

THE PENTATEUCH

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Lecture 1

Our course this semester is in a sense a continuation of the course Introduction to the Old Testament wherein we examine what the Old Testament is, what revelation is, and what inspiration is. I presume that you have an idea of what we deal with in that course in regard to this vital matter of God's revelation to us. Most of what we have in that course would apply equally well to either testament, although our emphasis was on the Old Testament. The same is also true in respect to questions concerning the canon; the principles dealt with there would apply equally well to the New Testament, but they are more difficult to apply there than to the Old Testament, and therefore it is especially important that we get an understanding of their application in that relationship. In the latter part of that course we discussed the four important ancient and immediate versions by examining the evidence regarding them and the Hebrew text and how we can determine that we have the correct text.

All of the material in the first part of that course is very important in our understanding of the entire Bible. The middle part dealt with matters that have become tremendously important as Barthianism has continued its attack upon the canon, although that importance is not always apparent to all. The latter part of that course is very important if you are doing a study of the specialized application of individual OT verses, but it may not enter into your particular work for many years.

The present course is very different. It is much more focused on a particular area. Yet, although we will be dealing with a small section of scripture, we will deal with a section upon which the fire of attack has been very fierce. We will deal with a point which can be called the watershed of division between believers in supernatural Christianity and those who have rejected it. It has been at this point of introduction to the Pentateuch that many great leaders in Christian thought have been gradually diverted from their allegiance to orthodox Christianity and became instrumental in shifting entire seminaries and denominations onto altogether different tracks, leading them in an entirely different direction.

The question of the Pentateuch, what it is, who wrote it, and when it was written has been a focal point of the attack upon supernatural Christianity which has had visible results upon every portion of the professing Christian world. The controversy which was raised sixty years ago about the Pentateuch, which was heard throughout Christendom, and was especially prominent in all theological institutions, is no longer as visibly prominent as it was then. The reason for this from the point of view of the liberals is that the battle has been won on this point. It is their opinion that it was won sixty years ago, and so today you will rarely find a seminary with a class which takes up the question at all as we will take it up in this course, even though it will be from a negative viewpoint. Today you will rarely find it discussed, although sixty years ago you would have found it used in practically every subject.

The vital question was, did Moses write the Pentateuch? And is the Pentateuch something God revealed, is it his work, is it dependable, or is