

# A New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Most people who have read, or even thumbed through the Bible will know that there are two major sections in it: the Old and New Testaments. In light of this some have asked, “Why is there an Old and a New Testament? Why is there not just one?” It is sad to say that many who have sought to answer this question have missed the mark as to what God intended by giving us two testaments or covenants. Or, they have simply failed to answer the question altogether. We see evidence of this today where people who claim to be of the one true church try to justify their religious practices by using the Law of Moses.

If we are “rightly divide the word of truth” as Paul gives exhortation in 2 Tim. 2:15, we must strive to understand the true meaning of the two testaments and their purposes. Jeremiah sheds some light on this issue in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Beginning with this passage, let us see what God has said is the purpose of these two covenants

## The First Covenant

According to our text the first covenant is referring to the one that God made with Israel when He delivered them out of Egypt (See Deut 5:2, 3; 4:13). A study of Exodus through Deuteronomy will reveal the nature, content and requirements of that covenant. But rather than going into detail let us just consider the Psalmist’s comments concerning this first covenant. “*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple*” (Ps. 19:7). We find that this law was indeed given by God and it was perfect. The apostle Paul agrees that the old law was also righteous; “*For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them'*” (Rom. 10:5). So here we have a law that was given by God that is perfect and righteous. Moses himself said that those who walk by those things (the things in the first law) shall live by them. So we must ask, if the old law or covenant was perfect and righteous, why would God want to bring us a new covenant that would not be like this old covenant? Though this question as confused many “religions” out there if we search the scriptures we will find that God offers us a very simple answer to this question. From the moment Adam and Eve sinned it has been God’s purpose to save man from sin; to bring us to Him as His people (Eph. 3:8-11). With this goal in mind God established His covenants with men: With Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then He established a covenant which separated those under the covenant from all other people on earth; a covenant which made its subjects God’s holy people. Thus it is written, “*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*” (Ex. 19:5). Again we will note that the Psalmist describes this covenant or law as perfect. But if it was so great and perfect, why would God seek to make a new covenant not like this first one?

Paul answers this question for us in Rom. 8:3 where he writes, “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son...*” But we ask the same question again, if the law was so perfect, what could it not do? We know that God’s purpose is to

do away with sin. So, He gave the old law which clearly defined sin for mankind. *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet’”* (Rom. 7:7). So the old law showed men exactly how to live a perfect life before God, but in spite of this there was one problem that remained in light of God’s ultimate goal – What if a person were to sin against the law? You see, though the old law was perfect when men failed to keep that law perfectly it gave no way of forgiveness for those who sinned against it. That might not have been that big of a problem, except for the fact that *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23). The law was perfect, yes, but only so long as the person who was under it kept it perfectly. Remember again that God’s purpose is to free men from sin and to destroy sin. The old law could not accomplish this. *“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...For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Heb. 10:1, 4). So what plan did God have for preventing man’s utter demise because of sin? He gives us Jeremiah 31:31-34.

### **A Second / New Covenant**

God knew that His first covenant would not offer salvation to mankind. Its purpose was not to bring us salvation, but to show us how sinful we really are and how much we need truly need His grace (Gal. 3:19-25). Therefore He promised through Jeremiah, *“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers”* (Jer. 31:31, 32). How is this new covenant different from the old? He states in our text, *“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. 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”* (Vs. 33-34). Problem solved. Where the first covenant was lacking, the New Covenant was perfected. Therefore the Hebrew writer says, *“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”* (Heb. 9:15). This new covenant which would bring the forgiveness of sins was ratified in Jesus Christ as it says, *“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions...”* (see also vs. 16, 23-27). And God be praised that this new and better covenant that Jesus established for us on the cross brought to us much, much more than just the forgiveness of sins.

### **A Better Covenant**

This new covenant, which was prophesied of by Jeremiah and established in Christ, brings us the true blessings promised to Abraham, in that the scriptures say, *“...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* (Gen. 12:3). Therefore it says in Jeremiah that in the new covenant...

- ✓ Vs. 33 – God will put His law on our minds and write it in our hearts, rather than simply having it set in a book or engraved on stones (2 Cor. 3:3).
- ✓ I will be their God and they shall be my people. Not like the Old Testament where men, though they were of God’s people, did not revere Him as God but sought other gods (Rom. 1:24, 25).

- ✓ Vs. 34 – We shall all know God. Notice, a requisite of being a part of God’s people is to know God. How is this possible? Because only those who come to know God and love Him can enter into this covenant with Him (John 17:3).
- ✓ He will forgive our iniquities and remember them no more.

Not only these, but when the new covenant is compared to the Old, we have many things which are much better.

- Heb. 1:1-4: We have a better mediator, who is in the presence of God in heaven.
- Heb. 7:19: We have a better hope through which we can draw near to God.
- Heb. 8:6: We have better promises (spiritual rather than physical).
- Heb. 9:23: We have vessels of our ministry which are of a true, heavenly form for which the old covenant only provided a copy or shadow.
- 2 Cor. 3:7-11: We have a covenant that is much more glorious than the old, for as we noted God knew that the Old covenant had to be replaced, therefore it was passing away, but now the covenant that we have in Christ Jesus is eternal and shall never pass away!

Finally, in this New Covenant all those blessings which were promised by God through the ages have been given to those who are in Christ, whereby it says, “*Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...*” (Eph. 1:3-14). What then is the application we can make from all of these things that will help us better our lives? “*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’*” (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

### **Conclusion**

Have you entered into this covenant with God whereby He will remember you sins no more? For, if you have not been baptized into Christ you must understand that your sins are with you and they will still be with you on the judgment day. The blood of the new covenant has not made you free from that. However, because God does not desire that you perish He sent His Son who brought to us a gospel that offers forgiveness of those sins. Therefore Jesus said, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28-30). Will you come to Jesus whereby you can enter into this covenant relationship with God?

If you are a Christians you need to understand Heb. 10:26-31. If you are in sin but desire to be saved from this faith, you can still come to Jesus who is our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). Be zealous and repent! Walk worthy of the calling of your covenant with God (Eph. 4:1).

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