

CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

A NEW & BETTER
COVENANT

30

SERIES

In dedication to all the soul-winners that need a Bible study on the Old and New Covenant.

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“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Heb. 8:6-8).

There are many covenants found within the Scriptures. This study covers the Old Covenant that was founded with Moses and the children of Israel and the New Covenant that was promised to Israel and offered to all of the world. A proper understanding of the covenants can lead to so many depths and riches found within this topic. An improper understanding can lead to false doctrine and utter confusion when trying to decipher the meanings found within the word of God. As the Apostle Paul stated, we must *“be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

Let’s start off with the definition of a covenant. A covenant within the Bible is *“an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advanced”* (George Mendenhall, 1178). Basically, a covenant is an agreement of both parties to remain faithful.

THE OLD COVENANT

The Old Covenant was established by God with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai after they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. At Mount Sinai, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, and it represented the whole covenant that he had established with Israel.

Exodus 19:3-5

“And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.’”

Chapter 20 of Exodus lists the Ten Commandments that God established with Israel. All of these commandments are based upon the attributes of God with the exception of the commandment to “keep the Sabbath day holy” (vs. 8). All of these moral commandments are established and carried on within the New Testament Church.

The Old Covenant not only contains the moral commandments found within the Ten Commandments, but it includes all of the ceremonial and civil laws found within the five books of Moses. There are over 600 Old Testament laws that are part of this covenant with most of them being found in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The Apostle Paul says that the Old Covenant promises were established to point to a new and better covenant that God would give his people. He calls the Old Covenant a “shadow.”

Hebrews 8:4-5

“For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished

of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”

A NEW COVENANT PROMISED

God promised Israel a new covenant—one that would change their heart through the Spirit of God and would give them the power to be able to obey God through the transformation of their own inner being. This covenant was promised several times throughout the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Ezekiel 36:26-27

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Joel 2:28-29

“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

These scriptural promises of a new covenant were prophesied to come to pass not only for the nation of Israel, but for the whole world.

THE END OF THE OLD COVENANT

While the Old Testament spoke of a new covenant that would be established, it is the New Testament that explains the transition from the old to the new. Jesus spoke of the Old Covenant Law being transitioned out with the introduction of the New Covenant by John the Baptist.

Luke 16:16

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”

However the time in which the Old Covenant was fully ended was not until the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Book of Hebrews makes it very clear that the author of the Old Covenant had to die for another covenant to take effect. God came down in the person of Jesus Christ and offered himself as the perfect human sacrifice and that put an end to the Old Testament Law.

Hebrews 9:15-17

*“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the **new covenant**, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the **first covenant**, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a **testament**, there must also of necessity be the **death of the testator**. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.”*

The word, “testament” is the exact same word as “covenant.” It is diathekes in Greek. So, the author of Hebrews is saying that the death of

the one that gave the covenant had to take place so that a new covenant could be established.

What does this mean for us? It means we no longer live by the Old Covenant. We have a new and better covenant that was prophesied in the Old Testament.

Oftentimes people ask the question, “if baptism is essential for salvation, then why did Jesus allow the thief on the cross to enter paradise without being baptized?” Well, understanding covenants is the key for the answer to this question. If the New Covenant did not start until after the death of Jesus, then they were living during the Old Covenant Law. The Old Covenant Law required sacrifices for one’s sins. Since the thief was living during the Old Covenant Law, he needed a sacrifice for his sins. Jesus became that perfect sacrifice for him. That is why at the birth of the Church in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, the Jews asked how to be saved and Peter stated the requirement for the New Covenant believer:

Acts 2:37-38

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

IS THE OLD COVENANT STILL ACTIVE?

While the Old Covenant ended with the death of Jesus, there are parts of the Old Covenant that are carried into the New Covenant. Jesus said that he didn’t come to put away the Law, but to fulfill the law. He was referring to the Old Testament ceremonial laws.

Matthew 5:17

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Hebrews 10:1

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.”

Hebrews 10:8-10

*“Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” **He takes away the first that He may establish the second.** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant Law through his perfect sacrifice. By fulfilling the Law, all of the ceremonial laws are no longer required, since we have a new covenant law that lives within us by the Spirit of God.

This does not mean that the Old Testament is not for us; it is for us. Those are the scriptures from which the apostles read, studied and preached. They are a “*shadow of the good things to come*” which means they were the building blocks that helped tutor us to help us understand the New Covenant.

Galatians 3:24

“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

There are some laws in the Old Testament that supersede the Old Covenant. We refer to those as the “moral laws.” They are timeless and are required in all covenants regardless of the time in which we live. Laws such as thievery, deceit, lying, sexual sins, cross dressing, and

many more are required—regardless of the times in which we live. The moral laws are based on God’s attributes. Since God does not change, neither do his moral laws. That is why Jesus in the New Testament reiterated the importance of the Ten Commandments. Take a look at the Ten Commandments. The commandment to keep the Sabbath Day holy is fulfilled by the New Testament baptism of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 28:11).

Commandment	God’s Attributes
You shall have no other gods before me.	God is One.
You shall not make idols.	God is One
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.	God’s Name is Holy
Honor your father and mother.	God is our Father
You shall not murder.	God Gives Life
You shall not commit adultery.	God is Faithful
You shall not steal.	God is our Restorer
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	God is Truth
You shall not covet.	God is our Provider

For more Information
Paul Baumeister
P.O. 2366, Elk Grove, CA 95759

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