

## What Is The Difference Between The Old & New Testaments?

(appropriate for Mid-schoolers and older, lesson is 35 minutes if the verses in parenthesis are skipped)

Michael R. Daily, January 2010

(ref: T. Cahill, The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks & Feels, Anchor Books, 1999)

testament - a covenant between God and the human race  
covenant - a solemn and binding agreement, a written agreement or promise between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.

So, the Old Testament are promises God made to the human race a long time ago. The New Testament is a newer set of promises God made to the human race.

How do the new promises affect the old ones? They don't. Both sets of promises are still in effect.

### Old Testament

The Old Testament is a record of the promises God made to the nation of Israel and the history of His relationship with Israel from the beginning up to about 400 years before the birth of Christ.

There were 2 primary purposes for the Old Testament.

#### 1. God demonstrated to the nations of the World that there was only one God and He was it

God chose to work through a tiny, inconsequential nation in order to show the other nations of the world that He was the one true God.

#### Deuteronomy 7:6-8

**"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7" The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.**

At the time of Abraham all the nations of the world were "pantheistic" – they believed in multiple gods. Every nation had many, many gods – a god of war, a god of the harvest, a god of the Sun, etc.

Although people talk about them "worshipping" these gods they really didn't – at least not the way we worship God today. Instead, people came up with elaborate rituals and sacrifices whose purpose was to try to manipulate their gods into doing things they wanted – a good harvest, victory in battle, etc.

If you were going out to battle with another nation you would go to your god of war and ask him to give you victory. You would then give him a sacrifice to show that you were serious and had done your part and now the god should do their part. It wasn't about what their gods wanted. It was about what they wanted from their gods.

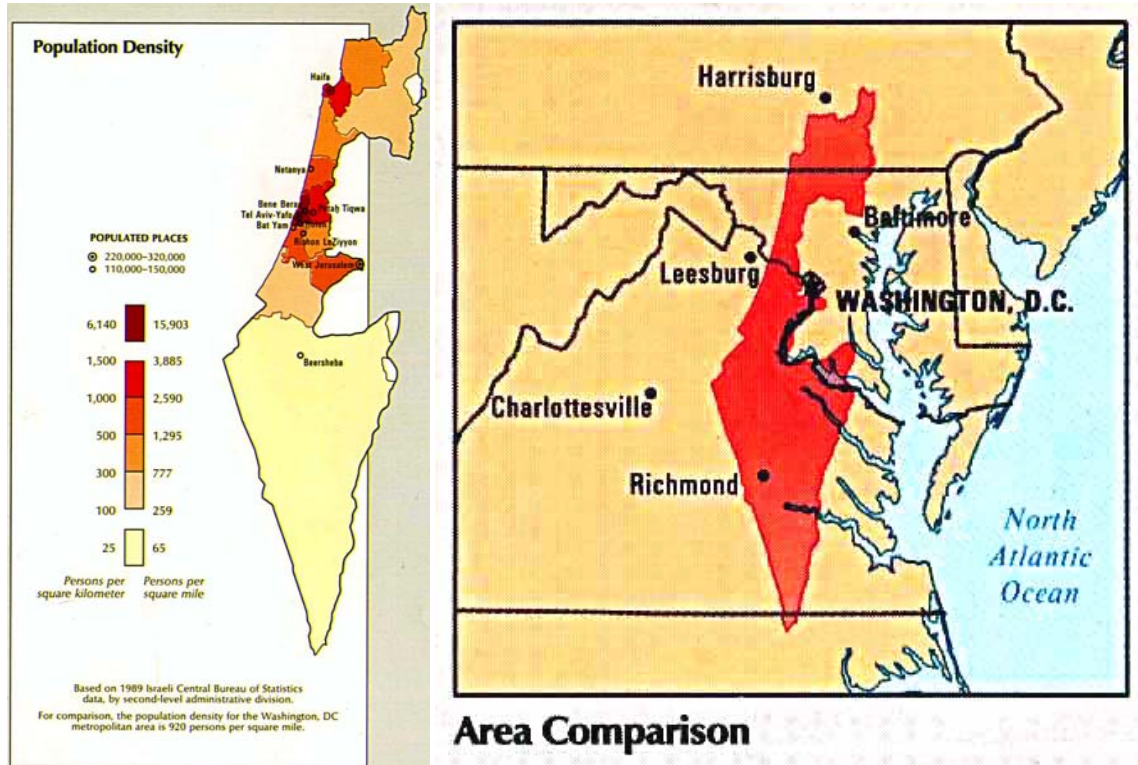
God chose to reveal Himself to all the nations of the world through His relationship with Israel, one of the tiniest of nations (show map at right).

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/israel\\_nbr90.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/israel_nbr90.jpg)

Israel and Neighboring States



As you can see the most populated part of Israel is only about 15 miles wide, border-to-border (or about the width of a large US city). This nation is really tiny!



[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas\\_middle\\_east/israel\\_pop.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_middle_east/israel_pop.jpg)

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas\\_middle\\_east/israel\\_area.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_middle_east/israel_area.jpg)

**Key Point:** *The message God had for the world was this - There are not hundreds of gods, there is only one God and I Am Him. And let me explain how this God thing works - I tell you what to do!*

Israel's God was very different from all the other gods. He told them what to do. And some of the things He told them to do were not things you would think up yourself.

(see ref. by Cahill - Note that this book is not a Christian book and is not suitable for teens younger than high school age)

Imagine an Israeli trying to explain his God to someone during this time period.

Israeli: For example, He says we should have only one wife

Sumerian: Really? Only one wife? But why would you limit yourself to one woman if you could have 10? It doesn't make any sense - look at Tiger Woods.

Israeli: I know! Our God is always telling us to do crazy things like that.

Sumerian: Why would you ask your god for only one wife?

Israeli: I didn't. It would never occur to me to ask for that. Its something He told us.

Sumerian: He told you?

Israeli: Yes.

Sumerian: Your God tells you what to do?

Israeli: Yep – He says things like, we should only work on 6 days and not work one day a week.

Sumerian: You're kidding! You're just supposed to lose 1/7 of your productivity for no good reason?

Israeli: Its worse than that! The six days we can work? – He wants us to give Him 10% of everything we earn from those six days.

Sumerian: No! So, what do you get for your 10%?

Israeli: Nothing. He just says, Give 10%, no strings attached.

Sumerian: Why, that's crazy talk. That's not even a good deal!

Israeli: I know, but that's the way He is. He's always telling us to do things that don't make any sense. You've probably heard about how we destroyed Jericho, right?

Sumerian: Yeah?

Israeli: You want to know how we did that? This is what our God told us to do - walk around in circles, shout and blow horns. So we did – and then the walls fell down.

Sumerian: That doesn't even make sense.

Israeli: I know. I know. He's always doing things like that. He tells us to do things we would never think of ourselves and then when we obey Him He does things for us that no human could have done. That's the kind of God we have.

Sumerian: I have never heard of any god that even comes close to yours.

### **Isaiah 45:20-22**

**"Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, Who carry about their wooden idol And pray to a god who cannot save. <sup>21</sup>"Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me. <sup>22</sup>"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.**

Another example of how different the God of Israel was is when God released Israel from being enslaved by Egypt, and in the process destroyed the economic and military power of the greatest nation on Earth at the time.

How could a bunch of slaves just walk away and leave the most powerful nation on Earth in ruins?

It was obvious to the other nations that something very unusual was going on – the God of Israel was a real god!

He told you what to do. He took miraculous actions on your behalf. Your job was to worship and obey Him.

***Ask for 2 volunteers to be actors. One will be a reporter for the Philistine Times. The other will be a Hebrew that left Egypt with Moses.***

***Print out 2 copies of the next 2 pages, one set per actor.***

**Imagine you're a Hebrew that left Egypt. You're being interviewed by a reporter for the Philistine Times**

- Philistine: I'm doing a story on how you destroyed the greatest nation on Earth. Can you tell me what happened?
- Hebrew: Sure, what would you like to know?
- Philistine: Tell me about that night where the first-born of Egypt died. What did you do first?
- Hebrew: Well, the first thing we did was paint the tops of our doors with the blood of a lamb.
- Philistine: Blood of a lamb, got it. Why would you do that? Oh, I see! Its like war paint – getting everybody worked up for the battle?
- Hebrew: No, we just painted the tops of our doors because our God told us to.
- Philistine: Your God told you to do that?
- Hebrew: Yes.
- Philistine: Then, what did you do?
- Hebrew: Then we made some bread without yeast in it. It makes a dense, flat bread that's hard to chew.
- Philistine: Of course, you can't go into battle with loaves of bread. You need something that's easy to carry into the fight!
- Hebrew: No, no. Our God told us to make the bread that way and then sit in our houses and eat it along with the lamb meat.
- Philistine: So, how did you kill all the first-born of Egypt if there was no battle?
- Hebrew: We didn't. We painted our doors with lamb's blood and sat in our houses and ate our unleavened bread and lamb's meat. While we were doing that and thanking God and praising Him, He sent His angel to kill the first-born of Egypt for us.
- Philistine: Really?

Hebrew: It went on all night. The next morning God told us to knock on the doors of our Egyptian neighbors and ask them if they would be so kind as to give us all their gold, silver, and other treasures. And they did!

Philistine: No way!

Hebrew: Way!

Philistine: Then what?

Hebrew: We packed up all our silver and gold and stuff and walked out of town.

Philistine: What did Pharaoh think about that?

Hebrew: I think he was glad we were leaving.

Philistine: I guess that explains how you destroyed Egypt's economy. But what about the Egyptian Army? Weren't they destroyed too?

Hebrew: Yes, well, God was leading us in the desert and we got boxed in against the Red Sea. Then we noticed the Egyptian army approaching from a distance and we figured Pharaoh must have changed his mind.

Philistine: So, what did you do?

Hebrew: We started saying our prayers because we figured we were toast.

Philistine: Then what?

Hebrew: Then God answered our prayers and parted the Red Sea and made a dry path for us to cross it - so we did.

Philistine: Yes, but the Egyptians. How did you destroy them?

Hebrew: Our God did it. Once we were across the Red Sea the Egyptian army tried to cross as well. Once the whole army was in the middle of the Sea God closed the part and the Egyptians all drowned. The bottom line is: Our God saved us – there is no god like Him.

Philistine: Wow. I wish our gods were like yours.

So, that was God's strategy. Demonstrate to all the nations of the world that the God of Israel was the only real God. Did it work? Is there any evidence in the Bible that God's strategy worked?

Let's look at 3 people from other nations to see what they have to say. The first are the Philistines – one of Israel's greatest enemies.

### **I Samuel 4:6-8 (Philistines' confession)**

**When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. <sup>7</sup>The Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup>"Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.**

The Philistines still did not quite understand the "one God" idea but they knew that the God of Israel was unlike any other God and was to be feared more than the mightiest army.

The next example is of a Canaanite prostitute named Rahab.

### **Joshua 2:8-11 (Rahab's confession)**

**Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, <sup>9</sup>and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. <sup>10</sup>"For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. <sup>11</sup>"When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.**

Rahab understood that the God of Israel was the ruler of all of heaven and all of Earth (that about covers it) and, therefore, He was the only real God and to oppose His will meant destruction.

The last example is from the man who was the emperor of the entire world during the time of the Babylonian Empire.

### **Daniel 3:28-29 (Nebuchadnezzar's confession)**

**Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup>"Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."**

Nebuchadnezzar still did not understand the concepts of compassion and grace but he understood that there was one God and this God did miraculous things. This God tells His followers what to do and His commands are to be feared more than the commands of any human king – even the ruler of a world empire.

### **Prophecy**

The Old Testament also contains large amounts of prophecy – detailed statements about things that would happen in the future – and they always came true 100% of the time.

Once again demonstrating that the God of Israel was a real God, no other gods could do anything like this.

Many of the prophecies in the Old Testament have come true already but some are about things that will happen in our future.

## **2. God Gave the Law to Show Man that he was incapable of meeting the standards of a perfect God**

The second main purpose of the Old Testament was to show mankind that they were sinners who had no ability to save themselves from the penalty of their sins. This was in preparation for the coming Savior.

If people did not know they were sinners and could not save themselves, then they would have no reason to believe they needed a Savior. Much of Old Testament prophecy is about this coming Savior including both His first coming and His second (yet to occur).

### **Romans 4:15**

**for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.**

Imagine you are driving along a highway that has no speed limit. No matter how fast you are going you are not violating any law. If you pass a policeman you have nothing to fear – if he stops you what would he say? He may not like how fast you are going but that is just his opinion – he can't do anything to you.

But what if there is a sign that says the speed limit is 70 miles per hour. Now its clear that if you are going faster than that you are breaking the law and will have to pay a penalty.

### **Romans 3:19-20**

**Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**

### **Galatians 3:23-25**

**But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**

**(Romans 5:20) - The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more**

**(Romans 7:5) - For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.**

**(Romans 7:7-8) - What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." <sup>8</sup>But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.**

The Law was given to show us we are unable to keep it and how hopeless our situation is without a savior.

## **New Testament**

The New Testament is a record of the promises God made to the human race once the Savior appeared. A new covenant was needed because the rules of the game were changing. Now God's promises and His relationship would be with individual believers in Christ. Instead of a nation, God would now work through His Church to reach the people of the world in a more personal way.

### **Galatians 2:16**

**nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**

The new promise that God has for mankind is that His perfect Son, Jesus, paid for our sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, dying, and 3 days later rising from the dead. As a result God is now able to forgive men of their sins and to remember them no more.

### Romans 5:1

**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**

### Romans 5:9

**Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.**

The common element in both the old testament and the new is that men are saved by their faith in God and His promises of the Savior.

**(Habakkuk 2:4) - Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.**

**(Galatians 3:11) - Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

**(Romans 7:6) - But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.**

**(Colossians 1:13-14) - For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

But God is not finished with Israel yet.

### The Future - Israel Will Once Again Be Used By God

God worked through the nation of Israel from the time of Abraham up until Israel was destroyed as a nation. The Roman Empire destroyed Israel in 73 AD, about 40 years after Christ's resurrection. The Roman Empire dispersed the Jews across the Earth and changed the name of the land to "Palestine" – named after Israel's enemy, the Philistines. Although God told them this would happen, He also said He would one day restore them as a nation back in their land. Someday the nation of Israel would once again come back into existence.

**(Deuteronomy 28:64-65) - Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. 65"Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.**

**(Leviticus 26:44-45) - 'Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. 45'But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD."**

### Jeremiah 16:14-15

**"Therefore behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' 15but, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.' For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.**

When do you guys think God will fulfill this prophecy and Israel will once again exist? Here is some news – it already happened. Israel became a nation again, back in the same land, with the same name, and with the descendants of the same people. Does anyone know what year this happened? It happened in 1948, only 11 years before I was born. After 1,875 years of non-existence, God miraculously restored Israel as a nation. You guys are living in a world where the nation of Israel from the Old Testament is actually in existence today!

**Key Point: *The restoration of Israel as a nation after a gap of 1,875 years, in fulfillment of prophecy, is one of the most powerful evidences that the God of the Bible is the one true God.***

Although the Israel of today is the same nation as the one in the Old Testament, its relationship with God is not as good as it used to be. Paul describes Israel's current situation in Romans 11.

### **Romans 11:25-28**

**For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; <sup>26</sup>and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." <sup>27</sup>"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." <sup>28</sup>From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;**

Right now we are living in "The Time of the Gentiles". The Time of the Gentiles started at the resurrection of Christ. During this time period, right now, Israel's relationship with God is at an all time low. Paul says that Israel's heart has been partially hardened. They are not very spiritual people and they have rejected His Son, Jesus. In fact, Paul says that they are enemies of the gospel – they have rejected Christ. But they are also beloved for the sake of the fathers. That means that although they have rejected His Son, God still loves Israel because of the promises He made to Abraham. God still watches over Israel and miraculously protects Israel to this day. In the future Israel will once again turn back to God.

**(Ezekiel 36:24-28) - "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup>"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup>"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. <sup>28</sup>"You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.**

God has plans for Israel. The Time of the Gentiles will end when the Rapture of the Church occurs (when all the Christians disappear from the Earth). During the 7 year tribulation period God will once again use Israel to show the world that He is the one true God and Jesus is His Son.

**(Revelation 7:1-8) - After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. <sup>2</sup>And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, <sup>3</sup>saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." <sup>4</sup>And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: <sup>5</sup>from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, <sup>6</sup>from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, <sup>7</sup>from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, <sup>8</sup>from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.**

In the future, when the Savior Israel has been waiting for reveals Himself, they will realize it is Jesus Christ and they will deeply regret that they missed Him during His first coming.

### **Zechariah 12:10**

**"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.**

**Conclusion:** God has shown Himself to be unique compared to the gods men have made. He has shown man he can't keep the Laws of a perfect God and that he needs a Savior. God sent His Son to be our Savior and offers eternal life as a free gift. Although we are currently living in the "Time of the Gentiles", God has plans to use Israel once again as His witnesses to the world after the Church is raptured.

**QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD**

***JEREMIAH 15:16***

**THEME: *What is the Difference Between The Old & New Testaments?***

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Deuteronomy 7:6-8***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Isaiah 45:20-22***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Samuel 4:5-8, Joshua 2:8-11, Daniel 3:26-29***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

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**THEME:** *What is the Difference Between The Old & New Testaments?*

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION:** *Romans 4:1-15*

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION:** *Romans 3:19-20, Galatians 3:21-26*

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION:** *Romans 5:20, Romans 7:5-8*

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Galatians 2:16, Romans 5:1-9***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Habakkuk 2:4, Galatians 3:11, Colossians 1:13-14***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Deuteronomy 28:63-67, Leviticus 26:44-45, Jeremiah 16:14-16***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 11:25-29***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ezekiel 36:22-28***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 7:1-8, Zechariah 12:10***

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