

The New Covenant
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GFC – 2/17/19

We are in a sermon series called All Things New. Today I am preaching on The New Covenant.

In Luke 22:20 – the Bible says that during His last supper with His disciples, Jesus took a cup and said:

This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.

The fact that Jesus tells us that there is a new covenant, means there must be an old covenant. In fact, our Bibles are divided into Old and New Testaments, which is another way of saying old and new covenant.

There are many covenants in the Bible, but the main ones are:

- The covenant God made with Noah not to flood the earth again
- The covenant God made with Abraham that through his seed the whole earth would be blessed
- The covenant God made with David that there would always be someone in his genealogy on the throne – and that would be Jesus!
- The covenant God made with Moses and the nation of Israel.
This is what is called the Old Covenant
- The New Covenant God made through the blood of Jesus Christ.

There is a theme woven throughout the entire Bible. If you understand that theme, you understand the Bible and the plan of God. If you don't understand this theme – none of it will make sense to you. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 says:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Paul says that the message of God is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The scarlet thread running throughout the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation – is the blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross.

In the very beginning - when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden - God shed the blood of animals and covered Adam and Eve with their skins – this pointed to the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

In the Exodus from Egypt, when God told His people to kill a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts of their houses – that Passover Lamb pointed to the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

1 Corinthians 5:7 says:

For indeed Christ, our Passover Lamb, was sacrificed for us.

Whenever the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled the blood of a lamb on the mercy seat – that pointed to the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

In fact, every single blood sacrifice in the Old Testament pointed to the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. And that scarlet thread runs all the way through the Bible to the book of Revelation when John had a vision of heaven and a revelation of Jesus as a Lamb that had been slain.

And John said in Revelation 5:9-10 that he saw angels -
And they sang a new song: "You are worthy... because You were slain, and with Your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Do you understand the message of the Bible today?
 Do you understand that God loves you so much He sent His Son to die for you?

Twice in 1 Corinthians Paul tells us: *You were bought with a price.*
 1 Peter 1:18-19 tells us what that price was.

You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
 Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price for you: His own blood.

Why blood? Think about it. The Most High God who knows everything. He's all powerful. He's the Mastermind behind all of creation. Why did He choose something as gory as blood in His plan to save mankind from their sins? Surely being who He is, He could have come up with a different plan.

Why blood? Because Lev. 17:11 tells us that God has designed all living creatures in such a way that their life is in their blood. Your life is in your blood. If you lose your blood, you lose your life. Blood carries life-giving oxygen and nutrients into our cells. It also carries the impurities out.

In the same way, the blood of Jesus brings eternal life to our hearts and carries out death when He forgives us and washes our sins away. Life is in the blood! There is life and power in the blood of Jesus.

It's important to understand this because everything we receive from God is based on the blood of Christ. Do you want forgiveness? It's in the blood. Do you want salvation? It's in the blood.

Do you want freedom? It's in the blood.

Do you want healing? It's in the blood.

Do you want power?

There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

That's why Jesus said in Luke 22:20 – *This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.*

A covenant is a binding agreement between two people (like a marriage covenant, between two nations (like an alliance or treaty) or between people and God. Here's the interesting thing: the Hebrew word for covenant comes from a root word which means "to cut." In ancient times, when people made covenants, it was said that they cut covenant.

Why cut? Because part of the ritual was to cut a sacrificial animal in half on the ground, and then both parties would walk a figure 8 between the pieces to cut covenant. This shows that the shedding of blood was essential to covenant.

It also helps us understand one of the strangest passages in the Bible. In Genesis 15 God made a covenant with Abraham. He told him his offspring would be as countless as the stars in the sky. Genesis 15:6-18 says:

Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness. He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" So the Lord said to him, "Bring Me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." Abram brought all these to Him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ...When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land."

These verses show what it means to cut a covenant. This solemn ritual involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The persons making the covenant would sacrifice several animals and divide the bodies, placing the halves opposite each other on the ground.

Then the parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrifices in declaration that, if they failed to keep their word, they deserved the same fate as the animals. We see this in Jeremiah 34:18 which says:

The men who have violated My covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before Me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces.

Violating a covenant was serious! But there was something very different about Abraham's experience of cutting covenant.

He killed the animals, laid them on the ground, and spent the rest of the day fighting off the birds of prey that were attracted to the flesh and blood. That is symbolic of Satan and his demons wanting to steal God's word and God's covenant from us.

In the Parable of the Sower Jesus said that when a farmer sows seed, birds swoop down to eat it. Jesus explained what this meant in Matthew 13:18-19

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

That's why some people have a very hard time holding on to revelation. They receive it, but they cannot hold on to it because the enemy comes in quickly to deceive them. That's why we must learn spiritual warfare!

When the sun went down, Abraham fell into a deep sleep; and then *a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.* Notice that Abraham did not walk between the pieces of the animals. Instead, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces.

In the Bible, fire is a symbol of the presence of God. So, this verse is saying that God alone passed between the parts of the sacrifices! That's because God takes the sole initiative in covenant making and fulfillment. It was God who made promises to Abraham, not Abraham who made promises to God. There were no conditions attached; the covenant of grace came from the generous heart of God.

The New Covenant is also a covenant of grace – which contrasts with the Old Covenant, which was a covenant of law and works. When God was making this covenant with the people of Israel, Exodus 24:7-8 says that Moses gathered the people.

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

They promised to obey God, yet when Moses went up the mountain to ratify this covenant with God, they were breaking the law before He even came back down. Much of the Old Testament is the story of God's people breaking covenant, reaping disastrous results, and then repenting. This happened over and over.

That's why a new covenant was needed!

Hebrews 8:6-13 says:

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers 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 make with the house 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 a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, '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." By calling this covenant "new," He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

In this passage we see that God found fault with the Old Covenant. Why? Because man did not have the power to keep it. The law was given to reveal our sin and lead us to Christ!

The new covenant was given to produce very different results than the old. That's why it has better promises! Here are some of the benefits of the New Covenant.

1- The New Covenant is internal, not external

What do I mean by that? Hebrews 8:10 says –

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

The old covenant was based on external obedience to commands. But the new covenant is internal because it gives us a new heart and the power to obey. The old covenant did not change hearts or give any power.

2- The New Covenant is Based on Relationship with God, not Rules

Hebrews 8:10-11 says: *I will be their God, and they will be My people. They will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.*

The old covenant causes people to fear approaching a holy God. Therefore, they never really knew Him. Under the old covenant, they knew about God. But the new covenant enables us to truly know God through Jesus Christ!

We don't fear approaching God because the blood of the new covenant gives us boldness with God.

Hebrews 10:19-22 says:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

I remember when I would get in trouble as a kid and my Mom would say to me, “Boy, you just wait until your father gets home.” At those times I was not anxious for my dad to come home from work. I would be like Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden! But just like God found them, my dad would find me. And I would pay the price for my wrong doing.

And I think some of us carry that fearful attitude over to our relationship with God. We hear a voice in our heads saying, “Just wait until Father God finds out about this. You’re in BIG trouble.”

And that attitude causes us to run and hide from God. But we don’t have to hide from God. We don’t have to fear the presence of God. That’s the old way. There’s a new way. There’s a new covenant. There’s a new and living way. That way is to approach God with boldness. How do we do that? By the blood of Jesus.

3- The New Covenant Results in Forgiveness

The old covenant was a ministry of condemnation, but the new covenant is a ministry of grace, mercy and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus! Hebrews 8:12 says: *For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.*

Aren’t you glad for the new covenant? Aren’t you glad that when we repent of our sins and place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and given new hearts? We are new creations in Christ!

God we are under the new covenant, not the old! The new covenant is not just an updated, improved version of the old! It is totally different!

There are several Greek words for our word “new.”

The word *neos* means new in respect to time.

The word *kainos* means new as in something that never existed before.

It’s the difference between a new car and a totally new invention of something we’ve never seen before.

The new covenant is *kainos* – something that did not exist before has now come to exist. It’s not an improvement or an adaption, it’s a whole new covenant. And when the new arrived, the old was totally wiped out!

There are many truths we can learn from the Old Covenant, but many people seem to want to live under the old covenant rather than the new.

But the new covenant is so much better!

The old covenant was based on outward obedience to the Law.
But the new covenant is based in an inner change of heart.

The Old Covenant was about rules, but the New Covenant is about relationship!

The Old Covenant was about outwardly conforming to the Law, but the New Covenant is about inward heart change.

The Old Covenant enslaves, but the New Covenant sets us free!

The Old Covenant exposes sin, but the New Covenant forgives sin!

The Old Covenant brought a curse, but the New Covenant redeems us from the curse!

The Old Covenant ministered death, but the New Covenant ministers life!

The Old Covenant ministered condemnation, but the New Covenant ministers righteousness!

The Old Covenant is based on laws and works, but the New Covenant is based on grace and faith!

The Old Covenant was written on stone tablets, but the New Covenant is written on our hearts!

The Old Covenant remembers sin, but the New Covenant forgets sin!

The Old Covenant was powerless to save, but the New Covenant saves us to the uttermost!

The old covenant was based on what man did, but the new covenant is based on what Jesus did.

The Old Covenant is based the blood of animals, but the New Covenant is based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ!

The Old Covenant offered many sacrifices, but the New Covenant offers one sacrifice – Jesus on the cross!

The Old Covenant had many mediators, but under the New Covenant there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus!

The Old Covenant was only for Israel, but the New Covenant is for everyone everywhere who will repent of their sins and place their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross!

Have you done that?

Hebrews 9:15 says:

That is why Jesus is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed...