

The unabridged writings of Fred Morris, Manna Publications

The meaning of...

THE NEW COVENANT

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

A NEW COVENANT

Read: Hebrews 8:1-13

A group of men read these words from the New Testament. They were studying the Book of Hebrews: **“God found fault with the people and said, ‘The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’.” (Heb 8:8).**

The writer of the Book of Hebrews took these words from the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34). But he applied them to the Christian Church. The men agreed, those who believe are included in “the house of Israel.”

Jesus Christ came as the long-promised Messiah of Israel. “He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God” (John 1:11-12).

Israel did not receive their Messiah, but many Gentiles did. They believed in Him and came into “the house of Israel.” As the prophet Joel wrote, “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:32).

Many Gentiles had “called on the name of Jesus,” They had been saved from their sins and born again into God’s family (John 3:5,8).

JESUS DIED FOR ALL MANKIND

Jesus died on the cross for all men and women. Every race and tribe and language group are included. He established the New Covenant, which He sealed with His own blood (Luke 22:20) for all mankind.

All that the Old Covenant could not do, in changing the heart and bringing men to righteousness, God did for mankind in the New Covenant.

God did not find fault with the Old Covenant. He found fault with the people because their hearts were as cold and hard as stone and they broke His Covenant often (Ezek 11:19). The Old Covenant had no power to help men and women to obey its requirements. So God promised to change the hearts of all those He called out of the nations, those who believed in Jesus: “I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” He promised (Ezek 36:26).

THE PASSOVER

On the night before Jesus was betrayed and crucified, He ate a last meal with His disciples. It was the Passover meal, celebrated by the Jews from the day God brought them out of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-13).

God heard the cries of His people in Egypt and sent Moses to deliver them (Ex 3:7-12). They had been slaves in Egypt for 430 years. The night the Israelites left Egypt, each family killed a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the lintel and doorposts of their house. All who were in the house were spared when the angel of death passed over. In homes without the blood to protect those inside, the firstborn died. This was God's final judgment on Egypt. This was the first Passover, when the angel of death passed over the houses with the blood on the door posts and God spared the firstborn sons.

God commanded the Hebrew people to keep the first Passover at the very same time every year Egypt (Ex 12:1-13). Passover would be an annual Feast to remind the Israelites that God worked one last miracle to bring them out of slavery. And it pointed forward to the death of Jesus Christ (John 1:29).

The Passover Feast came at the end of a week-long celebration called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Mark 14:1). All leaven (yeast) was cleaned out of the houses and the people ate only bread made without yeast (Ex 23:15). Yeast was a symbol of sin and evil.

God commands every Christian to put away "the old leaven" of malice and wickedness and put in its place "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did God work ten miracles in Egypt (Rom 9:17)?
2. What was the last judgment God brought on Egypt to free His people?
3. What did God command each family to do (Ex 12:1-13)?

THE PASSOVER LAMB

Read: Exodus 12:1-30

The blood of a perfect lamb pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's Son (John 1:29). He is our Passover Lamb. He died on the cross on the very same night that the Passover lambs were killed in Israel.

God told Moses and Aaron to tell the people, "This month is to be for you the first month..." They would begin a new calendar. "On the tenth day of the month a man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household...The animal you choose must be a year-old male, without defect" (Ex 12:3-5). The lamb was chosen with care and kept for 14 days. The family watched the lamb to make sure it had no blemish. They were told not to break a bone when the lamb was killed (Ex 12:46). The apostle John said of Jesus "a bone of Him shall not be broken" (John 19:36).

The lamb was killed at twilight (in the last light of the day) and some of its blood put on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses. That night the angel of death passed through the land of Egypt. God said, "the blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you (the Hebrews) are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No...plague will touch you, when I strike Egypt...and bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt" (Ex 12:13).

THEY ATE LAST PASSOVER WITH JESUS

The disciples asked Jesus, "Where do You want us to make preparations for You to eat the Passover." So He sent two of His disciples, Peter and John, to prepare the Passover meal (Mark 14:12-16). They found an "upper room," and made ready for Jesus to come and eat the meal with them

The twelve disciples leaned on low tables as they took the bread and dipped it into the wine on the table. Jesus said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before

I suffer. (It would be like a farewell meal). For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 22:14-22).

God fulfilled the promise of the Kingdom of God when Christ sat down to His last Passover. At that meal Jesus introduced a memorial feast which rightly belongs to the Gospel Church.

THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

God said He would make a New Covenant with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Hebrews 8:8). This could not mean the Israel of old, but the Kingdom of God which includes all believers.

Under the New Covenant, the man-made divisions that separated Jew and Gentile would be taken away. Male and female, slave and free, would be all one in Christ (Gal 3:28).

In the Christian Church there is a glorious unity, not known in the Israel of old, which will be perfected in heaven after believers are "caught up" to be with their Lord forever (1 Thess 4:16-18; John 14:1-3).

Jesus said, "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18).

Some take these words to mean that Jesus will celebrate this feast again after the Church is gathered home to heaven. If this is so, John called it the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 21:1-4, 9). Some believe the parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14), is a picture of this Passover feast.

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did God strike Egypt with plagues?
2. Who did He protect from harm (Ex 8:23)? Why?
3. How did the Hebrews mark their houses?
4. What happened when the angel of death passed over Egypt?

THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

Read: Luke 22:7-23

We will follow Luke's account of the last Supper which exists in two versions, the longer one in the Authorised Version (AV), also in the New International Version (NIV). The shorter version is in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the English Bible where verses 19b and 20 of the AV and NIV are left out.

In Luke the bread was passed before the cup. Jesus' betrayal by Judas Iscariot follows the Supper, but comes before it in Mark's account (Mark 14:17). And Luke adds a number of sayings not recorded by Mark (Mark 14:12-26), but Luke omits Jesus' words in the 'ransom passage' of Mark 10:45.

John's account is quite different and centres on the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. At the table, Jesus told His disciples, "He who shares My bread has lifted up his heel against Me" (John 13:18). John says that Judas asked Jesus, "Lord, who is it?" John added, "As soon as Judas took the bread (which Jesus had dipped in the dish), Satan entered into him" (John 13:27).

The different accounts in the Gospels do not take away from the importance of this event, nor change in any way what actually happened that fateful night, or its meaning for the Christian Church.

THE BREAD AND THE WINE

While Jesus was eating with His disciples, He took the bread and broke it and said, "Take this, it is My body, given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). Jesus said the bread represented His body. He would be crucified on a Roman cross the next day.

In the same way, after the supper, Jesus took the cup which they shared and said, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20).

Jesus' body was broken for all mankind. When He died, His blood was spilled for the whole world. But only those who believe Christ died for them, to take away their sin, enjoy its blessings. Jesus Christ gave His own precious blood to be the once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Heb 9:10; John 1:29).

The crucifixion took place on the eve of Passover (John 19:14), Jesus hung on the cross at the very time the Passover lambs were being killed. This would give rich meaning to Paul's words, "For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

Believers obey Christ's command. They take the bread and the wine and eat, giving thanks and remembering His death was for them. This is called "The Lord's Supper." The words "Lord's Supper" are used only in 1 Corinthians 11:20. It is also called "Communion" from 1 Cor 10:16, and "the Lord's Table," from 1 Corinthians 10:21. The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word meaning "to give thanks" (1 Corinthians 11:24) but is not found in the Bible.

TALK ABOUT

1. What do Christians call the last meal Jesus had with His disciples?
2. Why did Jesus tell us to repeat what He did (1 Cor 11:25)?
3. Who betrayed Jesus?
4. Was Judas there when they ate the bread and drank from the cup?
5. What did Judas do when he went out from them?

JESUS KNEW WHO WOULD BETRAY HIM

Read: Psalm 41:7-12

After Jesus had passed the bread and the cup, He said to the disciples, "The hand of him who is going to betray Me is with Mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays Him" (Luke 22:21; Isaiah 53:10). Jesus spoke of the prophecies about Himself written by David in Psalm 41:9 and by the prophet Isaiah.

Matthew tells us that, when Jesus said this about the one who would betray Him, Judas Iscariot said, "Surely not I" (Matt 26:25).

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is you."

Then Jesus dipped a piece of bread into the dish of sauce made with olive oil and spices and gave it to Judas (John 13:26). When Judas took the bread from Jesus' hand, he left the room and went out into the night (John 13:27-30).

The disciples stared at one another, not knowing which of them Jesus meant (John 13:22). They began to ask each other which among them would do this. "And a dispute arose as to who among them was considered to be the greatest" (Luke 22:23-24).

Matthew and Mark place this event before the bread and wine had been passed. Luke places it after. The commentator Matthew Henry (1662) says, "It seems plain that Judas did not receive the Lord's Supper, did not eat the bread and drink of that cup for, after the solemnity was over, Christ said, 'Behold. The hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.'" (KJV).

Jesus said this act of betrayal was to fulfill the Scripture which said: "He who shares My bread has lifted up his heel against Me" (John 13:18; Psalm 41:9).

TALK ABOUT

1. What is "the Lord's Supper?"
2. Who told Christians to celebrate His death?

3. What does it remind the believer of?
4. How often did Jesus tell His disciples to remember His death (1 Cor 11:25-26)?

FALSE TEACHING

For three hundred years, the early Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper as Jesus had told them to. Paul, speaking to the believers in Corinth said, "I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you...This cup is the New Covenant in My blood'....." (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

In this passage of Scripture, Paul laid out the way Jesus wanted His people to eat the Lord's Supper, in celebration of His death and resurrection. We are told that the early Christians did this in their homes (Acts 2:42, 46).

At some time in the history of the Roman Church, error crept into the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It was said that the bread and wine, administered by a Roman priest, was transformed and became the literal "flesh and blood" of Jesus Christ. The appearance and taste did not change, but the inner quality of the symbols became spiritual. This is not so!

This doctrine, accepted by the Roman Church in 1215, is not true to the Bible. It destroys the true meaning of this holy sacrament and adds to the mystery and superstition for which the Roman Church is well known.

Most Christian churches today adopt what is called "the Dynamic View" of the bread and wine developed by the Protestant Reformers Calvin and Zwingli. The elements (the bread and the wine) are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus. His body had not been broken, nor His blood shed at the time He spoke the words to His disciples in the upper room.

Christ has risen and is seated on His glorious throne in heaven, yet He is present by His Spirit when we worship at the Lord's Table. We are blessed to have Him present by His Holy Spirit, as we take the bread and wine with reverence and understanding (Eph 1:7; 2:14-16; Col 2:6-10, 19).

Teaching that says Jesus is in heaven redeeming us now, or that we are redeemed again each time we take the bread and the wine is error (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus rose again from the dead and "entered the Most Holy Place (heaven) once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). The verb used *heurisko* means "to find for oneself, to get or obtain" the end which had been in view from the beginning of time (Eph 1:4).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did God find fault with the people (Heb 8:8)?
2. Why did Jesus come to earth and die on the cross?
3. What did God say about the condition of all mankind (Rom 2:10-12)?
4. Some say that we are 'saved' each time we eat the bread and take the cup. Is this true?
5. Why did God set aside the Old Covenant and make a New Covenant (Heb 8:13)?

THE OLD COVENANT IS GONE

Read: Romans 10:2-10

The Old Covenant was made effective by the sacrifice of bulls and goats on the altar. Their blood 'covered' or atoned for the sins of the people. When Jesus was crucified for the sins of the whole world, the Old Covenant passed away. God said, "By calling the Covenant 'New,' He has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb 8:13). When God says something is aged and obsolete, we had better believe it. The Old Covenant with its sacrifices and regulations is gone forever (Col 2:17).

Many of the early Hebrew Christians (and even some today) try to keep the Old Covenant for their spiritual instruction and nourishment.

No one could keep all the rules and regulations of the Old Covenant. As James observed, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10).

For fifteen hundred years the Old Covenant showed man his failure and his hopeless state. God said, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away (from God), they have together become worthless..." (Rom 2:10-12).

OUR PLACE IN THE NEW COVENANT

The blood of thousands of animals, sacrificed by the people of Israel made the persons who brought the sacrifice outwardly clean. "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ who, through the eternal spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" (Heb 9:13-14).

Thank God for the New Covenant which was made effective by the perfect, sinless blood of Jesus Christ. "When Christ came as High Priest...He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is...not part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:11-12).

Paul put it in a nutshell when he wrote, "In Him (Jesus Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7).

God gave the Old Covenant promises to Abraham (Gen 12:2-3). After the people of Israel came out of Egypt, He gave them again as a written code of Law. Moses received the Law from God on Mt Sinai (Ex 20:1-21). It was written on tablets of stone.

When Christ came and died for man's sin, He brought those who believe in Him into a New Covenant relationship with God. The New Covenant is written on men's hearts by God's Spirit when they put their faith in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:3). God gives each one His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who seals the believer into God's family (Eph 1:13-14).

A BETTER COVENANT

The New Covenant is "a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6). It provides grace that enables a man or woman to do all that it demands. The Holy Spirit writes it on our hearts and teaches us its truth (John 16:14), so that no man need say to his brother, "teach his brother, saying, 'know the Lord'." (Jer 31).

Is it built on "better promises." It promises the sinner forgiveness. God said, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Heb 8:12; Jer 31:31-34). It promises the born-again person acceptance before the Father in heaven. He or she is "accepted in the beloved" Jesus Christ (Eph 1:4). The New Covenant promises us the power of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who works grace in the heart and enables the believer to "work out" in everyday living everything the Spirit works in him or her (Phil 2:13). The promise is that the believer will go on from faith to faith being made more and more into the likeness of Jesus (1 Cor 3:18).

The New Covenant promises that those who receive it and feast on God's word will "grow in grace and a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Heb 8:11; 2 Peter 3:18). They will not need a priest to teach them, nor to represent them before God as they did under the Old Covenant.

The articles of the New Covenant are sealed to the believer in the Lord's Supper. He or she is being represented in heaven, before God the Father, by Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant (1 Tim 2:5).

TALK ABOUT

1. What is God's purpose for each person (Heb 9:14)?
2. How can sinners serve a holy God?
3. Who is the Mediator of the New Covenant (1 Tim 2:5)?
4. Why do men need a Mediator to stand between them and God?

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

Read: Acts 2:1-36

The New Covenant pointed to that day when the Holy Spirit would come to men's hearts and teach them about God (Jer 31:34). The Holy Spirit writes God's laws on the hearts of believers. They know Him in a personal way (1 John 4:13). The Holy Spirit shows them the truth of God's word (John 16:13).

In a vision, John the Apostle saw the Christian Church as "a great multitude that no one could count, standing before the throne in heaven" (Rev 7:9). They came from every nation, tribe, people and language group.

When Jesus Christ died, God brought in the New Covenant, He "set aside the first to establish the second" (Heb 10:9). He will never go back to the Old Covenant of law.

THE NEW COVENANT EMBRACES ALL PEOPLES

The Gentiles had always been welcome to join with God's people and some did, but not many had heard the invitation. Under the New Covenant God commanded believers to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Matt 28:19-20). He said His Kingdom would not be complete until this gospel was preached to every nation (Matt 24:14). If that were possible, God had opened His arms even wider to embrace all men and women from every tribe, language and culture (Rev 7:9).

Jesus had explained to His disciples, "that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teacher of the Law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Matt 16:21). He was not driven to His suffering, but went cheerfully.

He said, "I am the Good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep...I lay down My life - only to take it up again...I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They, too, will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd" (John 10:11, 16). Jesus saw men and women coming to Him from all nations.

So did the Old Testament prophets. Joel saw the time of the New Covenant when God would pour out His Spirit on His servants, both men and women (Joel 2:29). Joel was speaking to Jews, but Peter took Joel's words and applied them to all men and women everywhere who believed in Jesus (Acts 2:16-21). Peter said God's promise was "for you and your children (the Jews), and for all who are far off (the scattered Jews) - for all whom the Lord our God will call (the Gentile peoples)" (Acts 2:39).

TALK ABOUT

1. How can we know what God wants us to do (John 16:13)?
2. Why should we obey God?
3. Why was a New Covenant needed?
4. When did God bring in the New Covenant (Luke 22:20)?
5. How can we belong to God (1 John 4:13)?

WE EAT AT OUR PERIL

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:26-33

“Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,” Paul told the believers at Corinth, “you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes (again)” (1 Cor 11:26-33). We witness to all men that we honour and worship Jesus Christ.

Paul instructed them with the words, “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.” Because “whoever eats of the bread and drinks of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27). Anyone who eats without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep” (a common phrase used in the first century for death).

“If we judge ourselves (before we come to the Lord’s Table), we would not come under (God’s) judgment after. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined, so that we will not be condemned with the world.”

Paul said plainly that by partaking of the Lord’s Supper, we “participate in the body and blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 10:16). That is we share together in the great sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross. We have a personal interest in His death because by it we receive forgiveness and salvation.

It is the responsibility of each person “to examine himself”, repent of any known sin and ask for God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

The Christian at Corinth were celebrating the Lord’s Supper during an ordinary meal. They brought their own food and ate heartily and some got drunk. They ate without regard to those who had little to eat. They were not confessing their sins, without thought of waiting for each other.

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did Jesus allow the soldiers arrest Him (Mark 14:36)?
2. Who were the “other sheep” Jesus spoke of (John 10:16)?

WE WILL BE JUDGED IN THIS LIFE

God disciplines those who refuse to discipline themselves. He does this so that we are not “condemned with the world.” The world is “kept in store” for judgment. God is jealous of His own glory. The believer is held secure in God’s hand. God may take that one who eats unworthily out of this world, rather than let him or her bring dishonour to their Lord.

The Holy Spirit was sent to “convict the world of guilt in regard to sin” (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit works the same work in the believer. He convicts us of our sins, so that we can repent. If we do not listen to the Spirit’s voice, He may stop speaking (1 Thess 5:19).

When we sin and do not repent, our fellowship with the Father is broken. God wants us to have an unbroken relationship with Him as His own sons and daughters. He disciplines us to being this about (Heb 12:5-7; 10-11).

JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE

Read: John 6:47-51

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. He said, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not

die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:47-51).

The Jews who heard Jesus’ words began to argue and ask each other, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”

Jesus continued, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food, and My blood is real drink.

“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live (eternally) because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever” (John 6:52-60).

When they heard this, many of His disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

“Eating” is the same as “believing.” The Israelites ate manna in the desert and it kept them alive for a time. Jesus is the manna which came from heaven to bring us everlasting life. He said, “Whoever hears My word and believes on Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

“Death” in Jesus’ discourse means everlasting separation from God. By faith in Christ and His word, we cross over from death to eternal life. It happens the moment we believe (John 3:16). God gives the person’s spirit a new-birth by His Spirit and he or she becomes one of God’s children (John 3:5,8).

TALK ABOUT

1. What had happened to the believers in Corinth (1 Cor 11:30)?
2. Why does God judge those who eat and drink in an “unworthy manner?”
3. When Jesus spoke of ‘eating’ His flesh, the disciples said... (John 6:60)? What did they mean?
4. Do you have a good appetite for God’s word?
5. Who do we have to tell us what the Scriptures mean (John 16:14)?

FEASTING ON JESUS CHRIST

Read: John 15:1-8

To ‘feast on Jesus,’ means to read the Bible and learn more and more about Jesus Christ. God’s word is the same as Christ’s flesh. The Bible is the “living word,” which came from the hand of God. To feast on Jesus means:

1. To have an appetite for the things of God. This begins with a hunger and a thirst for righteousness (Matt 5:6).
2. We receive God’s words as for ourselves. We obey what the word says. We become “doers of the word, not hearers only” (James 1:22).
3. We delight in Christ’s salvation. As Paul, “We know nothing except Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).
4. We depend on God the Holy Spirit completely for our guidance and strength.
5. We say “No” to the things of the world (Gal 6:14-16).

To receive life, a man or woman must receive Jesus Christ into his or her heart by faith. To grow up in faith, a man or woman must study God’s word. If we do this, “we remain in Him (Jesus Christ) and He remains in us.”

Jesus said, “If a man remain in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me (or without Me) you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).

“Fruit” are those character traits that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the believer: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Jesus said, “The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:62-63). The words don’t give life, but the Holy Spirit gives life.

God gives eternal life to all who believe Christ’s words (John 5:24). Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31). Peter said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:20).

The living water which Christ gives is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came on all believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). All believers depend on the Holy Spirit in everything they do. The Holy Spirit ministers the life of Christ and His power to Christians who serve their Lord “in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Under the Old Covenant no one enjoyed the power and blessing of God’s Spirit. When the Spirit came on men in the Old Testament, it was to give them wisdom and power for a special work only.

Christ’s body of flesh was home to His spirit for a brief thirty three years. We cannot eat His flesh, but we can believe in His words. He was teaching the meaning of His words. Just as God is spirit, so His words are Spirit filled. Jesus’ words came from God, so they also are Spirit filled (John 12:49-50). They are not the words of a man. And men can only understand Jesus’ words with the help of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12-14).

To drink from Christ means to believe His words and receive new, spiritual life from Him. Jesus called the Holy Spirit “living water.” He said to the woman at the well, “Whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give...will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

TALK ABOUT

1. Jesus has told us to feast on Him. What does this mean to you?
2. When did the Holy Spirit come on all believers (Acts 2:1-4)?
3. Does the Holy Spirit come to each person when they are born again (John 3:5,8)?
4. Have you been born again by God’s Spirit?
5. Do you enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant? Can you name some of these blessings?

A MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Paul wrote, “Not that we are competent to claim anything of ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us....ministers of a New Covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Paul said this New Covenant is written on the hearts of believers. It is God’s law of love written “not with ink, and not on tablets of stone,” but by the Spirit on human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

In Paul’s ministry, he contrasted what he lived and taught under the New Covenant with what used to be under the Old Covenant. The Old was written on tablets of stone by the finger of God and given to Moses at Mount Sinai. It was a covenant of law.

The law said, "You must obey." It came with many regulations. It demanded righteousness, something no one could achieve. So the law condemned man and pointed to his failure, so it fulfilled its mission.

In their ignorance of God's holiness and their own sinfulness, the people promised, "We will do everything the Lord has said" (Exodus 19:8). How out of touch they were!

The covenant of law did not give man power to obey. Paul found that "the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death" (Romans 7:10, 12). The law pointed to his sin and its punishment.

Where the Old Covenant pointed the accusing finger and condemned men to death, the New Covenant promised righteousness and life by the power of God's Spirit which He gives to all who believe (Ephesians 1:13).

THE GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT

Under the Old Covenant, the glory was veiled and passing as was the glory that appeared on Moses' face (2 Cor 3:7-11). Under the New Covenant, the veil was torn away and the glory was thrown open for every person to share. "For what was glorious (then) has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory" of the New Covenant. For the glory of the New Covenant is that it is everlasting (Jeremiah 32:40).

Its glory is seen in the life of the believer, because what is written on the heart by the Spirit shows forth in the life. As Paul told the believers in Corinth, "You show that you are a letter from Christ...written not with ink...but with the Spirit of the living God."

TALK ABOUT

1. Paul wrote, "The commandment is holy, righteous and good." Why, then, did God bring in a New Covenant?
2. Where is the glory of the New Covenant seen?
3. Is the New Covenant open to all people (Acts 2:21)?
4. Who gives the power to live a righteous life (Eph 1:13)?

THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT

Read: Hebrews 2:5-15

In the New Covenant God gave us two wonderful blessings:

1. God sent His Son born of a human mother and born under the jurisdiction of the Law, that He might redeem those who were under the authority of the Law and lead us into becoming, by adoption, true sons of God" (Gal 4:4 Phillips Translation).
2. "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out 'Abba, Father'." (Gal 4:4-6).

The first blessing was readily observed. Jesus took upon Him a human body, lived as we live and died on the cross (Gal 4:4).

The second blessing is inward. God gives us the Spirit, which no man can see, so that we might live like His children in close fellowship with Him.

In all these things, God's great objective is to possess man's heart. From the heart a man loves and wills and acts. The will of man is not free, except the man's heart sets his will free to respond to God.

God made man's heart for His own abode so that, through the full possession of the heart, He might show forth His glory. All that Christ has done is worked into the believer's heart by the Spirit - His atonement by the cross, His sanctification by the Spirit and His glorification at the right

hand of the Majesty on High. We are heirs and joint heirs with Christ of all the blessings of the New Covenant.

GOD HAS DONE EVERYTHING

Under the Old Covenant man failed miserably. Under the New Covenant, God does everything that is required of a man in that man's heart. Under the old, man's heart of stone could not please God (Ezek 36:26). Under the new, God gives the believer a new heart. Into the new heart God puts "the fear of the Lord," (reverence for Him) the abundance of His love, the desire for holiness and fellowship and the strength to obey.

By the Spirit Christ rules in the heart. Our hearts become the temple of God (2 Cor 6:16). His glory rests on us and dwells in us and changes us into the same likeness "with ever-increasing glory, who comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

TALK ABOUT

1. What two blessings came to us in the New Covenant?
2. Why does God want to fully possess a man's heart?
3. Does God fully possess your heart?
4. What evidence is there of this?

THE MESSENGER AND MEDIATOR

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

In the New Covenant, Christ is supreme (Phil 2:5-11). He is King Jesus. Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises (Heb 8:6). The prophet said, "Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the Messenger of the covenant...will come" (Mal 3:1). Jesus is Himself called a covenant (Isa 42:6; 49:8). The union between God and man, between righteousness and peace, was fulfilled in Him personally (Psalm 85:10).

He is the Messenger of the Covenant. He came suddenly in history to establish and proclaim the New Covenant (Mark 1:15; Luke 22:20).

He is a Mediator of the New Covenant because His blood paid the price for our sins. Now He stands before God for us and we come to the Father through Him. We are assured of His never-ceasing intercession on our behalf. We pray in His name. He receives our prayers and presents them to the Father (John 14:13; 16:23).

A COVENANT BASED ON GOD'S OATH

God said to the Son, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind: 'You are a priest forever.' Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:20-22; Psalm 110:4).

Some versions of the Bible use the word "surety," a person who stands in for another. Judah, speaking to Joseph about the boy Benjamin said, "Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father" (Gen 44:32). Judah was surety to his father for his younger brother. If anything happened to Benjamin, Judah would have taken the blame. If Jacob let Benjamin go with them to Egypt, Judah would bring the lad safely home again.

Jesus stands surety to the Father for our salvation now and our future in heaven. And He guarantees to us that God's part in the New Covenant will be faithfully performed. He promises that every son and daughter, born again into the New Covenant, will reach heaven safely (John 14:2-3).

TALK ABOUT

1. Who is Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 8:6)?
2. Who said He will come again and take all who believe to heaven?
3. When will Jesus come again (Matt 24:36,42)?
4. Are you ready to meet Jesus Christ when He does come?

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Read: Hebrews 9:1-15

Moses said to the people, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep" (Heb 9:20). The blood is among the most mysterious yet the most glorious thoughts of God.

God said to Israel, "The life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar..." (Lev 17:11).

To 'atone' means to cover over. The blood of sacrifice covered the sins of the people so that God did not see them. The difference between the two covenants is the difference between the blood of bulls and goats and the sinless blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The worth and power of the blood of Jesus is the measure of the worth and power of the New Covenant. It made the New Covenant infinitely superior to the Old Covenant.

The sins committed under the Old Covenant were not taken away. They were 'covered' and waiting for the blood of Jesus to be shed. "For this reason, Christ is the Mediator of a New Covenant...now that He has died to set them free from (the guilt) of sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). The shed blood of Jesus cancelled forever the sins of the past, present and future for those who put their faith in Him.

Not only were the sins of the world atoned for by Christ's death (John 1:29), but the power of sin was forever broken. The blood of Christ gives us the victory we so desperately need against Satan and all evil. Sin does not have any more claim on those who are made clean by the blood. And the blood of Jesus goes on cleansing the sinner who keeps on coming to Christ in repentance (Heb 7:25; 1 John 1:9).

We give all praise "to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father - to Him be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev 1:5).

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

The angel told Mary that the One born to her would be great. He would be called "the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His Kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33).

Before Him "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11). Every spirit that ever lived will bow the knee to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

He will rule over the House of God which is made up of believers called out of every people and nation under heaven. This multitude is represented in Scripture as the "House of Jacob, the House of Judah, and the House of Israel" (Hebrews 8:8).

HAVE YOU BELIEVED?

The apostle John told us more about Jesus and His relationship to the Father than any other gospel writer. John wrote, "In Him (Jesus Christ) was Life, and that Life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

John came as a witness, to tell men about that Light, Jesus Christ, “so that through Him (Jesus Christ) all men might believe.” John was not that Light; “he came only as a witness to the Light. This was the true Light that gives light to every man who comes into the world” (John 1:7-9).

God has given every man a conscience to know right from wrong. He has given every person the same amount of ‘light.’ Yet before the New Covenant was sealed by the blood of Christ, men did not have the Holy Spirit to teach them the things of God.

God did not send the Holy Spirit into men’s hearts until after Christ was glorified. A cloud of ignorance shrouded the hearts of even the best of men. Paul told the men of Athens, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance.” He was not quick to serve judgment on the idol-worshipping Gentiles. “He was patient with them...” (2 Peter 3:9), “but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed...” the man Christ Jesus (Acts 17:30-31).

THE END OF TIME

God will bring an end to time, just as He began it. The hymn writer gave us the words taken from the Bible’s account of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 4:16-18).

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound
And time shall be no more;
And the morning breaks eternal bright and fair;
When the saved on earth shall gather
Over on the other shore,
And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.

TALK ABOUT

1. Will you be there?
2. How can you be sure?
3. What happened to the Old Covenant (Heb 8:13)?
4. Did believers in Jesus Christ immediately abandon the Old Covenant?
5. Is there any reason at all to try and keep the Old Covenant?

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