

The Covenants of God
Lesson 3 – Similarities and Differences between the Old and New Covenant
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Introduction: God's wisdom and character is revealed in His covenants.

- A. God worked His eternal plan to first prepare a people to receive the Messiah.
 - 1. God gave a temporary covenant with the Jewish nation until the coming of the Messiah and a new covenant with all nations. **(Isa 42:5-6; 49:6, 8)**
 - 2. God always had all men in view (Gentiles) for the forgiveness of sins and the creation of a holy people. **(Eph 2:11-12)**
- B. There are significant differences in these covenants because they had different purposes.
 - 1. God wanted the Jews to see their need of a savior and be prepared to receive Him. **(Heb 7:18-19; Gal 2:21)**
 - 2. The Old contained only shadows of the good things realized in the New!
 - 3. God wants us to distinguish and understand the roles and proper places of these covenants!

I. False differences between the covenants

- A. Consider some false concepts men teach about the Old and New covenants.
 - 1. "Outward obedience was acceptable in the Old while inward is required in the New."
 - 2. "God regulated worship in the Old but does not do so in the New."
 - 3. "God required physical circumcision in the Old but the circumcision of the heart in the New."
 - 4. "There is but one covenant in five phases."
- B. The Old Testament is a spiritual law that is directed towards the heart! **(Deut 6:4-6; 7:9, 12)**
 - 1. God wanted circumcised hearts in the Old covenant! **(Jer 4:4; Joel 2:13)**
 - 2. The contrast made between law and grace is in realization (shadow and reality) and not in kind. **(Jn 1:16-17)**
 - 3. There is law and direction for worship in the New! **(Mt 26:26; 28:20)**
 - 4. There are two covenants and not just one! **(Gal 4:24; Heb 10:9-10)**

II. Differences in the Covenants

- A. Consider three key differences in the covenants. **(Jer 31:31-34)**
 - 1. All of those under the New covenant have come to know God.
 - 2. All of those under the New Covenant will have the forgiveness of sins through the only perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ. **(Heb 8:6-8; 9:15)**
 - 3. The house of Israel and of Judah will be joined by the Gentiles!
- B. There are significant differences in worship and instructions. **(Col 2:14-17)**
 - 1. We are no longer under the temple system of worship.
 - 2. Laws unique to the Old are not to be bound upon Christians.

3. The Sabbath laws are no longer binding.
- C. Circumcision is no longer binding. **(Gal 5:1-4)**
1. It was not sinful to be circumcised, but it is not required by God.
 2. Paul used circumcision as a liberty to allow opportunity to teach the Jews. Consider Titus and Timothy. **(Gal 2:3-5; Acts 16:1, 3)**
 3. These are not minor issues but fundamental to the cross of Christ itself! **(Gal 5:11; 6:12)**
 4. Imagine the pain and persecution felt among Jewish converts from the attitudes and actions of their families.
- D. Issues that impact us today from a failure to distinguish between the covenants.
1. Clergy, laity distinction based upon the Old covenant priesthood. Also those who have a priesthood that has authority to forgive sins.
 2. The Sabbath laws, dietary laws and feasts days are observed by many.
 3. Instrumental music, tithing, burning of incense and special days are used and followed in some assemblies. **(Gal 4:9-11)**
 4. There is much confusion on almost every topic! (Ex. Marriage and polygamy)

III. Similarities in the Covenants

- A. Fully understanding the New is dependent upon knowledge of the Old. **(2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17)**
1. These exhortations to study include the Old Covenant!
 2. How many prophecies are quoted as fulfilled with the expectation that the reader would know and understand them?
 3. In conversion the prophecies of Jesus are crucial to prove He is the Son of God.
- B. We learn about God's nature and how we can trust His promises. **(Rom 15:4)**
1. These examples of blessing and punishment teach us about God! **(1 Cor 10:11-12)**
 2. We are powerfully introduced to God in the Old Covenant!
- C. We also can learn a timeless wisdom that teaches us about ourselves and about life. **(Prov 23:23-30)**
1. Wisdom can be more powerful than a specific law! Why?
 2. There is a maturity and patience necessary to gain wisdom.

Questions

1. Why do we need to know the differences in the Old and New Covenants?
2. What are some common misconceptions about the Old Testament? How are these views harmful?
3. How does the Old Covenant appeal to the hearts of those under it?
4. Give three key differences in the Old and New Covenants.
5. What are the consequences of mixing the laws (such as circumcision) of the Old and New Covenants? How can we do something similar today?
6. Why should we study the Old Testament?
7. Can we "bind" the wisdom of the Old Testament upon people today?