

17. Understanding the New Covenant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the fact that the Old Testament priesthood was only a shadow because the Old Testament priests could never take away sin. We saw that Christ is able to be our Great High Priest because He offered His own blood to take away our sin. As a result, Christ is now sitting at the right hand of the Father where He is interceding for us. Today, we are going to see that the New Covenant does much more for both the Jews who place their faith in Christ and also the Gentiles who come to Christ by faith.

In Hebrews 8:7-9, we read, “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--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.’” Here, we see that the first covenant was not faultless. The first covenant only showed that every person is guilty of sin. As a result, this meant that there had to be a new covenant. That new covenant is given in Jeremiah 31:31-34, and is quoted here in verses eight through twelve.

One of the first things we notice, about the new covenant, is that the new covenant was originally made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. In Jeremiah 30, God led Jeremiah to write about the time called the time of Jacob’s trouble. Jeremiah 30:6-7 says, “Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” Here, we see that Jeremiah described the time known as the time of Jacob’s trouble. That time is still future and will happen immediately after the church is taken to heaven. Then, following that time of Jacob’s trouble, the nation of Israel will experience the time of the new covenant mentioned in Jeremiah 31 and quoted here in Hebrews.

However, there are some Jews who are already beginning to enjoy the blessings of the new covenant because they have turned to Christ for salvation. Romans 11:4-5 says, “But what does the divine response say to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” In the time of Elijah, God said that there was a remnant or small group of the Jews who followed Him. In the same way, there continues to be a remnant of the Jews who have turned to Christ. That remnant is already enjoying the blessings of salvation.

The old covenant showed that all mankind is guilty before God. The new covenant shows that those who turn to Christ for salvation enjoy the blessings of God. The time will come after the time of Jacob’s trouble when the Jews as a whole will turn to Christ. Then, Romans 11:26-27 says, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away

their sins.” The day will come when both the Jews and Gentiles will enjoy the blessings of God. Romans 11:30-32 says, “For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” As Christians we are already enjoying the blessing of salvation promised in the new covenant whether we are Jews or Gentiles.

Since the new covenant was originally promised to Israel and Judah, we need to understand the promises that God gave to the nation of Israel in Jeremiah. God said that the new covenant was not like the covenant that He made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that most of the Jews failed to obey God because they did not come to Him by faith. God led the nation out of Egypt but most of them worshipped other things even in the wilderness.

As a result, in Hebrews 8:10-12 we go on to read about the promises that will one day be fulfilled in the future for Israel when they turn to Christ and come to God by faith after the time of Jacob’s trouble. These verses say, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” The old covenant was the law written on pieces of stone. Here, we see that God promises to write the new covenant in the hearts of the Jews.

In fact, that part of the blessing is also enjoyed by all Gentiles when we come to Christ. Romans 10:9-10 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” When we, as Gentiles, believe in our hearts that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Christ from the death, we receive the blessings of salvation. That is why Romans 10:12-13 says, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” God says that there is no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles that come to Christ by faith. God shows the riches of His mercy to every person that calls on the name of the Lord whether that person is a Jew or Gentile.

However, the promise that is given in verse eleven is a special promise to the Jews. God says that the day will come when the entire nation of Israel will turn to Christ. As a result, at that time still future there will not be a need for the Jews to teach one another about the promise of salvation through Christ because all of the Jews will turn to Christ in that day. No Jew will need to teach his neighbor about salvation. No Jew will need to teach his brother about salvation. At that time, all of the Jews will turn to the Lord for salvation. Instead of just reading the law that was originally written on pieces of stone, all the Jews will believe in their hearts and place their faith in Christ and recognize Him as the Messiah that they rejected at His first coming.

Verse twelve tells us about one of the blessings that all Christians already enjoy and which the Jews as a whole will begin to enjoy in that day when they turn to Christ. God promises that He will be merciful to the unrighteousness of the Jews. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” The Father says that when we accept the payment that Christ made for our sin when our sins were placed on Christ as He hung on the cross means that He places the righteousness of Christ on each person who comes to Christ. That is true for both the Jews and the Gentiles that come to Christ by faith. As a result, all who place their faith in Christ stand before the Father in the righteousness of Christ.

God promises each person that comes to Christ by faith that He will remember our lawless deeds no more. Here, we see one of the great things about the new covenant. God says that He chooses not to remember our past and hold it against us. This is a very important thing for every Christian to understand. The world will often remember our sinful deeds from the past and remind us of them. In contrast, God says that He chooses not to remember our sins and He will never remind us of them in the future. God told Israel in Isaiah 44:22 that when they turn to Him, “I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” Then Acts 3:19 promises all who become Christians, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” God blotted out our sins at the moment of salvation and they will never be held against us in the future.

Today, many Christians have never understood this part of the new covenant and continue to live with guilt for past sins that they have confessed many times to Christ. We need to remind such Christians of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 which reads, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We can enjoy the blessings of that liberty as we are being transformed and are becoming more like Christ.

Hebrews 8:13 goes on to say, “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 first covenant had served as a way to cover sin until the time that Christ came to take away sin. Once Christ came to take away sin by shedding His blood as the blood of the new covenant, there was no longer any need for the old covenant to continue to exist. As a result, God allowed the temple where the sacrifices of the old covenant were offered to be destroyed just a few years later. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and be able to explain the fact that the old covenant was no longer needed because it had been replaced by a superior covenant. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the new covenant.