

THE OLD COVENANT – FULFILLED IN CHRIST AND COMPLETELY ABOLISHED

A great many Christians do not believe that the Old Covenant – the Old Testament – was abolished in its entirety and completely replaced by the New Covenant in Christ – the New Testament. Some believe that only the ceremonial law – the sacrifices etc – have been done away with, not the moral law – the Ten Commandments etc. Others believe that the New Covenant is the same as the Old, the only difference being that the Old was written on tables of stone, while the New was written on tables of the heart. Yet both the Old and New Covenants clearly teach the abolition of the Old in its entirety and its complete replacement with the New Covenant (CP Jer 31:31-34). God makes it plainly evident through Jeremiah here that the Old Covenant will be completely replaced with the New Covenant “... *not according to the covenant I made with their fathers ... but this shall be the covenant I make ... I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts ... and they will be my people ... for I will forgive their iniquity and will remember their sin no more.*” This ties in with Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Messiah – Christ – and His New Covenant, and was quoted in part by the writer of Hebrews when contrasting the Old Covenant under the law of Moses and the New Covenant in Christ (CP Isa 42:5-7; 49:7-9; 55:3-5; 59:20-21; 61:8-11 with He 8:6-13; 10:16-17; 12:24; 13:20). We will examine He 8:6-13 and 10:16-17 in detail later on in this study.

(CP Mt 9:14-17; Mk2: 21-22; Lu 5:36-39). This is called the parable of old and new cloth and wineskins – (*bottles* (KJV), are wineskins). Here Jesus foretells the abolition of the Old Covenant and its complete replacement with the New Covenant. The old garment and wineskins symbolize the Old Covenant under the law of Moses, which kept everyone bound by it in bondage to sin. No one could be saved under the Old Covenant (CP Ro 3:20; 7:14-23; 1Cor 15:56-57). In using the principles of new cloth as a patch upon an old garment tearing away more, and new wine bursting old wineskins, Jesus made it clear that He would not be patching up the worn-out Old Covenant, but that He would be replacing it in its entirety with a completely New Covenant (CP Lu 4:17-21; Ro: 3:21-22; Ga 3:22-26). Whereas no one could be saved under the Old Covenant, the New Covenant makes salvation available to all by grace through faith in Christ (CP Jn 1:12-13; Ro 4:16; Eph 2: 1-8; 2Ti 1:9). This new way of salvation could never be mixed with the Old Covenant religious system because of the new life and freedom impossible under the Old Covenant (CP Ro 7:24-8:4). *The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus* in Ro 8:2, refers to the liberating force of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant setting people free from the Old Covenant law that bound them to sin and death.

The abolition of the Old Covenant in its entirety was also foretold by Moses. After he came down from God on Mt Sinai with the Ten Commandments Moses wore a veil to prevent the Israelites from seeing the fading reflection of God’s glory on his face, which presaged the future obsolescence and complete abolition of the Old Covenant (CP Ex 34: 27-35 with 2Cor 3:6-13). *The ministration of death written and engraven on stones* in 2Cor 3:7, refers to the Old Covenant law of Moses. *That which is being abolished*, in V13 refers to the Old Covenant becoming obsolete and being abolished, to be

replaced with a completely New Covenant. Paul is contrasting the Old and the New Covenants here, distinguishing between the ministries under each. No one could satisfy the demands of the law under the Old Covenant and so it condemned them to death (CP Psalms 143:1-2; Ro 3:19-20; 7:9-11; 2Cor 3:6; Ga 3:10-11). The ministry of the Spirit under the New Covenant is entirely different, because the New Covenant is a covenant of grace, entered into through the atoning death of Jesus, who has made possible for all who believe on Him, salvation, which was impossible under the Old Covenant (CP 2Cor 3:8-11 with Ac 13:38-39; Ro 3:21-26; 7:5-6; 8:1-4; Ga 2:16).

Paul’s primary purpose in contrasting the Old and the New Covenants in 2Cor 3:6-13, and distinguishing between the ministries under each, is to highlight the glorious character of the New Covenant. What the New Covenant in Christ offered could never be achieved under the Old Covenant (CP Ga 4:21-5:4; He: 7:12, 18-22; 8:6-13; 9:1-15; 10:1-18). In Ga 4:21-5:4 we learn that the Galatians were bent on holding to the letter of the Old Covenant law, yet they did not understand its real significance; that it could not save any one – it only pointed to the Saviour, Jesus. To enable the Galatians to better understand the law and its purpose, Paul used the two sons of Abraham as an analogy to distinguish between law – the Old Covenant – and grace – the New Covenant (CP Ga 4:22-26). The son of the bondwoman Hagar, was Ishmael. He symbolizes the law, and Isaac, the son of the freewoman, Sarah – Abraham’s wife – the child that God promised Abraham and Sarah, “... *but he of the freewoman was by promise*” – symbolized grace. The history of the conflict between the two sons of Abraham in scripture illustrates the conflict between the Old Covenant law, under which no one could be saved, and the New Covenant of grace, under which all who want to, can be saved. Law and grace cannot co-exist. As the son of the bondwoman, had to give place to the son of the freewoman so law – the Old Covenant, has given place to grace – the New Covenant (CP Ga 4:28-31). We will study the Hebrews scriptures above in more detail shortly.

The Old Covenant was only a *shadow*, or *type*, of which Jesus was the reality (CP Col 2:16-17; He 9:8-11; 10:1). When the reality comes, the shadow, or type, has no value; it is made obsolete (CP Mk 2:27-28; Ro 10:4; Ga 3:24). This is why the Old Covenant was made obsolete and abolished in its entirety and completely replaced with the New Covenant in Christ. The Old Covenant was only temporary, the New is everlasting (CP Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; Eze 16:60; 37:26). The Old Covenant in its entirety means that everything pertaining to the Old Covenant, including the law of Moses, the sacrifices, the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, tithing etc, was abolished. Those who argue that the Old Covenant has not been abolished in its entirety, refer to Mt 5:17-18, not realizing that it was Jesus Himself who fulfilled it (CP Mt 5:17-18 with Ro 10:4).

The most detailed account in scripture of the abolition of the Old Covenant and its complete replacement with the New Covenant, is found in the book of Hebrews, chapters 7-10. There the writer stresses the incomparable

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superiority of the person and the work of Christ over everyone and everything pertaining to the Old Covenant. He contrasts the imperfect and incomplete provisions of the Old Covenant under the law of Moses, and the infinitely better provisions of the New Covenant of grace in Christ. These are the scriptures we read earlier, now we will examine them in detail. They will help us even better to understand God's purpose in the two Covenants (CP He 7:12, 18-22). This teaches us that just as the temporary Old Covenant priesthood was of necessity replaced by the eternal priesthood of Christ, so too, of necessity the Old Covenant in its entirety had to be replaced by the New Covenant in Christ. No one could be saved under the Old Covenant because it could not offer a sacrifice that would pay for sin (CP V 11-28 with 8:6-13).

V6-7 in He 8 teaches that the New Covenant is superior to the Old and replaces it because the Old Covenant was faulty. In V8-12 the writer quotes Jeremiah's Old Covenant prophecy which we read at the start of this study in Jer 31:31-34 concerning the advent of the New Covenant, and the forgiveness of sins. In He 8:13, the writer explains that what God meant by a New Covenant was that he would make the Old Covenant obsolete and abolish it. *Old* in V13 means to abrogate, annul, be antiquated, no longer in force, to be obsolete, out of date. As we learned earlier, the Old Covenant could not save; it could only point to the Saviour, Jesus (CP He 7:19-22 with Jn 1:17; Ac 13:39; Ro 10:4; Ga 3:11-26). Everyone under the Old Covenant who got saved, was saved by the sacrificial blood of Jesus under the New Covenant, not by the sacrificial blood of the animals under the Old Covenant (CP Ro 3:24-26; He 9:11-15). These scriptures make it clear that only the blood of Jesus under the New Covenant could save those who lived under the Old Covenant.

(CP He 10:1-18). Here the writer of Hebrews shows the futility of the Old Covenant and how badly its sacrificial system failed (CP V 1-4). It was only Christ's sacrifice of Himself that satisfied God's justice and provided permanent sanctification – the setting apart of believers from sin for God (CP V 5-10 with He 7:22-25; 9:11-12, 24-26). The Old Covenant animal sacrifices, which had to be offered repeatedly, could not satisfy the will of God. Only the supreme *once for all* sacrifice of Christ fulfilled God's purpose for the Old Covenant sacrificial system, and when Christ offered himself up, the Old Covenant became obsolete and was abolished. Everything essential to salvation was included in that once for all sacrifice of Christ, which atoned for the sins

of all mankind, past, present, and future (CP He 10:11-14 with He 1:1-4; 7:18-19, 22, 27; 8:6-13; 9:15, 25-28; 1Jn 2:2). In V15-18 in He 10 the author again quoted the prophecy of Jeremiah in Jer 31:31-34 which we examined at the beginning of this study, that foretold the advent of the New Covenant and the forgiveness of sins (CP He 10:15-18). As we now know, this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ who died for sin once for all and dies no more. There is now no need for the constantly repeated Old Covenant sacrifices (CP Ro 6:9-10). This could never have been achieved under the Old Covenant, and that is why it was abolished in its entirety and replaced with the completely New Covenant.

The plain teaching of scripture throughout this study is that God never intended the Old Covenant to be permanent. It was always in His purposes that it would be abolished and replaced with the New Covenant in Christ (CP Ga 4:4-5).

It needs to be made clear in bringing this study to a close here that none of this teaching is intended to demean the value of Old Covenant scriptures in Christian life and ministry. They still stand for our example (CP Ro 15:4; 1Cor 10:1-11; 2Ti 3:16-17; He 4:1-12). As a point of interest nine of the Ten Commandments were reaffirmed under the New Covenant. The only one omitted was the fourth commandment – to keep the Sabbath – because its sole purpose was to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (CP Ex 31:12-18; De 5:12-15). The Old Covenant was between God and the Israelites only, whereas the New Covenant is for both Jews and Gentiles (CP Hos 2:23 with Ro 2:14; 9:22-26; Ga 3:13-14; Eph 2:11-16; 3:5-6; 1Pe 2:9-10). Those scriptures all show God's eternal purpose in abolishing the Old Covenant, which was for Jews only, and replacing it with the New Covenant so that Gentiles could be included in God's redemptive plan in Christ. The reference to the middle wall of partition being broken down in Eph 2:13-16 refers to the Old Covenant law which brought enmity that separated Jews and Gentiles, being abolished in Christ's death – from that time on they are all one in Christ (CP Jn 10:16; Ro 10:12-13; Ga 3:28; Eph 2:11-22).

The Old Covenant law with all its decrees worked against those who were under it. It had to be abolished in favour of the New Covenant of grace in Christ (CP Ro 5:20-21; 1Cor 15:56-59; Ga 3:23). Everyone under the Old Covenant was guilty before God, but as the fulfillment of the law, Christ took away that guilt (CP Ro 8:1-4; Ga 3:22-23).