



**LESSON TWO**

*ESD. 2017*

**BETTER  
COVENANT**

— LESSON 2 —  
A BETTER COVENANT

*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

– Ephesians 5:17

For many, the Bible can be difficult to understand; however, as Ephesians 5:17 shows, God fully intends for us to know His Word. To do so, it is first necessary to differentiate the Old Covenant (Old Testament or the Law of Moses) from the New Covenant (New Testament).

In reference to religion, a covenant is simply defined as an agreement that directs and guides the lives of God's people. Although both the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God and profitable "... for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 15:4), we must abide by the correct covenant lest we live contrary to God's will.

In this lesson, we will search the Scriptures to explore the following:

The distinctiveness of  
the two covenants

The abolition of the  
Old Covenant

The establishment  
and purpose of the  
New Covenant

Christians today are  
under the  
New Covenant

## THE TWO COVENANTS

Extolling the covenant that Jesus ratified by His blood, Hebrews states:

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second (Hebrews 8:6-7)

In Hebrews 9:8, the first covenant is identified as the Law given by God to guide Israel, "... 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." When Israel was led out of the bondage of Egypt she eventually found herself at Mount Sinai. On this special mountain, God delivered His Law to Moses; Exodus 19:16-19 tells the memorable story.

Later, Exodus 31:18 records, "And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." Thus, the first covenant was given to Moses to guide and direct the Jews. It was the giving of this law that provided the Ten Commandments. They have been respected by Bible-believing people ever since.

The second covenant was the law given by God to guide Christians. Hebrews teaches:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 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” (Hebrews 8:7-8).

The reason God gave a second covenant, the New Covenant, was that the first was incomplete by design in that it did not have a provision for absolute forgiveness. In Hebrews 8:13, we find, “In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

These verses undeniably speak to the replacing of the first, imperfect covenant with the second, better covenant, which was mediated by Jesus Christ. Speaking of the two covenants in Galatians 4:22-28, Paul presents an allegory concerning the two sons of Abraham and the two covenants.

- The first covenant is represented by Hagar the bondswoman and her son, Ishmael. Since Hagar was a servant, any child born to her would also be a servant. Likewise, the Law given by Moses (the Old Covenant) kept people under servitude.
- The second covenant – typified by the freewoman Sarah and her son of promise, Isaac – represents the freedom from a servitude to sin that was accomplished when the New Covenant was ratified and became effective for human redemption.



What is a covenant? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How many covenants are there? \_\_\_\_\_

The covenant which Jesus is the mediator of is called “a \_\_\_\_\_ covenant.”

“For if that \_\_\_\_\_ covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a \_\_\_\_\_.” (Hebrews 8:7)

The first covenant was given upon Mount \_\_\_\_\_.

The first covenant was given shortly after Israel left the bondage of \_\_\_\_\_.

“And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of \_\_\_\_\_, written with the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.” (Exodus 31:18)

Because of the fault found with the first covenant God gave a second or \_\_\_\_\_ covenant.

## **THE ABOLITION OF THE FIRST COVENANT**

To begin this section of our study, it should be re-emphasized that God never intended for Israel to live under Moses' Law indefinitely. The most notable fault with the Law was that it contained no provision for the absolute forgiveness of sin. Paul addresses this issue in Galatians 3:21-22. He writes:

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would

have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

In Hebrews 9:12-14, the author explains in greater detail this grave shortcoming of the Old Law:

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

In the Old Covenant, the high priest offered annual sacrifices for yearly atonement. Thanks be to God that Jesus, through the establishment of the New Covenant, obtained eternal redemption for humanity: “... having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).” Thus, the once-for-all atoning blood of Jesus blotted out the “handwriting of requirements” (the Law) written on the stone tablets.

Jesus accomplished this great blessing for mankind with His death on the cross. Paul addresses this subject in his letter to the Ephesians.

... having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity (Ephesians 2:15-16).

These verses clearly show that the first covenant, given through Moses to guide the Jews, was made ineffective when Jesus died on the cross. With the establishment of the new covenant, Ephesians 4:4 states we could all be “one body” composed of both Jews and Gentiles. This means that regardless of one’s nationality, anyone can, upon proper obedience, become a member of God’s family. This is a wonderful blessing that, before the cross, only a select few could enjoy.



In Romans 7:1-4, Paul explains the marriage law and uses it as an analogy to differentiate between the first and second covenants:

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

- As long as the husband lives the wife is bound to that marriage relationship.
- It is only when the husband dies that the wife is free to remarry.
- If the wife remarries while the husband is still alive, she becomes guilty of adultery.

Likewise, the passage teaches,

- By the death of Jesus Christ, we are free from the Law (the first covenant) and married to another (the second covenant).
- The Christian is dead to Moses and the Old Covenant and is married to Christ and the New Covenant.
- One is not allowed to be married to two people at the same time, nor is one allowed to live under two different covenants at the same time. If one is married to both covenants at the same time, he is guilty of spiritual adultery.

Hebrews 8:13 highlights the change in covenants: **“In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”** The term “old” is defined as “worn out, to declare obsolete.”

The wiping “out the handwriting of requirements” was accomplished through Jesus by \_\_\_\_\_ it to the \_\_\_\_\_. (Colossians 2:14)

“Having abolished in His \_\_\_\_\_ the enmity, that is, the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” (Ephesians 2:15-16)

How many men can a woman be married to at once? \_\_\_\_\_

“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the \_\_\_\_\_ through the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, that you may be married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.” (Romans 7:4)



## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT

As was mentioned above, when the Old Covenant was put to death, the New Covenant was established. Hebrews 9:14-17 thoroughly explains this process:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 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. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

This law (New Testament) went into effect when the Testator or Lawgiver died. In modern vernacular we say, "A last testament or will goes into effect when the will giver dies." Thus, the will of Jesus and the good news of the coming of the kingdom all became effective with His death on the cross.

If one desires to live under the Old Covenant, he abandons the promise of God to provide forgiveness. Any Bible student must recognize the significance of this promise – eternity is at stake and living in accordance to the New Covenant is of utmost importance.



Jesus Christ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the New Testament.  
(Hebrews 9:15).

“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the \_\_\_\_\_  
of the testator. For a testament is in \_\_\_\_\_ after men are dead, since it  
has no power at all while the testator \_\_\_\_\_.” (Hebrews 9:16-17)

“For this is My blood of the new \_\_\_\_\_, which is shed for  
many for the \_\_\_\_\_ of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)



## CHRISTIANS TODAY ARE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

In our quest to understand the statement made by the author of Hebrews, “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6), we have noticed several fundamental truths.

- There are two great covenants given in God’s Word.
- It was, according to Scripture, the plan of God to abolish the first (Old Covenant) to make way for the establishment of the second (New Covenant).
- The Old Covenant lacks the ability to provide forgiveness of sin; however, the New Covenant, which faithful Christians are now living under, provides the means for our sins to be forgiven.
- If we desire to please God according to His will, we must make sure we are living in harmony with His **effective** covenant – the New Covenant (New Testament).

As we seek answers in matters such as doctrine, worship, and salvation, recognizing the difference between the Old and New Covenants is a major step towards “understanding what the will of the Lord is.” With this foundational knowledge, we can avoid much of today’s religious confusion, and we can see more clearly what the Bible teaches for us today!

Name

Email

Address

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