

The Spirit of Bondage and the Spirit of Freedom

Jeremiah 31:31-34: Hebrews 8

The Old Covenant was established by God with Israel when He gave “the Law.” - *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you will be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation”* (Ex. 19:5). Israel replied to God in Exodus 24:7 and agreed with it. God divorced Himself from physical Israel (Is. 50:1) because of their violations of the law (sin). The New Covenant is an agreement between God and sinners whereby God’s favor abides upon sinners who trust Christ to “fulfill the Law” in their place.

I. Some Christians, emphasizing God’s unity of purpose, speak of only ONE covenant.

These people say that “Adam” was under a “covenant of works” – all others are under grace. It is true, that the purpose of God is to glorify Himself through the redemption of sinners, but the process by which He reveals His redemption to mankind differs in the TWO covenants.

A. Christians who see just ONE COVENANT speak of two “administrations” ...

This one Covenant, they say, is called The Covenant of Redemption and is from Adam. *“This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law and in the time of the gospel”* (Westminster Confession). The person who holds to this view will take all the laws of the old administration and make them apply in the New Covenant.

B. With this “covenantal” view, the emphasis is always on “law keeping.”

Baptize infants (circumcision), keep the Sabbath (now Sunday), priests are only male, “storehouse” tithing (Malachi), the church and pastors are under the law of God, etc.

C. The New Covenant, however, is NOT a covenant of law, it is of the Spirit.

We see in the text that New Covenant believers have liberty-- as led by the Spirit.

II. The Old Covenant led Israel into bondage whereas the New Covenant leads to freedom.

Until you recognize there is a RADICAL change from the Old Covenant to the New, you will constantly struggle to measure up to the imaginary standards of an old agreement. The New Covenant, under which you belong, is different from the Old Agreement in four ways:

A. Unlike the Old Covenant, the New Covenant cannot be broken (Hebrews 8:12-13).

When God’s people failed to perform in the Old Covenant, they broke the covenant and the blessing of God was not received. This is not the new agreement we have with God. “Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful” (II Tim. 2:13). Do you believe this?

B. Unlike the Old Covenant, in the New Covenant the “hearts” and “minds” of all covenant citizens will be changed, with the law of Christ written on it (Heb. 8:33).

Outward observance of laws was essential in the Old. Christ’s law is within (Jn. 13:35).

C. Unlike the Old Covenant, everyone in the New Covenant knows God (Heb. 8:34a).

Paul said, “Not all Israel is Israel” (Romans 9:6). In the New Covenant, all those who place their trust in Christ are circumcised in the heart and become God’s chosen people.

D. Unlike the Old Covenant, everyone in the New Covenant has sins forgiven (Heb. 9:34b).

The “Israel” of the New Covenant are all the body of Christ.

III. What makes us one in the body of Christ is our baptism by Christ into the Holy Spirit.

(See I Cor. 12:12-13; “by” is “in”). (See also Mark 1:7-8; Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:28).

The major difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is the Spirit of God.

(Read Acts 19:1-5). John was the “Forerunner” of Christ; but the New Agreement came after him.