

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **Searching the Scriptures – February 9, 2012**

As you know the Bible is divided into two sections. The Old Testament is composed of 39 sections that we call “books.” The New Testament is composed of 27 sections that we call “books.” Yesterday we discussed some things about the Old Testament. Today we will discuss some things about the New Testament.

Hello I’m Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Welcome to today’s edition of Searching the Scriptures.

As we begin our study today in the New Testament it might be helpful to summarize the differences between the religion of the Old Testament and the religion of Christ in the New Testament.

The Old covenant of God was with the Jews only. Christ’s covenant found in the New Testament is for all nations. Moses was the mediator of that OT covenant. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New. The Old Testament religion is likened to a shadow, whereas the New Testament religion is called the substance. You and I know the difference between a man’s shadow, and the man himself. In the Old Testament religion we see its dependence upon animal sacrifices. The Sacrifice of the New Testament is the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world. In the Old Testament religion we find offerings being made daily. In the New Testament religion there is but one offering made for everyone and for all time. In Old Testament days God remembered the sins of the people every year. In the New Testament it is said that God will remember sins no more. The Old Testament religion was temporary. The New is permanent, even unto the end of the world. The high priesthood of Old Testament worship came from the descendants of Aaron. But the New Testament worship is led by the High Priest after the order of Melchizedec, Jesus Christ Himself. In the Old Testament only people from the tribe of Levi could be priests before God. But in the New Testament we learn that every Christian is a priest before God. Under the old Law the people were under a curse. Under the new Law of Christ the people are under a blessing. The Old Testament principle is called the Law of sin and death. The New Testament

principle is called the Law of the Spirit of life. Whereas the Old Testament was concerned with keeping the outward letter of the law, the New Testament is also concerned with the motives of the heart. God's forgiveness during the days of the Old Testament could NOT be justified by the keeping of the Law, but with the faithfulness and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ God was justified in forgiving the sins of the world. And that forgiveness could be received through obedient faith in Christ.

These are the substantial differences between the Old Testament religion and the New Testament religion of Jesus Christ.

The 27 books of the New Testament are logically arranged as follows: in our English Bibles we have first the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell us about the Birth, the works, the teachings, the struggles, the rejection, the death, burial and resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ back to his heavenly Father. Secondly, the History of the New Testament church from its beginning until around 62 A.D. is found in the book of Acts. This book is also called the Acts of the Apostles, even though it mostly traces only the ministries of Peter and Paul.

The Third section of the New Testament is a collection of letters called the "Epistles of Paul." The word "epistle" refers to a letter of correspondence, one person writing to another. The apostle Paul wrote at least 13 epistles. Sometimes Paul wrote to specific churches, like the churches at Rome, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica and Colossi. Once, Paul wrote to a collection of churches in the area of Galatia. But Paul also wrote some private letters to individuals like Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

The fourth section of the New Testament Scripture is called the General Epistles. These epistles are called "general" because they don't seem to be directed toward an individual or a church. The book of Hebrews leads this group in our English Bibles. Then we have the epistle of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and the epistle written by Jude.

Finally, we have the book of Revelation, written by the apostle John probably in the ninth decade of the first century. This book contains seven letters to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, but most of the book also contains prophecies of things that were still future to the life of the apostle John and the suffering Christians to whom he wrote.

These are the five divisions of the New Testament: the four Gospel accounts of the Life of Jesus; (2) the one history book of Acts; (3) the 13 epistles of Paul; (4) the 9 general epistles; (5) and the one book of Prophecy, the book of Revelation.

Now let us go back and examine some of these books more closely, as time permits.

Why are there four accounts of the gospel of the life of Christ? Each writer addressed a different audience. It seems that Matthew addressed the people of the Jews; Mark seems to have addressed Gentiles, maybe the Romans; Luke seems to have addressed Greeks, and John seems to be addressing his remarks to both Jews and Gentiles who still do not believe in Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all inspired men. Matthew and John were apostles who had traveled with Jesus with the other apostles of Christ. An early church historian says that Mark was a companion of Peter, and wrote down what Peter was preaching. And we know that Dr. Luke was a traveling companion and helper of the apostle Paul. We are in debt to these men for giving us this valuable information about the life of the Son of God. Think about where we would be without these books. We would see this phenomenon in the world called Christianity and we wouldn't have a clue as to why! But with these four books we understand perfectly why there is Christianity in the world. The life of Christ is the reason.

The book of Matthew has 28 chapters. Matthew dwells on the idea that Jesus is the messiah, the Christ of God. The Hebrew word "messiah" and the Greek word "Christ" mean "anointed one." The imagery goes back to OT times when the head of a king was anointed with olive oil in order to install him as the king of the nation. The OT prophecies foretold of a special servant who would be sent by

God, whom God Himself would anoint. Thus, Matthew contends that the anointed One, Christ, is Jesus of Nazareth.

Mark has 16 chapters and dwells upon Jesus as the all-powerful man of action, the perfect servant of God whom God sent on a mission.

Luke contains 24 chapters and shows Jesus to be the perfect Son of man, the ideal man, the savior and perfecter of all people.

The book of Acts tells us how the church of Christ was established and how it spread throughout the Mediterranean world. We read of its struggles and its triumphs as the good news of Christ was preached and taught by the apostles and members of the church. The news spread like a wild fire. When the Jews tried to stamp out the teaching about the resurrected and ascended Lord, the Christians scattered from Jerusalem and went everywhere preaching the word. Jesus himself had outlined the progress of the church before His ascension. He had said to his apostles: **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”** (Act 1:8 KJV.) The church of Christ is still spreading the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth. Aren't you glad that it has taken root here? Aren't you glad to know something about the story of Christ? If you don't know enough of the story, then contact a church of Christ near you and learn the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.