



3. THE COVENANTS

We all know the Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word 'testament' can also be translated 'covenant'. So the Old Testament is the time under the old covenant, while the New Testament reveals to us the new covenant God established through Jesus Christ.

To understand the significance of this new covenant, let's look at the old first. There were various covenants God made – with his creation, with Abraham and Noah, but we are going to look at the one God made with Israel. We read about this in the book of Exodus. What is a covenant? It is a promise or a contract that is made between two parties. In this covenant God made with Israel, he promised to be their God. On their part they were to live according to his rules.

Exodus 19:5 “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Covenants were sealed in blood, and that is what happened when God gave this covenant on Mount Sinai. We know from history that the Israelites didn't keep their part of the covenant. In the time of Jeremiah God gave this promise: “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” This new covenant was introduced by Jesus. The blood that was needed to seal the covenant was his blood.

When we repent and ask forgiveness, and put our trust in Christ to save us, we enter into a covenant relationship with him. This is what it says in the Book of Hebrews:-

Hebrews 8:6 “The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.”

What is the difference between the old and new covenants? Hebrews 8 quotes from the prophet Jeremiah, and this is what we learn.

- 1.) First of all, the law was written on tablets of stone, but now it is written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We will know what pleases God and the Holy Spirit will give us the power to obey him.
- 2.) Secondly, we no longer need to bring animal sacrifices, as they did under the old covenant. Jesus became the sacrifice for our sin, so that our sin is forgiven.
- 3.) Not only that, but under the new covenant we receive a promised eternal inheritance. Now, just as Israel was called to be God's people, we become God's sons and daughters, bonded to him in a covenant relationship.

Marriage is a covenant between two people who make promises to one another. “In sickness and in health, until death do us part.” Sadly many marriages break as people fail to keep their promises.

However the covenant God makes with us through Jesus Christ is based on grace, not on our ability to perform. When we accept by faith what Jesus has done, he is committed to us. At times we may fail, but he never will.

2 Timothy 2:13 “If we are faithless he will remain faithful.”

What amazing grace!