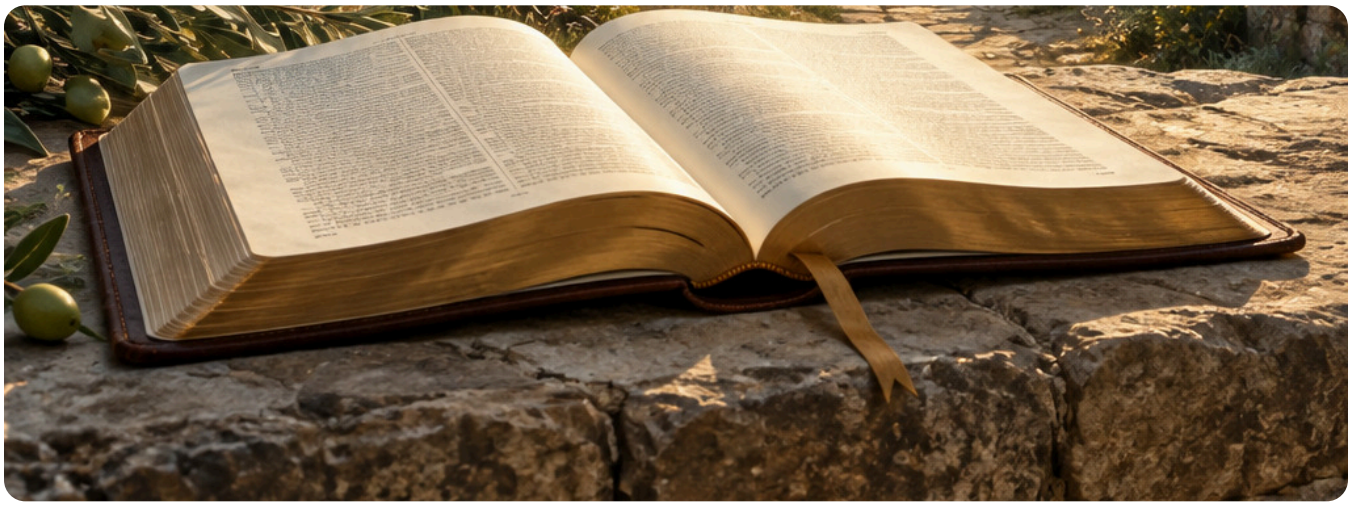
Lesson 10 - The Two Covenants



The word “covenant” can either mean a contract, an agreement between two parties, or a will, a promise made by one person but benefiting others. The Bible describes two opposite methods of salvation labeling them as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was a contract made between God and the Jews, while the New Covenant is a will, a promise made by God that He would redeem mankind through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Old Covenant was first introduced to the Jews of the Exodus. This covenant was a contract, an agreement between them and God. In this contract, God spelled out His laws, especially the Ten Commandments, and in return, the Jews promised to keep all of them. The agreement was that if they obeyed, they could live; and if they disobeyed, they would have to die.

However, when God gave His laws to the Jews and entered into the Old Covenant, He knew they could not keep them. The whole purpose of the Old Covenant, based on man’s promise and performance, was to make them aware that they were sinners in need of a Savior, thus preparing their hearts to accept the New Covenant, God’s promise of salvation in Christ.

Since sin is a deceiver, many make the same mistake as the Jews and enter into an Old Covenant relationship with God, thinking they can be saved by promising Him to be good. In this study we will examine the two Covenants and see why the Old Covenant can never save us. Our only hope of making it to heaven is the New Covenant: salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in what God obtained for us in Jesus Christ.

1. How did the Jews respond when they heard the Book of the Covenant? Exodus 24:7

The Book of the Covenant read to the Jews of the Exodus was the "Torah," the first five books of the Old Testament given to them through Moses. When they agreed to keep these laws, they entered into what is known as the First or Old Covenant.

2. Why was it necessary for God to introduce the New Covenant? Jeremiah 31:31, 32

The reason God entered into the Old Covenant of salvation by works of the law was to convince man of his need for a Savior. Once this purpose is fulfilled, the New Covenant of grace becomes meaningful.

3. What did God promise to do under the New Covenant? Jeremiah 31:33

Putting His laws in our hearts simply means He will create in us new desires that are in harmony with His laws (see Ezekiel 36:26, 27). Such desires are created in our minds because of a heartfelt appreciation for the forgiveness of sins and the hope of salvation obtained for us in Christ.

4. What phrase does Paul use to describe being under the Old Covenant? Romans 3:19

According to Paul, all humanity has failed to obey God's law and therefore stands guilty before God. To be "under the law," however, is not limited to being under the condemnation of the law. For example, the Galatian Christians desired to be "under the law" (Galatians 4:21). Of course, they did not desire to be under its condemnation; rather, they desired to be ruled or dominated by the law's demand to "obey and you will live, disobey and you will die" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

5. What do we become conscious of through the law? Romans 3:20

The law has no power to save. All it can do is make us conscious of our sin problem (see Romans 3:23). This is an important step as a means of accepting God's promise of salvation in Christ, the New Covenant - salvation by grace alone, through faith alone (see Romans 3:24).



Read carefully for the message that is repeated 3 times in this one verse!

6. Why is justification by faith in Christ our only hope of salvation? Galatians 2:16

7. What do Abraham's two sons and their mothers represent? Galatians 4:22-26

The two sons of Abraham and their mothers are excellent examples of the two covenants. Ishmael, Abraham's son through the slave woman Hagar, represents the Old Covenant because he was born as a result of human effort. Isaac, Abraham's son through his wife Sarah, was born as a result of God's promise (see Romans 4:16-22). Ishmael, therefore, represents salvation by works - the Old Covenant, while Isaac represents the New Covenant - salvation by grace alone, which is experienced by faith alone.

8. To which of the two sons of Abraham does Paul link Christians? Galatians 4:28

A true Christian is one who has realized that it is impossible to be saved by works of the law and has therefore accepted Christ as his or her Savior. Such a person depends entirely on God's grace offered in Jesus Christ for salvation. This is what it means to be under the New Covenant - righteousness is attained by faith alone in Jesus Christ, rather than by works of the law.

9. What must we give up if we are to experience salvation by grace alone? Galatians 4:29-31

Salvation by works and salvation by grace are two opposite methods of salvation that cannot be reconciled. It has to be one or the other. When we by faith accept God's gift of salvation through

His Son, Jesus Christ, we cannot hold on to any of our own selfrighteousness. The gospel is not "I plus Christ" but "Not I, but Christ" (see Philippians 3:3-9).

10. What happens when law-keeping is added to justification by faith as a means of salvation? Galatians 5:4

You cannot have it both ways: (1) admitting on the one hand that you are 100 percent sinful and therefore cannot make any contribution towards your salvation; and then (2) on the other hand, adding your own good works or law-keeping towards your salvation. Our only hope of salvation is through the righteousness of Christ and nothing else (read Galatians 5:5, 6).

11. Why is the New Covenant called a better covenant? Hebrews 8:6

The Old Covenant is based on our human promises, which are like ropes of sand. On the other hand, the New Covenant is based on God's promises, which never fail. That is why the New Covenant is a better covenant.

12. What reason does the Bible give for the need of the New Covenant? Hebrews 8:7

13. Where in the Old Covenant did the fault lie? Hebrews 8:8, 9

The fault with the Old Covenant was not in God's law, but in the inability of the Jews to keep it. This is the very purpose of the Old Covenant, that is, to convince us that we are sinners in need of a Savior (see John 8:32-34).

14. Does the New Covenant do away with the law? Hebrews 8:10

Nowhere in Scripture do we find that the cross of Christ did away with the law (see Matthew 5:17-19). On the contrary, the law is impressed on our hearts in the New Covenant. While the law cannot save sinners it is still the standard for Christian living (see Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:13, 14).

15. How does Paul contrast the law with his own sinful nature? Romans 7:14

God's holy law and sinful human nature are incompatible. Only after we discover this fact, through much failure on our part, are we able to appreciate Christ and His saving grace (read Romans 7:15-25).

16. According to Jesus, what sets us free from our slavery to sin? John 8:32

No human method is able to set us free from our slavery to sin, the principle of self. The only power that can do that is the gospel, the truth as it is in Christ.

17. How did the Jews respond to Christ's statement in John 8:32? John 8:33

18. What was Jesus' reply to their remarks? John 8:34

The word that Jesus used was not "servant" (KJV), but "slave." That is what we are from birth in regards to sin. Only Christ can deliver from that slavery (see John 8:36).

19. Why did Israel of Paul's day fail to attain righteousness? Romans 9:30-32

We're righteous,

aren't we?

The phrase "works of the law" (Romans 9:32) represents the Old Covenant - using the law as a means or method of

salvation. The word for this in English is "legalism.1" Only by faith in Christ, the New Covenant, can we attain to a righteousness that saves.

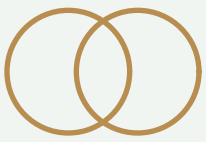
20. In the Lord's Supper, with what did Jesus link His shed blood? Matthew 26:28

Since the New Covenant, or Testament (KJV), is a will (promise) made by God to mankind, like any will it does not come into effect until death takes place. When Jesus died on the cross, God's promise became a reality.

21. Because of the cross, what does the New Covenant take away? Romans 11:27

22. What is another name for the New Covenant? Hebrews 13:20, 21

Just as the Old Covenant condemns to everlasting death those who disobey it, in the same way the New Covenant brings everlasting life to those who accept its offer of salvation in Christ. That is why Scripture sometimes refers to the New Covenant as the Everlasting or Eternal Covenant.



THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

My Response to Lesson 10

• Scripture describes two opposing means of salvation-the Old Covenant, salvation by human works, and the New Covenant, salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ. To which Covenant do you want to belong?

Response: _____

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