

Carnal and Spiritual

Ponder: The Old Testament and the New Testament

Scripture: “. . . concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation” (Hebrews 9:10 NKJV).

God has always wanted the allegiance of the heart, not mere rote obedience. It is a mistake to think that people under the Old Testament did not have to be devoted to God as long as they outwardly kept the commandments. Deuteronomy 6:5 said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Still, the Old Testament dealt much more with material and carnal matters, while the emphasis in the New Testament is spiritual. For example, God’s people often engaged in carnal warfare to advance the Lord’s cause under the Old Testament. Today, “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (2 Corinthians 10:4). Rather, our sword is spiritual (the word of God); the rest of our armor is also spiritual (Ephesians 6:13-17). We strive not to physically kill others, but to put to death the old man of sin (Colossians 3:3-10) so that a new man in Christ may come forth.

An earthly, political kingdom characterized much of the Old Testament era. Beginning with Saul, dozens of kings reigned over God’s chosen people. Today, Jesus is our King; but He Himself said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). His throne is in Heaven, not on earth. His kingdom knows no map boundaries, for He reigns in the hearts of His subjects.

Worship in the Old Testament centered around the Jerusalem temple. Today, God’s spiritual temple is made of living stones (1 Peter 2:4). Rather than the various material sacrifices of the Old Testament, we offer “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:4) such as “the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

Songs of praise were accompanied by various instruments in the Old Testament (trumpet, harp, lute, timbrel, flute, cymbal, etc., Psalm 150:3-5). Under the New Testament, we pluck not the carnal harp strings, but the spiritual heart strings (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

Let us be thankful for the spiritual emphasis in the New Testament. And let us resist any effort to return to the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament.