**Lesson: Two Testaments**

There are two, and only two, testaments to the Holy Bible. The first was God’s message to the Jews about faith, law, forgiveness, salvation, and Messiah who would come. The second was God’s message to all people about faith, law, forgiveness, salvation, and Messiah who had come. The former was delivered to God’s chosen via Moses and the prophets. The second was delivered to all people through Jesus Christ and the apostles. Jew or Christian, God is calling all people to Himself if only they will choose Him.

* ISA 9:6 ~ A child is born for us; a Son is given to us. The government will be on His shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.
* ISA 42:6 ~ I the Lord have called you [Messiah] in righteousness and will hold your hand and keep you; and give you as a covenant for my people and a light for the Gentiles.
* MAT 20:16 ~ Jesus said, “The last will be first, and the first last, for many are called, but few are chosen.”
* JOH 1:17 ~ For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.

Our Judeo-Christian founders, framers, and leaders brought forth a novel way of self-government based on both testaments of the Bible and the sovereignty of God. The concept of three equal but separate branches of government came straight from the Holy Bible (ISA 33:22). This instruction has enabled our nation to prosper and prevail. We must not abandon the fundamentals of our faith such as love, mercy, morality, liberty, and justice, else we go the way of great nations before us which is downward. Beware when those in power whittle away at your liberties, scorn solid tenets of morality, confound the borders between branches of government, and disseminate justice unevenly. To quote Alexis de Tocqueville “Liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith.” Adding justice to his message, I have proposed four pillars of fate (faith, liberty, morality, and justice), which if any one falters the whole system comes crashing down (Barber, 2016). It appears that all four pillars are cracked and wobbling, but it is not too late to reinforce and strengthen them. To quote Benjamin Franklin, “[You have] a republic if you can keep it.” The further we stray from being “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” the closer we approach the brink of destruction.

There are sixty-six canonical books of the Holy Bible comprising the sole, faultless testimony of God who directed the authors to spread His Word (2 PE 1:16–21). Many religions and denominations have added additional references from which they derive historical, cultural, and social material to augment their belief system. At times, these traditions and rituals are elevated to doctrinal level, which is dangerous; both the Old and New Testaments warn not to add to or subtract from God’s Word. To repeat, if we stray from the path God has revealed to us into any other direction, that policy will fail, we will lose our way, and the nation will fall. Let us hold fast to the precepts of God and abandon those of humankind whenever they are unaligned with the Word of God.

* ISA 29:13 ~ The Lord says, “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me consists only of precepts taught by men.”
* MAR 7:6–9,13 ~ Jesus said, “Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites (ISA 29:13). For you put aside the commandments of God and follow the traditions of men. By following your own traditions, you show a disregard for the Word of God.”
* ROM 14:5–8 ~ One person considers a particular day more sacred than other days; another person considers each day alike. Both should be completely confident in their decision. Those who regard one day as special, do so to the Lord. Those who feast, eat to the Lord and give Him thanks. Those who fast, do so to the Lord and give Him thanks. Nobody lives totally to themselves and nobody dies totally to themselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
* COL 2:8,20–22 ~ Beware that you are not spoiled by errant philosophies or vain deceptions, originating from worldly traditions and principles and not from Christ. You are in Christ and not the world, so why submit to its rules? You are not subject to ordinances based on the doctrines and commandments of men (such as don’t touch, taste, or use certain things). Those traditions are destined to die out. People may appear reasonable with their self-imposed worship, false humility, and harsh treatment of the body, but these practices lack value in restraining the sinful flesh.
* 2 TH 2:15 ~ Fellow Christians, stand fast in your faith and hold onto those traditions that you have been taught in God’s Word through the prophets and apostles.

 We must be careful not to add to or subtract from the Holy Bible. No matter what your belief system, everyone knows in their heart what is right and wrong, because your conscience will acquit you or convict you (ROM 2:15). That is, God has written His laws upon our hearts, so nobody has an excuse for doing evil or opposing God (ROM 1:20–21). Morality and truth are not relative, they are absolute, since they come directly from God who is perfectly holy and absolutely true to His Word.

* DEU 4:1–2,5–6 ~ God said, “Listen Israel to the laws and statutes I am about to teach you. Follow them so you can live and take possession of the land I am going to give to you. Do not add to my commands and do not subtract from them. Keep these laws carefully, for this will demonstrate to other nations your wisdom and understanding.”
* DEU 12:32 ~ Do what God has commanded you, and do not add to it or diminish from it.
* PRO 30:5–6 ~ Every word of God is true. Do not attempt to add to His words or He will rebuke you and you will be proven false.
* GAL 1:8 ~ Anyone, including the angels, who preaches anything contrary to what Jesus Christ and the apostles preached are cursed.
* 1 TH 2:13 ~ We thank God that you received His Word and accepted it as the Word of God and not the word of men. The Word of God is at work in believers like you.
* 2 TI 3:16 ~ All scripture is inspired by God. God’s Word provides the doctrine of truth, refutes that which is false, and instructs all people in the ways of righteousness.
* 2 PE 1:16,21 ~ We did not follow cleverly devised fables when we told people about the power and coming of Jesus Christ, for we were eye witnesses of His majesty. No prophecy ever came from the impulse of man, but holy men spoke as they were directed by God.
* REV 22:18–19 ~ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, that if anyone adds to these words, God will add unto that person the plagues mentioned in this book. If anyone subtracts from the words of this prophecy, God will take away their name from the Book of Life, and they will not share in the inheritance.

The central message of Judeo-Christian theology is communicated and remembered during Holy Week. The significance of this week should not be marginalized. It is not about vacations, candy, food, games, or chores; it is about the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (JOH 1:20). This is represented in three important events: first, Abraham sacrificing a ram in place of his son Isaac; second, the slaying and eating of the Passover lamb which saved the firstborn of the Jews who had painted their doorposts with the lamb’s blood. Third, the fulfillment of covenants with Abraham and Moses, which foreshadowed the sacrifice of God’s firstborn and only Son, slain on the cross during the celebration of Passover.

Jesus is the Passover Lamb. Abraham knew about Messiah and rejoiced, as testified by Christ Himself (JOH 8:56–58). Moses also knew this when he declared the New Covenant to the nation of Israel (EXO 24:8). God’s chosen include all who possess a faith like Abraham, which requires inviting the Holy Spirit to guide you in your walk. God is there anyway, and always; all you need to do is acknowledge Him and He will show you the way home.

* GEN 22:2–8 ~ God told Abraham to take His only legitimate son Isaac and sacrifice him on a mountain. Abraham proceeded to do as God requested. Along the way, Isaac asked his father, “Where is the lamb for sacrifice.” Abraham answered, “God Himself will provide the lamb.”
* EXO 24:8 ~ Moses took blood from the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the people saying, “This is the blood of the everlasting covenant revealed by the Lord in these His words.”
* JOH 1:29–35 ~ John the Baptist saw Jesus coming and said, “Look, here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the One of whom I spoke who would come after me, though He is preferred over me for He existed before me. I didn’t know Him intimately, but He is the reason I have been baptizing people with water. He told me that I would see the Spirit of God descending upon Him and remaining there. I saw the Spirit of God descending upon Him like a dove, and it rested upon Him. He is the same One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I am a witness that He is the Son of God.”
* JOH 8:56–58 ~ Jesus said, “Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.” The Jews replied, “You are not even fifty years old and you claim to have seen Abraham.” Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was, I AM.”
* 1 CO 2:13 ~ We teach using words taught by the Holy Spirit, not by human wisdom. Spiritual truths can be interpreted only by people who possess the Spirit.
* HEB 9:19–22 ~ Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the Book of the Law, the church, and the people, testifying of God’s everlasting covenant (EXO 24:8). By the Law evil is purged with blood, and without blood there can be no remission of sins.
* 1 PE 1:18–19 ~ You were redeemed, not with corruptible things such as gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without any imperfections.

It is by faith that we are saved, solely by the grace of God and the sacrifice of His Son (ISA 53; JOH 3:16; EPH 2:8–9). This free gift of salvation is the theme of the entire Bible. If you want to live forever with the Lord of the universe, believe in Him; if you refuse you will spend eternity separated from Him. God reveals Himself to anyone who seeks Him and loves Him (MAT 7:7–8). God loved us first (1 JO 4:19), and wants us to love Him back; but He will not force anyone, it’s our choice. The faith evident in Abraham and the patriarchs of the Old Testament was shown in the followers of Christ in the New Testament. Like them, we are flawed human beings, incapable of fulfilling God’s Law in entirety, which is why Christ fulfilled the Law on our behalf in whom our faith is founded.

* GEN 22:18 ~ God told Abraham, “In your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed because you have been obedient to me.”
* ISA 41:8 ~ You Israel, are God’s servants, the children of Jacob whom I have chosen, and the seed of my friend Abraham.
* JOH 8:31–47 ~ Jesus spoke to those Jews who believed in Him saying, “If you continue in my Word, you are indeed my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Some of the bystanders answered, “We are descendants of Abraham, and we have never been slaves to anyone; how can we possibly be set free?” Jesus replied, “Whoever sins becomes a slave to sin. A slave has no position in the family, but a son does. If the Son sets you free, you will definitely be free. I know you descended from Abraham, yet you are ready to kill me because you have no room for my Word in your heart. I’ve been telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence.” They responded, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus announced, “If you were Abraham’s children you would do as he did. Instead, you plot to kill me, a man who has given you the truth directly from God; Abraham would never do such a thing. You are following the ways of your earthly father.” They protested, saying, “We are not illegitimate children; God Himself is our Father.” Jesus explained, “If God was your Father you would love me, for I came from Him and here I am; I have not come on my own but He has sent me. Why is this so hard for you to understand? I’ll tell you why, because you belong to your father the devil, and your desire is to carry out his will. He was a murderer from the start and despised the truth, for there is no truth in him. He speaks only lies whereas he is the father of lies. I speak only the truth but you refuse to listen. Can you prove me wrong; if not, why do you not believe? Whoever belongs to God listens to Him. The reason you do not understand is because you do not belong to God.”
* ROM 4:13,16; ROM 9:6–7 ~ For the promise that he should be an heir to the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. Therefore, it is by grace through faith that the promise is given to all the seed; not only to those who obey the Law, but also to those who demonstrate the faith of Abraham who was the father of us all. Not everyone who is a descendant of Jacob is of the house of Israel. That is, just because someone is from the lineage of Abraham, it doesn’t necessarily make them children or heirs.
* GAL 3:6–9,16,26–29 ~ Consider Abraham. He believed God and his faith was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham. The scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced it in the Gospel to Abraham as it is written: All nations of the world will be blessed through your seed (GEN 22:18). Anyone having faith is blessed along with Abraham, a man of great faith. To Abraham and his seed, the promises were made. God didn’t say “seeds” meaning many people, He said “seed” meaning one person, who is Christ. You are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for you have been baptized unto Him and have clothed yourselves in His righteousness. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in the Lord. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to God’s promise.

Without faith, we cannot please God no matter how many good works we perform; however, with faith we are compelled to do good works and improve in our ability to resist sin and temptation. Belief systems presuming that being good will earn salvation are in error. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation or pay for it, since it is free and paid for in full. Religious leaders of Jesus’s time were repeatedly warned about elevating works above faith. However, those exhibiting the faith of Abraham will bear good fruit worthy of repentance.

* MAT 3:7–10 ~ John was baptizing people in the Jordan River when many of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to observe. John spoke to them saying, “You snakes! Has anyone warned you of the judgement that awaits you? You’d better start bearing fruit that is worthy of repentance. You say to yourselves that you have Abraham as your father. I assure you that God can produce children of Abraham from these stones. The ax is ready to strike at the roots; any tree that does not bear good fruit will be chopped down and burned in the fire.”
* MAT 23:23–25 ~ Jesus said, “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees. You make tithes of your spices, yet you ignore the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. You are like the blind guide, who would gag on a gnat but easily swallow a camel. Woe to you hypocrites, for you make the outside appear clean while the inside is full of extortion and excess.”
* LUK 20:46–47 ~ Jesus said, “Beware of the Pharisees. They enjoy wearing fancy robes, being greeted in the marketplace, sitting in places of honor at church, and reserving the nicest rooms for their banquets; yet they cheat widows out of their homes, and for a show, recite long prayers. They will receive the greater damnation.”

Before concluding, let’s reexamine Holy Week and its importance for all Bible believers. From the Old Testament perspective, the week (eight days) begins and ends on a “high” Sabbath, in addition to the weekly Sabbath which was observed in like manner. Pivotal feasts include Unleavened Bread, Passover, and First Fruits. From the New Testament perspective, Holy Week begins and ends on a Sunday; pivotal events coinciding with those listed above are Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Therefore, Jews and Christians alike attend worship services multiple times for eight days, in addition to attending the weekly convocation. The many parallels between and among these sacred observances are not a coincidence. The unleavened bread represents Jesus’s body which was without sin, broken on the cross where He shed His blood on the very day the Jews were celebrating Passover. Interestingly, Jesus arose from the dead Easter Sunday, the same day the Jews were engaged in the feast of First Fruits. For more about this it is recommended the reader study the April 2021 Bible lesson entitled *Holy Week*.

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Reference:

Barber, A. V. (2016). *Faithbook for Christian Counselors*. El Paso, TX: Special Delivery Press. (ISBN 9780966970241)