

J. KYLE PAISLEY MEMORIAL FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Adult Bible Class Studies

3rd September 2006

Read: John 14: 25-31

An Introduction to the New Testament

No.1, Background Details

The Bible is the Word of God, which simply means that the Bible is the revelation that God has given of Himself to man. That revelation of God in His Word comprises all that is necessary to the salvation of sinners. To know God is to have eternal life, John 17: 3; and since God is known only as He reveals Himself, then the Bible is the Word of God.

The *necessity* of such a revelation is due to the impossibility of man, left to himself in his fallen state, ever finding out God, 1 Cor 2: 9. Here, the expression “the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” refers to the Gospel in all its fulness – the entire scope and range of the salvation that the Lord has decreed for lost men. But this verse makes it clear that man left to himself will never come to an understanding of the Gospel. Thus, it must be revealed to him as v.10 proceeds to state – “*But God hath revealed them unto us.*” How marvellous that the Lord in His sovereign mercy and grace would condescend to make Himself and the way of salvation known to guilty sinners! But without such no man would ever be saved.

In *nature* this revelation that God has given of Himself is special as opposed to natural. Beyond doubt, God is revealed through nature, Ps 19: 1-6; Psalm 97: 6; Rom 1: 18-23 – note that God’s wrath is against men because they have rejected the light of nature; the revelation of God in creation, a revelation that leaves sinners without excuse. But while God’s works reveal Him, for sinners to be saved they need to know much more than God’s “*eternal power and Godhead (divinity).*” We are sinners and thus we need to know the goodness of God in salvation and the means He has employed to our salvation. Thus, a special revelation of such is required, a revelation that is given in the Scriptures. See 1 Cor 2: 10, 12 & 13 – these verses teach that by His Spirit the Lord has given an inscripturated revelation of Himself; i.e. by the inspiration of the Spirit, the Lord has specially revealed Himself by means of *words*. Those “words...which the Holy Ghost teacheth...” are what comprise the Bible, words which present God as a saving God. So, the essential subject of the Bible as the Word of God is the way of salvation. The Bible is the Word of God setting before sinners the great scheme of redemption in Christ.

That scheme of redemption is sufficiently set forth at any point in Scripture in order to the salvation of men at any given time throughout the ages. However, taking the Bible as a whole, its contents were progressively revealed over many centuries and through various writers and under many different circumstances. Therefore, the Bible is an entire library of books, each with its own peculiarities and distinctions, but all setting forth this one common theme of the redemption of men from sin. Moreover, in the Bible, while there are many books and various sub-divisions, yet there are but two main sections – the Old and New Testaments. It must be understood that this division is not of human invention. In revealing His word, God first gave that body of literature that in our English Bible is comprised of Genesis to Malachi. Then – as fully documented Jewish history verifies – there was a space of about 400 years until the Lord began to give the material that we know as Matthew to Revelation. Hence, we have in the Bible two sections of sacred literature – the two *testaments*.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The word *testament* -- our English word *testament* comes from Latin. But in the Gospels and the Epistles the actual Greek word that is translated *testament* is harder to define, indicated by the fact that in the Scriptures it is translated both as *testament* and as *covenant*.

Occurrence & meaning of the term *new testament* – about 5 times in the Gospels & Epistles; but not in the sense of referring to the books from Matthew to Revelation. Instead, the term designates the new administration of the covenant of grace or way of salvation. In the era represented in Genesis to Malachi the covenant was administered under the ceremonial system; but when Christ came that ceremonial system was fulfilled in Him and was therefore abolished, bringing in a new administration of the covenant of grace – hence, *the new testament* or *new covenant*. Therefore, essentially the term *The New Testament* refers to the relationship into which God enters with men in salvation through Christ, under a testament or covenant of grace that is free from the ceremonial trappings of the old administration, *the old testament* era. Therefore, Christ is “*the mediator of the new testament...*” Heb 9: 15; His blood is the “*blood of the new testament...*” Matt 26: 28; and Gospel ministers from the days of Christ & the Apostles until the end of the age are “*ministers of the new testament...*” 2 Cor 3: 6.

The application of the term *The New Testament* to Matthew through Revelation. However, the term *new testament* has been taken to designate that volume of literature that records the coming in of the new administration of the covenant of grace, just as the term *old testament* designates the Scripture that records the former or old administration of the covenant of grace. See 2 Cor 3: 14 – and note the words “*the reading of the old testament.*” This is an important reference in that it shows the use of the term *old testament* with respect to Scripture given in the times prior to Christ. Thus, the reference shows the legitimacy of using the term *the old testament* to identify that body of literature that we know as Genesis to Malachi. By this token it is therefore legitimate to employ the term *the new testament* to designate the sacred books that record the events that focus on the person & work of Christ, in whom the covenant of grace was fully & finally revealed.

The addition of the New Testament books to the Old. Obviously the OT was in existence before the NT was written. The OT was the Bible of the Jew; and was the Bible that Christ employed. For it He had complete

reverence, interpreting & applying it properly, something the Jewish religious leaders failed to do. The Apostles likewise used the OT and had the same holy respect for it as is seen in the record of their preaching – it was full of the OT. NT Christianity was explained & defended by use of the OT.

Consequently, the books that the Apostles wrote were added to those that already existed in the OT Scriptures. Their authority for doing so lay ultimately in Christ Himself. Christ laid claim to an authority equal to that of the OT writers; e.g. John 5: 46 & 47; and this claim was supported and corroborated by the glory of His very being and by His miracles. However, while Christ personally & directly wrote no Scripture, His authority was continued through the Apostles by means of the commission that Christ gave them, John 17: 18. That commission included their anointing by the Spirit to guide them into all truth, John 16: 13 – while the Spirit guides all believers concerning the truth, this promise must be understood strictly as a promise to the Apostles concerning their ministry, including the writing of Scripture; see also John 14: 26. Thus, by virtue of this authority that devolved to them from Christ, the Apostles wrote their books – the books from Matthew to Revelation, thus giving the Church *The New Testament* – which were added to the Bible already in existence.

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