

Christian Study

Lesson 260

Be Light

Focusing on Church beyond Sunday

A Closer Look At the New Covenant

The Glory of the New Covenant

"The Law was written in letters on stone. Even though it was a way of serving God, it led to death. But even that way of serving God came with glory. And even though the glory was fading, the people of Israel couldn't look at Moses' face very long. **8** Since all of that is true, won't the work of the Holy Spirit be even more glorious? **9** The Law that sentences people to death is glorious. How much more glorious is the work of the Spirit! His work makes people right with God. **10** The glory of the old covenant is nothing compared with the far greater glory of the new. **11** The glory of the old is fading away. How much greater is the glory of the new! It will last forever. **12** Since we have that kind of hope, we are very bold. **13** We are not like Moses. He used to cover his face with a veil. That was to keep the people of Israel from looking at his face while the brightness was fading away. **14** But their minds were made stubborn. To this very day, the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. The veil has not been removed. Only faith in Christ can take it away. **15** To this very day, when the Law of Moses is read, a veil covers the minds of those who hear it. **16** But when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. **17** Now the Lord is the Holy Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, freedom is also there. **18** Our faces are not covered with a veil. We all display the Lord's glory. We are being changed to become more like him so that we have more and more glory. And the glory comes from the Lord, who is the Holy Spirit."

The Reason for the New Covenant

Most everyone knows about the Ten Commandments. Hollywood had a movie with the same name a number of years ago and if you grew up attending church on a regular basis, you no doubt were encouraged to memorize them and use them as a guide for life. So, like most of us, you tried to live up to the commandments. You gave it your best. How well did you do in keeping all of them?

The commandments were the basis of the Old Covenant God established with Israel. Israel gave it her best shot to live up to these righteous requirements. Today, we don't have to read too much of the Old Testament to realize that Israel failed over and over. As a matter of fact, they never made it pass the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3 There is certainly nothing wrong with the commandments. The Bible says they are "holy and righteous and good." Romans 7:12. So why is it that God ushered a New Covenant? Let's take a closer look.

Hebrews 8:7-8

"For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. ⁸ But God found fault with the people and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

According to the above verses, we see that there was nothing wrong with the first covenant but there was something wrong with the people. They were not able to keep the laws, and we also see how God promised to give them a new one. The writer of Hebrews is reminding his readers about the promise God made with the people of Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-36. God had planned this to happen. This old regulation was going to be set aside and a new one put in its place by Jesus to enable believers to draw near to God. Let us read what Hebrews 7:18-19 has to say about this. "The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless **19** (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God." It was not possible to draw near to God under the Old Covenant. God was feared and to many He was a God of punishment and that made the Old weak. But with the New Covenant, believers are able to draw near to God and call Him "Father."

Israel and the Law

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh's army, they settled in the desert near Mt. Sinai. There God established a covenant with the people. Exodus chapter 19 and 20 record the terms and conditions of that covenant given to Moses. The responsibility of the people was to fully obey God by keeping His commandments. If they do, they would be God's treasured possession, and they would be God's kingdom of priests and a holy nation. After Moses set before them the terms and conditions of the covenant, their response was "we will do everything the LORD has said." On two other occasions, Moses read the book of the covenant to the people of Israel in Exodus chapter 24 verses 3 and 7. On both occasions the peoples answers were the same, "we will do everything the Lord has said" Their response indicated that they believed they could live up to the requirements of all these laws.

We see evidence of the fact that they were unable to keep the commandments. While Moses was away talking with God the people gathered around Aaron the brother of Moses and said "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." Did Aaron also believe that Moses had gone for too long and wanted power or did he think Moses was not coming back? Verses 2-7 of Exodus 32 explains what Aaron and the Israelites did afterwards. A god made with human hands was put in place of the God who took them out of the land of Egypt. The people did not live up to their promise to God to fulfill the terms of the covenant and God called them "stiff-necked people." In the New Testament, the apostle Paul put it this way, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" **Romans 3:23**

REMINDER "All means all, that's all, all means"

Based on the truth that all have sinned, it was necessary for God to usher in a new Covenant for the salvation of all believers.

The Purpose of the Law

There would have been no reason at all for God to establish a New Covenant if there had not been a problem with the first covenant. As we learned, we were the problem. Israel could not keep the terms of the Old Covenant, and neither can we. So what is the purpose of the law? Paul posed this question in his letter to the Galatians "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. **22** But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. **23** Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should

be revealed.²⁴ So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." **Galatians 3:19, 22-25**

The law is like a mirror that can reveal that your face is dirty, but does not have the ability or power to clean it. It is an x-ray machine that reveals different diseases in different people but does not have the power to heal them. "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." **Romans 3:19-20**. Here we have it brothers and sisters in Christ, the law speaks to those who are under it to keep their mouth shut and be held accountable to God not to man. According to these verses it is safe to conclude that if someone is truly under the law they are not saved, because salvation does not come by observing the law but by the free gift of grace given to us by Jesus Christ. In God's sight no one will be declared righteous by observing the law.

The apostle Paul was fully equipped by God to be a minister of this New Covenant as we have seen in most of his letters to the different churches he had planted. Here is what he had to say to the believers in Corinth. "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." **2 Corinthians 3:5-6**

Q In your own words, why did God usher in the new Covenant?

A

Q Has the law fulfilled its purpose in your life?

A

We are the reason God ushered in the New Covenant. It is not that the Old Covenant was bad. It is just that we could not live up to our own end of the bargain. How could we? It is impossible for anyone to live up to the righteous requirements of the Law. But God never intended for us to do so. He gave us the Law, or the Old Covenant, to show us our need for salvation; to show us our need for a new and better covenant, one that had better promises and provisions.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

It is no secret, what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

Our mission is to help people find strength and security on the foundation that can never be shaken, cracked or shattered. This foundation is the remarkable truth of God's unconditional love and His indisputable grace experienced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The critics of Christianity have launched a full attack to discredit the person and works of Jesus Christ and the reliability of His word. We cannot be silent anymore. Let us as children of light, stand firm in the faith, because He who has taken us this far will never forsake us. You are called Christians, be careful of that name. Let not our Lord Jesus Christ be blasphemed on your account

Believe this, "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live."

Keep It Simple

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

If you have any questions, comments or you know anybody else who will benefit from this study please feel free to give us their email address and they will be added to our mailing list to receive weekly lessons. The email address is santigiemando1@yahoo.com,

Remember: A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle (Ephesians 5:8)

Let's go light another candle!