

The Old Man and the New Man

A Brief Study by G. H. Shinn

Old Man	New Man	Comments
Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with <i>Him</i> , that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.		Romans 6 lays the foundation for the further use of these terms. The old man cannot be the sin principle or the flesh, though this is the conclusion of both reformed writers (eg. Jay Adams, best know for his writings in counseling) as well as some who claim to be dispensational (e.g. David Needham, a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate and on the faculty at Multnomah School of the Bible). The old man of Romans 6 has already been co-crucified with Christ. This is clearly a non-experiential, positional and judicial truth. It looks at the believer from God’s point of view.
Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,	Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new <i>man</i> who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,	Colossians 3:9, 10 further expands the positional truth and applies the results. The reference to the old man makes it clear that the believer has previously “put off” the old man and “put on” the new. No action regarding the old or new is contemplated, as this passage lays the foundation for the activity of “not lying to one another.” Since the temptation to lie is Satanic, the old man does not refer to the sin principle, the flesh. Nor does the new man refer to the new nature that we received at regeneration.
Ephesians 4:22, 23 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,	Ephesians 4:24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.	In Ephesians we have the position applied in a general way to the lifestyle (“former conduct”) of the believer. Believers are actually instructed to put off the old man. How is this possible, if the old man was crucified with Christ? The answer lies in verse 23. Being “renewed in the spirit of your mind” refers to a mental activity. Putting off the old man is a mental activity that is only possible by an internal change of attitude. Likewise, putting on the new man requires this mental renewal that is possible only because believers already have a renewed mind that was produced at regeneration.

How then are we to define the old man and the new man? These terms cannot be identified with the old nature and the new nature. Scripture nowhere indicates that the old nature was crucified. What then was crucified with Christ? The answer is found in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The personal pronoun “I” is the subject of the verb “have been crucified.” The grammar of the verb is significant:

- (1) the perfect tense indicates a past action with on-going result. Therefore, the “I am crucified” of the KJV is accurate in that it emphasizes the result, while the “I have been crucified” of the NKJV is accurate in that it emphasizes the past act.
- (2) the passive voice indicates that “I” did not perform the crucifixion myself. Self-crucifixion is not a biblical doctrine.
- (3) the indicative mood indicates that the crucifixion is viewed as real. Positional truth, such as this, is viewed as being real by God.

Conclusion:

The “old man” is the *person as a whole* viewed from the viewpoint of fallen position in God’s eyes. This old man is the entirety of the person, with a view to and including the old nature, but not limited to it. The “new man” is also the person as a whole, but viewed with reference to saved position, including the new nature and its capabilities.