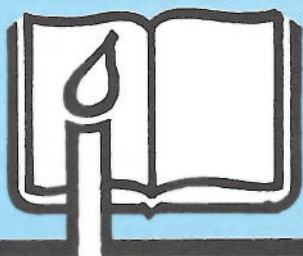


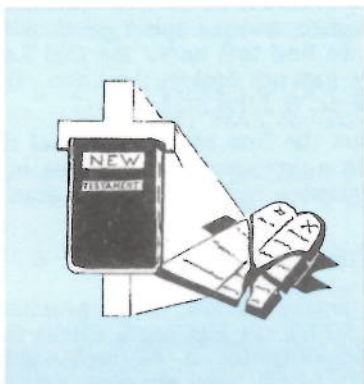
STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



The Two Covenants

Lesson 17

On the page preceding the New Testament books in the American Standard Version of the Bible you will read, "The NEW COVENANT COMMONLY CALLED THE NEW TESTAMENT OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST." It is correct to call the New Testament the New Covenant because the word in the Greek from which "testament" is translated also means "covenant".



When Christ died on the cross He left a testament (or will). This testament was also a covenant between God and man. (A covenant is an agreement or contract between two or more parties.) The Bible recognizes two such covenants that God has made with man. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." Heb. 8:7). In both of these contracts God promised certain blessings to man, conditioned on man's obedience to God's laws.

The First Or Old Covenant

The old covenant was first made with Abraham, and later repeated (except for that portion fulfilled in Christ) in the Law of Moses. In a previous lesson we learned that God promised Abraham (1) to make of him a great nation, (2) to make his name great, (3) to give him a land, (4) to bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him, and (5) to bless all of the nations of the earth in his seed. (Gen. 12:1-7.) As a sign of this agreement God required Abraham and his descendants to be circumcised.

This covenant was not in written form until repeated in the Law of Moses. The Law restated the promises and added regulations to be obeyed by the children of Israel. It included (1) the ten commandments, written on tables of stone (Ex. 34: 27, 28) and (2) the other portions of the Law called the book of the covenant. (Ex. 24:7.) The Law of Moses was given **only** to the Jews, and lasted only until the death of Christ. It was a law of the letter rather than of the spirit, and was sealed by the blood of animals which the Jews offered regularly to God. (Heb. 9:18-21.)

The Old Covenant accomplished several things. (1) It fulfilled the promises made by God to Abraham except that which pertained to Christ. (2) It revealed the true nature of sin. (Rom. 5:20.) (3) It served as a reminder of sin. (Heb. 10:3.) (4) It was a temporary expedient until Christ would replace it with a better covenant by His death on the cross. (Gal. 3:19-25.)

The Second Or New Covenant

The New Covenant is far more important to us than the Old. The prophecy of Jeremiah that God would make a new covenant with His people (Jer. 31:31-34)

was fulfilled when Christ ushered in the New Covenant by shedding His blood on the cross. This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth in his seed. (Gen. 22:18.) Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, blessed all mankind by making salvation from sin possible through His shed blood. The terms of the New Covenant are revealed in the twenty-seven New Testament books.

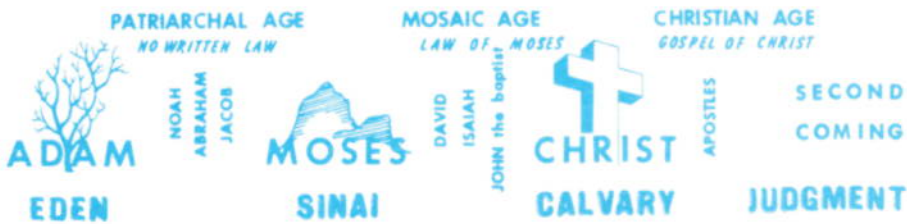
A major difference between the two covenants is that while the first was made only with the Jews, the second is for all who will obey the gospel of Christ. The universal nature of this New Covenant is expressed in Galatians 3:26-29. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Thus the promises of the New Covenant are intended for all who obey Christ, regardless of race, sex, or condition of servitude.

The two covenants differ in other ways. The Old was sealed with the blood of animals, but the New was sealed with the blood of the Son of God. (Heb. 9:11-15.) The New is a law of the spirit, not just a law of the letter as was the Old "But now we are delivered from the law (of Moses), that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. 7:6.) "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (II Cor. 3:6.) As an example of this difference we find that under the Old Law a man who hated his brother but did not kill him had not broken the Law. But under Christ whoever hates his brother is a murderer. (I John 3:15.)

Furthermore, the two covenants differ in that the first served to reveal the enormity of sin, but the second to remove sin. In a previous lesson we saw how this is done. Thus, the New Covenant is a permanent agreement rather than a temporary one as was the Old.

How The New Covenant Replaces the Old

Jesus taught, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matt. 5:17.) In His death Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant. Its purpose having been completed, it was replaced by the New Covenant. Consider these passages: "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." (Heb. 10:9.) "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . . But now we are delivered from



the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. 7:4, 6.) "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (the Law of Moses) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:14.) "For he is our peace . . . having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." (Eph. 2:14, 15.) Surely no one can rightly contend in view of this evidence that we are still under the Old Covenant.

These passages also show the fallacy of those who teach that we must keep the sabbath (or Saturday). This command was a part of the Law of Moses, the

Old Covenant, and was never repeated in the New. We are no more obligated to keep this day than we are to offer animal sacrifices, another commandment found only in the Old Covenant. The first day of the week on which Christians worship (see Acts 20:7 and I Cor. 16:2) is not the sabbath day. But because Jesus arose on this day it is called the Lord's day. (Rev. 1:10.)

Again, the terms of salvation by which we are bound did not apply to those under the Law of Moses. Some ask, "Was not the thief on the cross saved without baptism?" While we do not know that the thief was baptized and while Jesus said to him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," (Luke 23:43) He made this promise before He died while the Old Covenant was yet in effect. "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9:17.) The command of baptism, then, became applicable after the death of Christ, while Jesus made His promise before He died.

The New Covenant is an "everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20) by which God deals with us today. If we obey Him, He will reward us with an eternal home. How God revealed the terms of this covenant through the gospel in the establishment of His church we shall study next.

"Seek and Ye Shall Find"

Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

- a b c 1. While the Law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by:
(a) John the Baptist; (b) Jesus Christ; (c) Peter. (John 1:17.)
- a b c 2. In Hebrews 10:1 the Law is called: (a) a shadow of good things to come; (b) a mirror; (c) a book.
- a b c 3. Paul also called it a: (a) way of life; (b) means of salvation; (c) schoolmaster. (Gal. 3:24.)
- a b c 4. However, the Law made nothing: (a) beautiful; (b) strong; (c) perfect. (Heb. 7:19.)
- a b c 5. Therefore Jesus became the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better: (a) promises; (b) rules; (c) love. (Heb. 8:6.)
- a b c 6. Paul said that whosoever tried to be justified by the Law had fallen from: (a) grace; (b) hope; (c) faith. (Gal. 5:4.)
- a b c 7. The handwriting of ordinances (Law of Moses) has been taken out of the way by Christ and nailed to His: (a) house; (b) boat; (c) cross. (Col. 2:14-17.)
- a b c 8. Christians are: (a) obliged to keep the Law; (b) delivered from the Law; (c) under the Law. (Rom. 7:6.)
- a b c 9. The Law of commandments has by Jesus been: (a) abolished (b) renewed; (c) forgotten. (Eph. 2:13-15.)
- a b c 10 In speaking of the covenants we are told that Christ took the first away that He might establish the: (a) third; (b) second; (c) tenth. (Heb. 10:9.)

Write true or false before each statement:

- 1. A testament is a will.
..... 2. A covenant is an agreement or contract.
..... 3. The ten commandments were written on tables of wood.
..... 4. The Law of Moses was given to many peoples besides the Jews (children of Israel).
..... 5. The command, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8) was a part of the first or Old Covenant.
..... 6. The New Covenant has not replaced the Old Covenant.

Fill in the blanks:

1. Exodus 34: 27, 28 — "And the Lord said unto, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the the words of the covenant, the commandments."

2. Jeremiah 31:31 — "Behold, the come, saith the Lord, that I will make a covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."

3. Hebrews 8:7 — "For if that covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the"

4. Hebrews 9:15 — "And for this cause he is the of the testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the that were under the testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

5. Hebrews 13:20 — "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great of the sheep, through the blood of the covenant . . ."

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