

The Two Covenants

Introduction:

- A. The Bible is made up of two major divisions—the Old Testament and the New Testament.
 1. These two major divisions of the Bible deal with two different covenants.
 2. A covenant is defined as a legally binding agreement between two parties, like a contract.
 3. The Old Testament is the record of one covenant between God and man.
 4. The New Testament is the record a second covenant between God and man.
 5. These two major divisions of the Bible deal with two different covenants.
 6. It is important to compare the two covenants in order to see the differences between them.
- B. General overview of the two covenants.
 1. The two covenants are called by a number of different names in the Bible.
 - a. The Old Covenant is referred to as the Old Testament (2 Cor. 3:14).
 - b. The New Testament is referred to as the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6).
 - c. The Old Covenant is referred to as the first covenant (Heb. 8:7).
 - d. The New Covenant is referred to as the second covenant (Heb. 8:7).
 - e. The Old Covenant is called the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:6).
 - f. The New Covenant is called the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).
 2. The two covenants were given to two different categories of people.
 - a. The Old Covenant was given only to Israel (Deut. 5:1-2).
 - b. The New Covenant was given to all of mankind (Mk. 16:15).
 3. The two covenants are contained in separate sections of the Bible.
 - a. The Old Covenant is made up of the first 39 books, including Genesis through Malachi.
 - b. The New Covenant is made up of the last 27 books, including Matthew through Revelation.
 4. The two covenants have a different nature from one another.
 - a. The Old Covenant is very physically based.
 - b. The New Covenant is spiritually based.
 5. The two covenants are not of equal value to us today.
 - a. The Bible says that one covenant is better than the other (Heb. 8:6).
 - b. The New Covenant is better than the old one.
- C. A failure to see the differences between the two covenants will lead to major problems.
 1. A failure to accept the differences between the two covenants has led to endless religious error and division.
 2. We must learn to accept what the Bible says about the two covenants.

Body:

I. The Old Covenant.

- A. The Old Covenant was limited in its duration.

1. It began at Mt. Sinai after Moses led Israel out of Egypt (Neh. 9:13-14).
2. It ended with the death of Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:24-25).
- B. The Old Covenant was limited in its scope.
 1. It was only for the nation of Israel (Deut. 4:1, 13).
 2. It was not given to every nation in the world.
- C. The Old Covenant was limited in its purpose.
 1. It could help to restrain Israel from sinning against God (Gal. 3:19).
 2. But it could not take away their sins (Heb. 10:1, 4).
- D. The Old Covenant was physically based in its worship.
 1. Under the Old Covenant Israel had a separate priesthood (Num. 3:10).
 2. Under the Old Covenant Israel had to offer animal sacrifices as burnt offerings to God (Lev. 1:2-3).
 3. Under the Old Covenant Israel worshiped at a physical sanctuary.
 - a. At first, they had the tabernacle (Heb. 9:1-4).
 - b. Later, they built the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:5-6).
 - c. Slide: Old Covenant Sanctuary (overhead views).
 4. Under the Old Covenant Israel had a law written on stone (Ex. 34:28).
 5. Under the Old Covenant Israel was obligated to keep the Sabbath day (Ex. 31:15).
 6. Under the Old Covenant Israel was commanded to use instruments of music in their worship to God (2 Chron. 29:25).
 7. Under the Old Covenant Israel was obligated to give a tithe (10%) of their annual increase to the Lord (Deut. 14:22).

II. The New Covenant.

- A. The duration of the New Covenant.
 1. The words of Christ will endure forever (Matt. 24:35).
 2. The New Covenant will never be replaced by anything else.
- B. The scope of the New Covenant.
 1. The gospel of Christ is to be taken to every nation and every person in the world (Matt. 28:19-20).
 2. All men are responsible for obeying the words of the New Covenant.
- C. The purpose of the New Covenant.
 1. The teaching of the New Covenant should keep us from sinning.
 2. But the New Covenant was brought into effect in order to provide a way for man to have his sins forgiven.
 - a. Matt. 26:26-28.
 - b. Acts 2:38.
- D. The New Covenant is spiritually based in its worship.
 1. There is no separate priesthood among Christians in the New Covenant (1 Pet. 2:5).
 2. There is only one sacrifice for sins and that is the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made as he gave himself to die on the cross (Heb. 10:12-14).
 3. There is no physical sanctuary or physical temple of worship under the New Covenant (1 Cor. 3:16).

4. The laws of the New Covenant are written on the hearts of believers instead of on tablets of stone (Heb. 8:10).
5. There is no Sabbath law under the New Covenant, and instead, Christians meet to worship God on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
6. There is no use of instruments of music in worship to God under the New Covenant since the only music is vocal (Eph. 5:18-19).
7. There is no mandatory tithing under the New Covenant since Christians are commanded to give as each one purposes in his heart (2 Cor. 9:7).

III. The New Covenant Has Replaced The Old Covenant.

- A. The Old Covenant was taken away at the cross (Col. 2:14-17).
 1. It was taken away when Jesus died on the cross (v. 14).
 2. It was only a shadow of what was to come in the New Covenant (v. 17).
 3. Therefore, no one is to be judged based on the ordinances of the Old Covenant anymore (v. 17).
- B. The Old Covenant was abolished at the death of Christ (Eph. 2:15).
 1. To “abolish” is to do away with.
 2. Since the Old Covenant had only been given to Israel it represented a separation between Jews and Gentiles.
 3. But the Old Covenant served its purpose and now that separation has been removed since Christ abolished the Old Covenant and its ordinances when he died on the cross.
- C. The New Covenant came into effect after the death of Jesus (Heb. 9:16-17).
 1. A last will and testament does not take effect until after the one who made it dies.
 2. The New Covenant came into force and replaced the Old when Jesus died on the cross.
- D. The Old Covenant is now obsolete (Heb. 8:13).
 1. It is “obsolete” in the sense that it is no longer in use since it has been replaced by the New Covenant.
 2. Illustration: Would you drive a horse and buggy on a busy highway?
 3. Illustration: Try using 19th century law in court to avoid paying taxes.
- E. No one is under the Old Testament law today!
- F. Should we keep the Ten Commandments today?
 1. Are you an Israelite?
 2. Do you live in the time before Jesus died on the cross?
 3. If not, then the Ten Commandments are not your law!
 4. Does that mean we can murder, steal, and commit adultery?
 5. No! We must obey the law of Christ (Jn. 12:48)!
- G. Does the Old Testament have any value for us today?
 1. It is still the inspired word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 2. It offers wisdom and understanding leading to salvation in Christ (2 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 3:24).
 3. It provides examples of God’s dealings with man (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11).
 4. But it is NOT our pattern for worship and doctrine today (2 John 9)!

IV. What If We Try To Keep Part Of The Old Covenant In Our Worship Today?

- A. Trying to hold to both covenants is like committing adultery (Rom. 7:2-4)!
 - 1. If a woman is married to one man, she cannot be married to a second man at the same time or she will be guilty of adultery (v. 3).
 - 2. But if her husband dies, then she is free to marry a second man and it will not be considered adultery (v. 3).
 - 3. The point of this is to illustrate that if we try to keep the Old Covenant and the New Covenant at the same time, then that is like a woman trying to be married to two men at the same time.
 - 4. But since the Old Covenant has passed away, we can be joined to Christ through the New Covenant and bear fruit to God (v. 4).
- B. If one tries to keep parts of both covenants he will fall from grace (Gal. 5:4)!
 - 1. Some of the Galatian Christians wanted to hold to some of the Old Covenant religious ordinances even though they were under the New Covenant.
 - 2. As a result, they separated themselves from Christ and fell from grace.
 - 3. That is what happens to those who try to incorporate Old Covenant practices in their worship today.
- C. If one tries to keep part of the Old Law today he cannot be saved (Gal. 2:16)!
 - 1. No one can be justified before God by keeping the commandments and religious ordinances of the Old Covenant.
 - 2. Salvation comes through the gospel of Christ, not through the Old Covenant (Rom. 1:16).

Conclusion:

- A. Let's remember that Jesus is "the Mediator of the New Covenant" (Heb. 12:24).
- B. If we want to have a relationship with God through Jesus, then we need to understand that we are under the New Covenant today.
- C. Have you met the Lord's terms for salvation under the New Covenant?