

*From Where I Sit . . .*

## **The Most Misunderstood Page In The Bible**

What do you suppose is the most misunderstood page in all the Bible? There are, no doubt, many different answers. Some would argue that one of the pages from Revelation, Daniel or Zechariah with images and prophecies must certainly be the hardest. Others would choose pages containing some of the many doctrinal passages that seem to generate such controversy visualize: baptism, the incarnation of "God in the flesh," and such like.

This writer has found a much simpler page to actually be equally as confusing to the casual reader. It's the page at the end of Malachi and prior to Matthew chapter 1 that is inscribed "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

There is much misunderstanding as to what this actually means. Most folks think that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are actually New Testament books, but in reality they describe a time very much in the latter portion of the Old Testament period or Covenant of God with His people the Jews. It's not until one gets to the cross of Christ at the end of these records that he actually moves into the New Testament or covenant time period. Note Hebrews 9:16-17: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

The four Gospel accounts of the life of Christ find Him living and dying in the Old Testament time period, faithful to all the Law of Moses; preparing His disciples for the coming Kingdom and New Covenant; and fulfilling both the prophecies and the purpose of the Old Testament. It was necessary for Him to die for His New Testament Will to come into effect.

One significance of this is that I cannot go to episodes like the thief on the cross to discount specific commandments of the Lord in the New Testament such as "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," (Acts 2:38). Christ was very much alive at the point of speaking to the thief, "today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Whether the thief was or was not baptized has no bearing at all on Acts 2:38 and it's relevance to you and me. The thief lived AND DIED under the old covenant. You and I live under the terms of His New Testament.

A misunderstanding of this change from the Old to the New Covenant has also caused men to use the Old Testament to justify many practices that were not ordained by the Lord for the New Testament church. Examples of these would be: Sabbath Day observance, instruments of music, ceremonial worship, and a separate priesthood.

Paul admonishes us to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15).

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