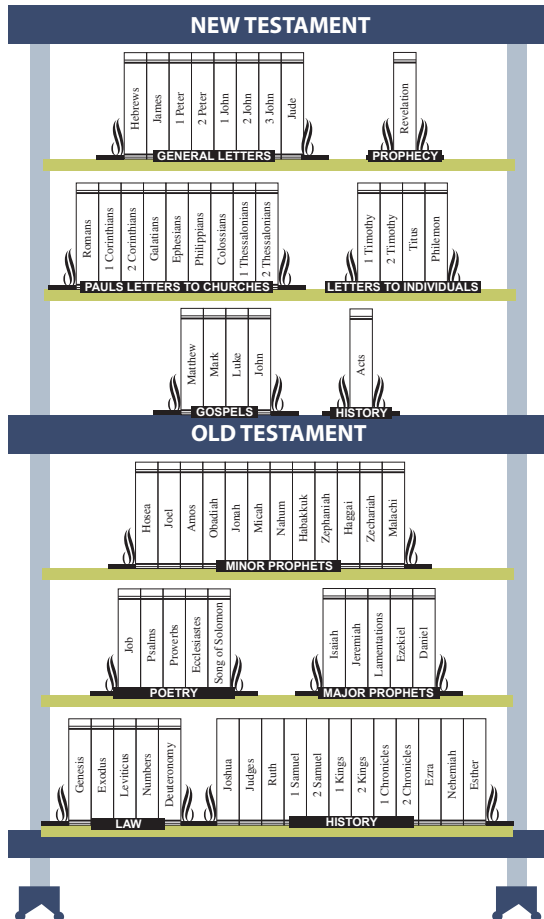
Generally speaking, the Books of Genesis–Deuteronomy contain God’s law to his old covenant people, Israel (the early beginnings of mankind are also recorded in Genesis). Joshua–Esther tells the history of the Jewish nation. Job–Song of Solomon contain inspired instructions relative to man’s daily problems; hence, wisdom literature. Isaiah–Malachi contain prophecies of the future regarding the Jewish people, Gentile nations, and the coming

Messiah. The prophets are a wonderful proof of the Bible’s inspiration!

The 27 books of the New Testament may also be divided into four parts:

Biography—4 History—1 Letters—21 Prophecy—1

Matthew–John are four gospels telling of Christ’s life, his mission and sufferings. These inspired *biographies* tell us just about everything we know concerning Jesus’ life and teachings. Acts is the *history* of the early church. This book tells us how people become Christians and how the church of Christ was begun, organized and spread. Romans-Jude are *letters* to Christians giving instructions on how to live and serve God. Revelation, the New Testament book of *prophecy*, tells of events which John said “must shortly come to pass.” In Revelation, we see the triumph of God’s people over every evil, even Satan himself.





QUESTIONS

YES OR NO

- _____ 1. Does God want us to understand the Bible?
- _____ 2. Can man understand the Bible?
- _____ 3. The New Testament has more books than the Old Testament.
- _____ 4. The New Testament contains the history of the Jewish nation.
- _____ 5. We read of the life of Jesus in the New Testament.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The _____ shall judge us in the last day.
2. There are two major parts to our Bible. They are the _____ and the _____.
3. There are _____ books in the Bible: _____ books in the Old Testament and _____ books in the New Testament.
4. The first five books of the Old Testament may be called books of _____.
5. The book of Genesis deals with the _____ of mankind.
6. _____ through _____ are the twelve books of history in the Old Testament.
7. Job—Song of Solomon are called _____.
8. There are _____ books of prophecy in the Old Testament.
9. The _____ are a wonderful proof of the Bible's inspiration.
10. The life of Christ may be found in _____ books of our New Testament.
11. The history of the early church may be found in the book of _____.
12. Twenty-one letters were written to _____, telling them how to live.
13. The book of _____ shows the triumph of God's people over evil.

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS

“In that he saith a New Covenant, He hath made the first old” (Heb. 8:13).

We have thus far noticed that our Bible consists of an Old and a New Testament. Note also that the Old Testament law was given to the Jews, whereas the New Testament commands were given to all nations.

Another important difference to be noted is that the *New Testament succeeded the Old Testament*. God’s people today are not under the Old Testament but the New. Let us be clearly understood: God has given us the entire Bible; both Testaments, but the first he intended to be temporary, the second permanent. As an example, consider the man with a wife and child who decides to make a will. He leaves all his estate to them. As the years go by several other children are born into the family. Being a good father, he has planned to provide for these children as well. So, he writes a new will, changing it in some respects, and includes benefits for all of his family. Finally, he dies. Which will do you think would come into effect? The last one. Even so, God has had two wills: one for part of his children, a later one for all of his family. When Christ came to earth the first will was still in effect. He came to bring a better will, the New Testament. When he died on the cross, the first one was taken out of the way that the second will might come into force. Notice that this is exactly what the Book of Hebrews teaches us in chapter 9:15-17 (**please read**).

Now let us consider some other Scriptures that deal with the same subject.

Hebrews 8:6-13

In this passage, we are told that Christ had obtained a more excellent ministry than the Levitical priesthood before him inasmuch as he was bringing a better covenant, based on better promises. God found fault with the first covenant and decided to make a new one with Israel and Judah. This new covenant would be different from the former. It would be a *spiritual* law, placed in the minds of the people; it would be *personal*, for all would know the Lord; it would be *merciful*, as God would remember their sins no more. Inasmuch as a *new* covenant was coming into being, the *old* covenant was waxing aged, decaying, and ready to vanish away.

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
1. Mediator — Moses.	1. Mediator — Christ.
2. Made nothing perfect (Heb. 7:19).	2. Better Covenant; better promises.
3. God found fault.	3. Faultless.
4. Written on tables of stone (2 Cor. 3:7).	4. Written in their hearts.
5. Had to be taught: “Know the Lord.”	5. All would know God.
6. No actual forgiveness.	6. Forgiveness of sins.
7. Ready to vanish away.	7. Abiding.

Romans 7:1-4

In this passage we are again taught that God’s people are no longer under the law of Moses. This the apostle Paul does by mentioning the well-known laws of marriage. How many husbands may a wife have? Clearly, “only one.” If her husband dies, only then may she be found guiltless in marrying another. In verse 4 the application is then made: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” What could be clearer than Paul’s illustration? One can no more be “married” to the law of Moses and to Christ at the same time, than to two husbands at the same time. Such would be spiritual adultery! Christians are dead to Moses and the law: they are “married” to Christ who died for them.

MARRIAGE	SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP
1. Wife bound to husband “so long as he liveth.”	1. God’s people once married to the Law.
2. At death—“loosed from law of her husband.”	2. Loosed from the law by Christ’s death.
3. May marry another.	3. Now married to Christ.
4. If married to two—an “adulteress.”	4. If trying to be married to both—“adultery.”

TRUE OR FALSE CIRCLE CORRECT ANSWER

- T F 1. God has had two Testaments.
- T F 2. Christ is the mediator of the New Testament.
- T F 3. The New Testament came into force after Christ's death.
- T F 4. The first covenant was faultless.
- T F 5. Under the new covenant sins would be remembered no more.
- T F 6. Under the old covenant people had to be taught "know the Lord."
- T F 7. "In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old."
- T F 8. It is lawful for a woman to be married to two husbands at the same time.
- T F 9. Christians have become dead to the law.
- T F 10. Christians are married to Christ.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. "For where a _____ is, there must also of necessity be the _____ of the testator."
2. The _____ succeeded the Old Testament.
3. _____ is the mediator of the New Testament.
4. The New Covenant is a _____ covenant, established upon _____ promises.
5. Concerning the new covenant God said, "I will put my laws into their _____ and write them in their _____."
6. A woman married to another man while her husband yet lives is called an _____.
7. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become _____ to the _____ by the body of _____; that ye should be _____ to another, even to him who is _____ from the dead, that we should bring forth _____ unto God."


It is our pleasure to become acquainted with you through this course. We hope that we can serve you and become even better acquainted as time goes along. Our only purpose in these lessons is to help the student gain a better understanding of God's word and to encourage obedience to the Gospel. We ask you to determine now to complete each lesson of the course. Call on us if we can help you.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Only one question presents itself to us now: Since the law has been abolished, is there any value in studying the Old Testament? Yes! In Romans 15:4 we read, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Again, 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." As we read of Noah, Abraham, and David, let us take notice of their faithful lives and how God rewarded them. As we read of Cain, Esau, and Jezebel, let us note their iniquity and God's punishment for their sins. Though God's laws are different for us today, his attitude toward obedience and disobedience remains the same.

CONCLUSIONS FROM OUR FIRST LESSON

Christians live under the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Nothing should be practiced in religion today that was not practiced by the early church.



A failure to distinguish between the two covenants has caused much religious division and the teaching of many "unauthorized" practices. Denominations are doing what they ought not and leaving undone what the Lord has said they ought to do.



YES OR NO

- _____ 1. Has the Law of Moses been taken away?
- _____ 2. Can we learn anything from things written aforetime?
- _____ 3. Examples of wickedness in the Old Testament should serve as warnings to Christians.
- _____ 4. Are Old Testament law and New Testament law identical?
- _____ 5. Must Christians practice only those things authorized in the New Testament?

FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. A failure to distinguish between the two _____ has caused much religious _____ and the teaching of many _____ practices.
- 2. _____ should be practiced in religion today that was not practiced by the _____.

A QUESTION FOR DILIGENT STUDENTS

In view of our present study this question may present itself, "Have the Ten Commandments also been replaced by New Testament laws?" To help the student find the correct answer we direct your attention to the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 5. There in verses 21 and 27 we find the sixth and seventh commandments introduced by these words, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time" (see also vv. 31, 33, 38, 43). Christ then follows by saying, "But I say unto you.

Question? *Did Christ present a new moral code or simply repeat the old Ten Commandment code?* (Put an X in the correct block.)

New code

Same code

USE THIS SPACE TO WRITE ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

Student's Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____

Church Affiliation _____

Grade _____

Return this lesson to:

Please return to the person who gave you the lesson.

Thank You.

www.churchofchristireland.ie