

First, we must know how the Old Testament was given. Before Jesus came to earth, God spoke to men “at various times and in various ways” (Hebrews 1:1). How did God make known His will to people in the period of time covered by the Old Testament?

The Age of the Fathers is that period of time when God revealed His will through the fathers, the heads of the families. This arrangement lasted from Adam to Moses for all mankind, and continued to Christ for the Gentiles. What people knew of God under this arrangement was handed down by tradition from their fathers (cf. 1 Peter 1:18). For example, Abraham was a prophet of God (Genesis 20:2-7) whom the Lord knew would “command his children and his household after him” (Genesis 18:17-19). The Lord delivered to Abraham and the other patriarchs commands to obey and promises to receive as the reward for their faith and obedience. This was a family type religion, that is, God spoke to a particular family.

In process of time God raised up a lawgiver named Moses, and the Mosaic Age began. This lasted from the time Moses gave the law at Mount Sinai until Christ replaced it with the New Testament. The Lord spoke “in various ways” during this time. He revealed Himself through Moses, the lawgiver, who delivered the law (Nehemiah 9:13-14). He advised through wise men, who gave counsel (Proverbs 1:1-6). He taught through priests, who were the teachers and interpreters of the law (Leviticus 10:8-11). He spoke through prophets, the inspired preachers of His word (Amos 3:7-8) and by psalmists, who gave to Israel its inspired poetry (2 Samuel 23:1-2). In all these ways the Old Testament was written. This was a national religion, that is, God revealed Himself to a special nation, Israel.

Is the Old Testament our law today? The law was never intended to be a permanent and full revelation of God’s mind to man, but rather, was given for the express purpose of preparing the way for Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). Furthermore, the law given through Moses was never intended for any people except the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 5:1-3; 6:6-7). Thus, with the death of Christ upon the cross, this temporary law, the Old Testament, was taken away (Colossians 2:13-17). Now, instead, God “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2; cf.

Matthew 17:1-5). This is a universal religion in that God, through His Son, now wants His will revealed to “all the world” (Mark 16:15). This being true, the man who goes back to the Old Testament and tries to be justified by it has “been severed from Christ” (Galatians 5:4, **NASB**).

Does this mean we have no use for the law today? To the contrary, there are four important ways we can use the Old Testament. We can use it as evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that the Bible is the Word of God by studying the fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament (John 5:39). The “things . . . written before” can be a source of hope to us, as we thrill to see revealed in it the faithfulness of God to bless those who patiently obey (Romans 15:4). The Old Testament serves as a “shadow,” that is, a dim outline and foretelling, of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:4-5). Finally, we can look to God’s dealings with His people, both to bless the faithful and to condemn the rebellious, and the way people either faithfully served the Lord or disgracefully fell, as examples for us in our efforts to please our Maker (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Thus, just as the apostle Paul, we must believe “all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14). But, also as Paul, we must not seek to be justified by the Old Testament (Galatians 5:4).

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified (Galatians 2:16).

Questions for Review

I. True/False

1. _____ The Old Testament is inspired of God.
2. _____ God first spoke to people through the fathers as heads of the families.

3. ____ This lasted from Adam until Paul.
4. ____ This was a national religion.
5. ____ Abraham was a prophet of Israel under the Law of Moses.
6. ____ The Law given through Moses was for the nation of Israel.
7. ____ The priests were the teachers of the Law.
8. ____ Prophets preached the Word of God to Israel.
9. ____ The Psalms are in the New Testament.
10. ____ The Law of Moses is our law today.
11. ____ We should not believe the Old Testament.
12. ____ We can be justified by keeping the Law of Moses.
13. ____ The Old Testament provides evidence that Jesus is the Christ.
14. ____ God now speaks to us through His Son.
15. ____ The New Testament reveals a universal religion.
16. ____ The purpose of the Law of Moses was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ.
17. ____ We are justified by faith in Christ.

II. Matching: Match the Age with the type of religion.

1. ____ Age of Fathers A. Universal
2. ____ Age of Moses B. Family
3. ____ Age of Christ C. National

**Bible Correspondence Course
Lesson Three
Things Written Before**

“Oh, you’re one of those people who don’t believe in the Old Testament!” This is the welcome I received one time from a person I had invited to our worship assembly. This person, and many like him, have the mistaken idea that members of the church of Christ do not believe the Old Testament. Actually, I believe the entire Bible. “All scripture,” both Old and New Testaments, “is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). I believe “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). But, as with all the Bible, we must handle accurately the Old Testament (2 Timothy 2:15, **New American Standard Version**). How, then, are we to use the Old Testament?

Age of Fathers		Age of Moses	
Adam	→	Moses	
<u>Spokesmen</u>		<u>Spokesmen</u>	Christ
		<u>Type of Revelation</u>	<u>Type of Revelation</u>
Fathers		Moses	Law
		Wise Men	Counsel
		Priests	Teaching of Law
		Prophets	Word
		Psalms	Poetry
Family Religion		National Religion	