

## The New Covenant verses The Old Covenant

The New Covenant or as some call it, the New Testament, is found in both books of the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is stated in Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 and 10, but never exactly explained. This writing endeavors to make clear what are the New and Old Covenants and to explain the differences and similarities.

### New Covenant Stated

Jeremiah 31:31-34 *“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—<sup>32</sup>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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”* God makes a promise to a divided Israel, Judah being the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, Israel being the other ten tribes who rebelled and installed their own king. So, Jeremiah prophesied of a time when they would be again a united kingdom called Israel. Now, Paul explains in Romans 9:3-7 *“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,<sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;<sup>5</sup> of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.<sup>6</sup> But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,<sup>7</sup> nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.”<sup>8</sup> That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.<sup>9</sup> For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”* The promise of the covenant is made to the true Israel, those that believe.

Jesus said that his blood was shed for the New Covenant. What does this mean? Why his blood? God made a promise. If we will enter into His Covenant with Him, He will write the law into our hearts and minds. This promise is so sure that He shed His own blood to show His creation that it will come to pass and that it can be believed. We are given the Lord’s Supper to remember that He died so that the promise of the New Covenant will happen, not just the forgiveness of sins but also the law written in our hearts.

### The Promise

Hebrews 8 and 10, *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.<sup>8</sup> 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—<sup>9</sup>not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD.<sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.<sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”* God will write the law in our hearts. What does this mean? Does it happen when we are born again? Could God put the law in us without us knowing? In the Old Covenant the commands were written in stone. It could not be erased, only broken. So, He will make His commands part of who we are instead of just something we do when it is convenient for us. It starts at new birth and can happen much faster if we endeavor to understand His law and commands especially the two greatest.

### The Old Covenant

Exodus 19:4-6 *“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. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”* God called Israel out of the nations to be his people. Meaning, a people who would not just obey Him, but that would be like Him, a people who lives in “righteousness and true holiness” as Ephesians 5:24 describes it. And of course, He promises to be the God of this kind of people. This part of the Old and New Covenants are the same and always have been. Peter even quotes Exodus 19 in 1Peter 2:9. The major differences are how the covenants will be fulfilled. Exodus 24:3-8 *“Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.”* As it is written, the people said, “we will do and be obedient”. As we all know they soon forgot their promise and broke the covenant. In the New Covenant God takes our promises and abilities out of the equation and proclaims “I will write the law in their minds and in their hearts”.

### Writing the Law

The way God accomplishes this promise is this. He teaches us to fulfill the law instead of keeping it and making a religion out of it. We know that love fulfills all of the law. The problem is as a new born Christian we don't necessarily know how to love God's way. Some people figure this out just from the two main commands, love God and neighbor. Most people need more teaching and understanding, more details. The love God wants us to understand is the love that comes direct from Him and describes His

character such as mercy and generosity. Love without the fruit of the Spirit falls short of God's standards. What God does is that He teaches through experience and through His word. We get hands on experience from Him and toward our neighbor. The scriptures tell us to practice the kind of love we experience from Him. Ephesians 4:28 tells us, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” When the thief starts doing this process of working and giving he will find out that it is better to give than receive and his heart and desires will begin to change. This is the old and the new, being created in God's image. A thief is who he was and a giver is who he has become. He has to give because mercy is in him. He has to take care of the need because generosity is in him. It will be written in his heart. This is God's remedy for sin. It is how we overcome, taking off the old and putting on the new. This is different from keeping the law, making a list of do's and don'ts that we keep when it is convenient for us. Just as God is love, it is who He is; He wants righteousness, mercy and patience to be who we are. “We are renewed through the knowledge of Him,” Colossians 3:10. You can see that understanding God's character is important.

Each command has its own individual fulfillment designed to change the carnal mind and heart. This process is designed to change the desires of the heart and is what the commandments by themselves cannot do. The commands tell us what not to do and convicts of sin. The fulfillments teach us what to do and how to do it God's way. So, the New Covenant is an agreement between us and the Creator. We are promised if we fulfill the law and walk in the fruit of the Spirit we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh, Galatians 5:14-16. That is our part, to walk in the light and do his will; walking in the Spirit and doing good works. Philippians 2:1-14 tells us with humility and service to work out our salvation and that God is working in us to desire to do his will, not just obeying because we think we need to. This is the difference between keeping the law and grace. With grace God is teaching us to love. The law is forcing us to love.

## Abrahams' Covenant

As it is written in Genesis 12:3 and Galatians 3:8, God promised Abraham "in you all nations will be blessed". This promise was the greatest of many promises spoken to Abraham while he was still in Hebron. As time went on God continued to reveal Himself and also gave more understanding of His promise. Eventually He made an agreement with Abraham and in Genesis 15 God made a blood covenant or agreement with him. Verses 4-6, And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." <sup>5</sup>Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Then, Abraham asked, "Lord God, how shall I know that I shall inherit it?" God commanded him to take 5 different animals and kill and divide their carcasses in two. Afterwards, God sent a smoking furnace and a flaming torch to pass through the midst. This was the answer to Abraham's question. It parallels with what Jesus did when His blood was shed for the New Covenant. It was God's side of the agreement. A proof that he meant what He said.

In Genesis 17 God gave Abraham his side of the agreement, circumcision. As it has been said, Abraham believed first, then after the act of circumcision was required. This was an act of faith. It represented circumcision of the heart as revealed in Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6 and Jeremiah 4:4. Remember what God told Abraham in chapter 17:1, "I am God Almighty, walk before me and be upright. This parallels with baptism in the New Covenant. Colossians 2:11-12 refers to this comparing circumcision with baptism. Baptism is an act of faith. It testifies to everyone and God that we will begin to put off the old and put on the new. It is the handshake between us and God to agree to let Him work in us and write the law in our hearts and that we will walk in His ways.

Now, Abraham was counted righteous when he believed, just as we are, but there is more to the story. When he offered up his son Isaac he was doing a work to match his belief. James 2 tells us that Abraham became righteous when he did this. James is telling us to do the same. If we believe

we are forgiven we need to forgive. We need to walk in the understanding God has given us, doing what we believe. When we first believe, God counts us righteous, then He works in us to make us righteous. You may have heard someone say we cannot become righteous, that is why Jesus died for us. That is not true; Jesus died for us because we were unrighteous and was raised from the dead so we could become righteous. Read 1 John 3:7. How else could we be recreated in His image, the image of Christ, as Paul describes it in Ephesians 4:24, "in righteousness and true holiness"?

It is not hard to see that Abraham's Covenant is both the old and the new. Of course, the Old is done away in Christ and the New is fulfilled in Christ. According to Galatians 3 the promise of Abraham was made to Christ, but don't forget Isaac had sons and descendants just as Christ has sons and daughters. If the covenant was only to Him why would verse 7 call those who believe children of Abraham?

We all believe that God has and will forgive our sins. This is only part of the New Covenant. He also wants to transform us and to let us be part of His kingdom. We need to do our part which is to walk in His ways, fulfilling the law. It starts with baby steps and leads to becoming sons and daughter.