

Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: A 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God

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Day 11

OUT WITH THE OLD

It is embarrassing to admit that for fifteen years, my husband and I did not see the importance of understanding that the New Covenant is distinct from the Old. Let me restate that, just in case you are as dull in your thinking as we were. The New Covenant is different. It is not the same. The Old Covenant is old. The New Covenant is new. God didn't say, “This is the *additional* covenant I make with you,” nor did He say, “Combine these two covenants.” He said, “This is the New, *not* like the Old.” Hopefully, your head is not as hard as ours were.

Jeremiah 31:31-32

*“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— ³² **not** according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.*

God wants us as believers in Jesus Christ to understand that we are under the New Covenant only and not the Old because the New Covenant and its promises are better.

Hebrews 8:6

*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.*

One would think that this truth would be met with little resistance, but we have encountered nearly irrational thinking and behavior upon discussing it, as if to simply state that we are not under the Old is to threaten the very existence of God Himself!

Let us be clear, we are absolutely not saying (as some have slanderously reported) that we should rip the Bible in half and throw away the Old Testament writings. On the contrary, we need Genesis – Malachi in order to fully appreciate the New Covenant, but that we are not under the Old Covenant is indisputable! In fact, if you are not Jewish by birth, at

no time have you **ever** been under the Old Covenant, for the Old Covenant was with the Jews **only**. As we have discussed, the law was meant to bring the Jewish people to Christ—serving as a tutor. But after faith has come, they (and we) are no longer under the tutelage of law (Gal. 3:25).

It is important that we understand, not only that the two covenants are different, but that we see with acute clarity that the Old Covenant is now obsolete.

Hebrews 8:12-13

*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”¹³ 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.*

When I worked as a teacher, each year the librarian would get out her rubber stamp and spend several hours stamping hundreds of textbooks and library books with the word “OBSOLETE”. This meant that these books were no longer to be used in the school. Either the information in them had been found not to be true, or the teaching methodology was considered not to be effective. The obsolete books were discarded and **replaced** with new books because the new books were considered **better**. (However, a few teachers, seeing that their favorite textbooks from which they taught for perhaps 10-20 years were going to be trashed, would somehow manage to keep a set of the obsolete books to use in the classroom.)

The Old Covenant was not capable of making us perfect or of allowing us to have perfect closeness with God. It could only make it very clear to us that we were not perfect. The better hope that Jesus brought us not only perfects us forever in regard to sin and makes us holy (Heb. 10:9-14), but also brings us close to God.

Under the Old Covenant, the presence of God was terrifying, and only the high priest dared enter. If his sacrifice was not accepted, he would die. This is not so for those who receive the New Covenant. His blood puts us permanently *in* the presence of God and puts His presence permanently in us! We live seated with Christ on the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When Jesus said that the law would not fall away until all was fulfilled (Matt. 5:18), many take this to mean that we are still under that law. Jesus was not saying any such thing. He was foretelling the time when He Himself would fulfill the law for us. The Old Covenant had a purpose, and that purpose was fulfilled in Jesus Christ at His death.

Luke 24: 44-45

*Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.**" ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*

Romans 8:3-4

*For what the law **could not do** in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ **that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us** who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

Did you hear that? The righteous requirement of the law has been fulfilled in us believers. God opens our eyes to understand the Old Covenant writers, but not in the sense of being tutored by them, but rather to see how Jesus perfectly fulfilled them. Once He fulfilled them, He replaced them. Now, He speaks to us through His Son.

Hebrews 1:1-3

*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time **past** to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His **Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself **purged** our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

The law was given to the Children of Israel for a season. The New Covenant was not God's Plan B because Plan A failed. It was always God's design that the law that came through Moses would be replaced by Jesus.

John 1:14-17

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" ¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all

*received, and grace for grace.¹⁷ For the **law** was given through Moses, but **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ.*

Knowing that Jesus fulfilled the law, we can rejoice that we are not under it. We can read all of Scripture from our New Covenant perspective—in its proper context.

When we read the blessings and curses of the law, instead of fearing the curses or thinking we must follow the law to receive its blessing, we can be thankful that we are already blessed in Him apart from following the law (2 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 1:3) and that the curses for disobeying the law have been broken (Gal. 3:13).

When we hear the longing of the Psalmist to be given a clean heart, we can overflow with gratitude that we already have one (2 Pet. 1:9). When David asks that God's Holy Spirit not be taken from him, we can sing out our praises that the Spirit abides in us forever (Jn. 14:16). When he expresses his concern that he not be cast away from God's presence, we can rejoice that this will never happen to those who are in Christ (Heb. 13:5).

In other words, we have those things for which those under the Old Covenant could only long. Once we know who we are in Him and what He has already provided for us through the New Covenant, the Scriptures prior to His cross take on a more blessed significance and cause us to give thanks.

Jesus used the Scriptures concerning Himself with those he met on the road to Emmaus. The Early church also taught Christ using Genesis through Malachi. They proved through the prophecies that Jesus was indeed the Christ. They gave evidence of what He would accomplish.

Acts 17:2

As usual, Paul went to the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

Acts 17:11

The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Acts 18:24, 28

A Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was powerful in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus...²⁸ For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

What about the teachings of Christ? Some have said that nothing He taught speaks to believers at all because He spoke before the establishment of the New Covenant. This is not true. Yet, as I have already

stated, in order to understand their true meaning, we must keep in mind that even the words of Jesus need to be considered in their context.

Allow me to reiterate a little here. When we read the words of Jesus, we need to discern if He was preparing His audience for what was to come, speaking a universal truth, or if He was speaking to those who would be under the New Covenant. We do this by observing the context and the obvious intent of His words, but always interpreting them in light of the New Covenant, *which was yet to come*.

Here is another splendid example.

Matthew 5:20

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

If we do not understand the context of this saying, we will become discouraged. Jesus was speaking to the Jews. They knew the Scribes and Pharisees to be righteous according to the law (Phil. 3:6, Lk. 1:6). Jesus surprises them by saying that to enter the kingdom of God, their righteousness had to *exceed* that of the Scribes and Pharisees. This doubtless caused them to tremble. How could they ever be more righteous than those who were endeavoring so diligently to keep the law? Yet, Jesus knew something that those on that side of the cross did not yet know—that the righteousness that would exceed that of the Pharisees would be given as a *gift* to those who put their trust in Jesus. Only an imputed righteousness, the very righteousness of God, which we obtained as a gift when He became a sin offering for us, would be sufficient (2 Cor. 5:21).

Our righteousness thus exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees under the New Covenant.

No clearer proof can be given that we are under the New Covenant only and that our focus is now on Jesus, not the law and prophets, than what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration (Lk. 9:28-36). You know the story. Jesus took Peter, James, and John apart to a high mountain separately and was transfigured before them. While this was happening, Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus about His upcoming death.¹ While Moses and Elijah were departing, Peter, not knowing what to say out of fear, proposed that a tabernacle be built for each of them; one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, but God had something different in mind. He spoke from heaven and said, “This is my beloved SON. Hear HIM!” Previously, God spoke through the law and prophets, but

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Moses represents the Law. Elijah represents the prophets.

now He is speaking to us through His Son Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2).

When we understand the dividing line between the Old and New Covenants to be the cross, we begin to appreciate the changes God brought about through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. Glory to God! We are under the New Covenant *only*.² The Old Covenant is OBSOLETE. The life that we now live is through **faith** in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

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The best chart I have encountered delineating the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New can be found in an article by James A. Fowler entitled "God's Covenants with Man", Number III. To view this chart, go to: <http://www.christinyou.net/pages/covenants.html>. Additionally, the book Jesus Changes Everything by Bob George goes into greater detail about the two covenants.