

The Bible: The Two Covenants

The entire Bible consists of 66 books with 39 that make up the Old Testament (*Genesis through Deuteronomy- Law; Joshua through Esther- History; Job through Song of Solomon- Poetry; Isaiah through Daniel- Major Prophets; Hosea through Malachi- Minor Prophets*) and 27 that make up the New (*Matthew through John- Gospels; Acts- History; Romans through Philemon- Paul's Letters; Hebrews through Jude- General Epistles; and The Revelation*). It was written by over 40 men from differing backgrounds over a period of roughly 1500-1600 years.

Canon of Scripture

“The English word ‘canon’ goes back to the Greek word *kanon* and then to the Hebrew word *ganah*. Its basic meaning is ‘reed’, our English word ‘cane’ being derived from it. Since a reed was sometimes used as a measuring rod, the word *kanon* came to mean a standard or rule.”

“Thus if one speaks of the ‘canonical’ writings, one is speaking of those books which are regarded as having divine authority and which comprise the Bible.”

Neil R. Lightfoot; *How We Got the Bible* (pg. 152)

Scribes

Because there weren't any copying machines from the beginning, scribes had the task of recopying or 'scribing' these documents. As they became worn and unable to be read, a new one was reproduced which is why original manuscripts are so rare to non-existent. Scribes were highly sought after professionals. Once the New Testament writers began circulating their letters they were copied and circulated on a wider scale. Eventually these inspired writings were canonized, as was the Old Testament prior to the time of Christ since He and His disciples often quoted from them. Since the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we have further evidence of scribes having copied these ancient texts, keeping them alive and available for generations to come.

Old Testament/Covenant

First, what is a 'testament'? According to the Greek (1242) a testament is “a *disposition*, that is, (specifically) a *contract* (especially a devisory *will*): -covenant, testament. Thus, in this context, God made a *contract* between Himself and Israel under the Old Covenant. Such a contract could be broken by either party but it was Israel who ultimately broke it because they worshipped the gods of the nations they were supposed to destroy. (*Jer 16:10-12*) According to Hebrews 9:16; “For where a will (testament) is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established”. Thus, the blood of animal sacrifices was given under the Old Testament to establish that contract between the Israelites and God.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

Exo 24:6 “And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he

threw against the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' 8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold **the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you** in accordance with all these words.'" (*emp. added*)

New Testament/Covenant

But that first covenant between Israel and God had fault even though God doesn't do anything that is faulty. The fault lied with Israel in that Israel could not keep it perfectly (*Act 7:53; Jas 2:10*) and since to begin with "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (*Heb 10:4*).

Rom 11:25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all (*spiritual*) Israel (*Jew and Gentile- Gal 3:28*) will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Heb 8:4 "Now if He (*Christ*) were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the Law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.' 6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the Old as the Covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first Covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second."

Christ became the High Priest of the New Covenant (*thus fulfilling what the Law and prophets stated concerning Him -Mat 5:17; Rev 11:7-12*), even though under the Old the priesthood belonged only to the tribe of Levi. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah.

Heb 7:11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the Law as well. 13 For the One of Whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

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Mat 22:35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Jesus knew when He was being baited with insincere questions. The lawyer tried to find something with which to catch Christ off guard as if making one law superior over the rest in order to make the others less important and not subject to be obeyed. Jesus masterfully answered by stating that our love for God is most important but at the same time He compared it to the love of our fellow man.

Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Therefore, God had planned from eternity a New Covenant (*Heb 8:10; 10:16*) since He is omniscient (*all knowing- Job 37:16*) and knew man's weaknesses before He even created him. It wasn't God's choice that man would fall (*2 Pet 3:9*). We have been given "free-agency" since God loves us and wants us to make the decision whether to love Him in return.

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (*atonement*) for our sins.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Mat 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Questions

1. The Bible consists of a total of how many books? Old Testament? New Testament?
2. What is the English word that means 'standard or rule'?
3. Why are the original manuscripts rare to non-existent?
4. What is a testament?
5. What was the element that sealed both Covenants?
6. Why is it said that the first Covenant had fault?
7. Why does Christ's role as High Priest under the New Testament differ from that of the Levite under the Old Testament?
8. What is the key ingredient in the new law that Jesus gave His disciples?

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