



June 17, 2007

## *Understanding The Design*

Last week we began talking about how to understand the Bible and compared it to a puzzle. When we open the box to assemble a puzzle we may turn the lid over so that we can see where the color patterns fall. This will assist us in placing the pieces in the general areas that they will eventually occupy. When we look at the Bible we see that there is an organization or layout. But how do we place the various pieces, represented by the different books, in their rightful place? Why is this important? When we try to understand the Bible, knowing where, and when, something occurs identifies the context of a passage. This is significant as it will impact how we view the doctrine later on. This design is not immediately apparent but there are ways that we can begin to grasp it. In the same way that we get an idea of where the pieces of a puzzle will fall, by looking at the entire picture, we recognize patterns that will reveal the context of each piece during assembly. At first glance the puzzle may only appear to be a mass of disjointed elements but understanding where the color patterns fall points us in the right direction. There are two main divisions in the Bible. The Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament refers to the thirty-nine books of Hebrew origin. The New Testament, written in the Greek language, refers to the twenty seven books that were written during the first century. The term “Old Testament” has two meanings which is important to understanding the doctrine of the Bible. The “Old Testament” not only refers to the books mentioned above, but also refers to the Law that was given to Moses. This may seem confusing but in later articles we will draw other distinctions that will help clarify this. God began giving instructions, later repeated at Mount Sinai and afterwards, with the instructions for the Passover. The books that comprise the Old Testament however relate the narrative of how God dealt with the faithful prior to the Law of Moses. The time period during which the Law of Moses spans does not end with the last book of the “Old Testament”. Christ lived and died under the Law and through his death brought the Law of Moses to its conclusion by fulfilling it (**Matt 5.18**). Paul deals

with this in his writings and reveals the effects of Christ’s sacrifice (**Col 2.14**). We understand that God and Christ do not change (**Heb 13.8**), but God’s conditions for faithful service change as the Law of Moses is taken out of the way and is replaced by its fulfillment, the Gospel, as revealed through Christ and later the writers of the New Testament. This is probably one of the most misunderstood aspects of the Bible and when we try to see how all of the pieces fit together in this great puzzle we find that it was also a problem for those in the first century. Paul writes, “*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*” (**Gal 3.24-25**). The writer of Hebrews refers to the passing away of the Law of Moses as we read, “*In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*” (**Heb 8.13**). Paul makes a distinction between the Law of Moses and the Gospel when he states, “*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*” (**Gal 4.4-5**). The writer of Hebrews also indicates that the blood of Christ covered the sins of those who were faithful to God under the Law (**Heb 9.15**). Christ is therefore the fulfillment of the Law bringing in a new covenant as God had promised. Even in our own time there are many who perceive God’s laws as being the “**Ten Commandments**” which were part of the Law of Moses. This misunderstanding is based on a lack of knowledge of how the two are related. We will cover this in more detail later. In our next article we will look at the three ways in which God revealed his laws to mankind.

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