



LESSON 3

Old Covenant/ New Covenant



“YOUR eyes *saw* my substance, being *yet* unformed.
And in YOUR book they *all were written*, the days *fashioned*
for *me*, when as *yet* there were NONE of them.”

Psalm 139:16

A decorative header featuring a collage of fresh produce including green olives, a peach, and various green leaves. The text is centered within a white rectangular box with a thin black border.

IN SEASON

Old Covenant/New Covenant

LESSON 3

OLD COVENANT/NEW COVENANT (Hezekiah prays for long life)

Just within the body of our own church (and it is surely true of almost every church), we find many different beliefs instilled in us by our parents, grandparents, or the teachings of various churches we may have attended. When I visited my grandma and grandpa's church as a child, I had to wear white gloves on my hands, shiny black patent leather shoes, a dress and petticoat, and lace-trimmed socks. We were to look our finest for God out of respect for Him and the day. We could whoop and holler when we got home and change into our shorts and flip-flops for the rest of the day. But at church, we barely moved on the pews. The "minister" wore something like a choir robe. There were a lot of do's and don'ts, and I lived in constant fear that I would do something wrong. I didn't even know what that might be, but I sat very quietly and still, just in case. Looking at the stained-glass windows kept me occupied.

I stopped attending church for a time, but when I began to attend another church as a young adult, the atmosphere was very different. We could go barefoot if we felt like it. The music was not from an organ but a guitar or a band. There was no choir; one of the pastors simply led us in singing. The songs were mostly new to me, straight Scripture from the Bible, although we did sometimes sing from a hymnal on Sundays. The church doors were open every day of the week for some activity or study. There were no do's and don'ts that I ever heard, and the people came in droves.

I don't recall my grandparents' church specifically teaching us that we wouldn't go to heaven if we acted a certain way, but it was certainly what I felt as I listened. If I lied or stole, or committed any number of other sins, it was over for me. That was it. I was out of heaven.

The teaching at that first church might have made me nice, but it wouldn't make me holy.

Men and women lived under the Old Covenant with an awareness of every law, in fear of breaking some commandment God gave to Moses. They needed to know precisely what God was allowing and disallowing so that they could sacrifice appropriately to atone for their sins. As time went on, they began to interpret the commandments more and more precisely to account for each and every possible eventuality, accident, illness, and sin, even if unintentional. If they displeased God, then He would not bless them.

And, of course, it was impossible to live this way perfectly. God had instituted a way for the people to get clean again before Him through sacrificial offerings of livestock and grains, but they were continually having to sacrifice something to be cleansed from their sins. No one could (or can) live perfectly without ever committing a single sin (except Jesus, the perfectly sinless Lamb of God.)

Of course, it is crucial to teach children to be kind, get along with others, tell the truth, share, and so forth. But it isn't the teaching of salvation. The message of the second church I attended was how Jesus meant for us to see and live under the New Covenant. Jesus already paid the price for our sins—we would never have to. We are saved by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ.



Let's look at Hezekiah's prayer for which God granted him a longer life to illustrate the beliefs under the Old Covenant, which provided for God's blessing or cursing according to man's obedience or disobedience.

Briefly, what was the Old Covenant to which Hezekiah was subject? Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 outline what God covenanted to do for man if man kept God's laws. This is called the Mosaic Covenant. Specifically, God promised to bless the children of Israel and their descendants if they kept His laws.

1. From Leviticus 26, list things God promised to do if the people did what He told them to do. You can scan verses 4-12 for the information.

2. From Deuteronomy 28, make a list of things God promised to do if the people did what He told them to do. You can scan verses 3-14 for the information.

3. Now, let's look at Hezekiah. Read Isaiah 38:1-5. As you read, fill in the missing words.

vs. 1) *In those days, Hezekiah was sick and _____ . And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your _____ , for you shall _____ and not _____ .'"*

vs. 2) *Then Hezekiah turned his _____ toward the _____ , and prayed to the LORD:*

vs. 3) *And said, "Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I _____ before You in _____ and with a _____ , and have done what is _____ ." And Hezekiah _____ bitterly.*

vs. 4) *And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying,*

vs. 5) *"Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have _____ . _____ , I have _____ ; surely I will _____ to _____ fifteen years."*

4. Although Hezekiah didn't specifically ask God to prolong his life, that is certainly implied by his reaction to being told he was going to die. What is your first reaction to Hezekiah wanting a longer life?

5. What do you think might be valid reasons for asking God to prolong your life?



IN SEASON

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LESSON 3

Because we believe in the sovereignty of God to decide the events of our lives, we may at least agree that God, for His reasons, permitted or allowed Hezekiah to become sick. We don't know what sickness he was enduring, but it was going to take his life. We can also agree that God was doing Hezekiah a kindness in telling him he had only so much time to get his house in order. We don't always get this advance news before death. Some do—perhaps those who have an incurable disease. But we do all know that we will die someday.

6. What does Hebrews 9:27 say about the day we will die?

7. What does Psalms 139:16 say about the day we will die?

Since God tells us that we will die someday, we then also have the same opportunity as Hezekiah to “get our house in order.” Merriam-Webster defines this saying as *to improve or correct the way one does things.* MyEnglishPages.com* says, “The idiom was first used as a warning before death for a man to plan for his inheritance, funeral, unresolved family feuds, or any other unfinished business so that his survivors do not have to deal with them.”

Today, the phrase is often used to mean changing one's habits so that life is less chaotic. Sometimes, the expression indicates that people have to mend their personal problems or business affairs, improving or correcting the way they do things before they start criticizing others.

8. Have you gotten “your house in order”? If not, what remains to be done?

I have heard many times from pastors, a police Chaplain, and hospice workers that when a family is grieving and devastated with the loss of a loved one, it is so difficult to make important decisions. Burial or cremation? How will the family income change? What should be done with personal property? And the worst of all—what can be done about the complications created by unresolved relationship issues? I will be ever thankful that my own mother took care of all these things before her passing. She bought a cemetery plot, told us her wishes to be cremated, made arrangements for the sale of her house, sorted all her belongings to be given, sold, or saved, and put another relative's name on all her accounts. It was immeasurably helpful to not have to deal with all those things after she died. Perhaps best of all, she had said all she wanted to say to those of us remaining. And—lest you think it is too soon for us to do any of these things—remember that we do not know when that eternal call will come for us.

Hezekiah believed he had lived a life pleasing to God. On this basis, under the Old Covenant, he could ask God to prolong his life. “God, I've been good. Now do for me what You said You would do for those who obey You.”



IN SEASON

Old Covenant/New Covenant

LESSON 3

Today, we who believe in Jesus are more likely to want God to just take us to our eternal home, and the sooner, the better, for we know we will spend eternity with Him. But before Christ lived and died, there was no real assurance, with a few notable exceptions, of a heavenly home. One could never know if he really was “good enough.” Death was often viewed as God’s curse or displeasure of a life, particularly when it came to a younger person. Hezekiah was 39 years old when he prayed this prayer.

I remember being a young mom, filled with the joy of raising children, sincerely hoping that Christ would not call me home anytime soon. I didn’t want to miss the whole beautiful experience for which I had waited so long. If I had been told I had an incurable disease when I was 39 years old, I would have cried bitterly.

What looked so good to Hezekiah at the time did not produce good results. God did prolong his life by 15 years, but Hezekiah did not continue to follow God; during that 15 years, he fathered a son who lived a profoundly wicked life; he also bragged to all the wrong people about his riches, which were later stolen by the very men he bragged to.

9. If God told you had 15 years left to live, how would you feel? Would that be welcome news, or would it cause you anxiety? Why?

In the Book of Job, we see, in stark detail, the cultural attitudes held by the people in the Old Testament days. God tells us in Job 1:1 that Job was blameless, upright, and feared God and shunned evil. There can be no doubt in our minds that Job lived a life that pleased God. First, Satan accused Job to God’s face, and God gave him permission to try Job’s faith. Then Job’s three so-called comforters accused him (from chapters 3 through 37) of being a sinner unwilling to admit his sin and repent. Why did they feel the freedom to accuse a righteous, blameless man? Because since Job had suffered terrible losses, it appeared that God had cursed him. They had no evidence whatsoever of any wrongdoing—they only surmised that he had done something to displease God, so God’s blessing was removed, and only His curse remained.

Because of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, we do not live under the Old Covenant but under the New Covenant.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.

10. What does God promise in verse 31?

11. In verse 32, what did God’s people do with the Old Covenant?



IN SEASON

Old Covenant/New Covenant

LESSON 3

12. In verses 33-34, God tells us what HIS involvement would be in the New Covenant. List what God covenanted to do for His people.

13. What is the main difference you see between the Old and New Covenants, as recorded by Jeremiah?

14. Read Galatians 3:13-14. Why is the curse on us no longer in effect?

15. What do we receive by faith alone and not by works?

Read Colossians 2:13-14.

16. What were we dead in?

17. What has Jesus done for us?

18. What did Jesus wipe out?

19. What did He nail to the cross?

20. Write out Hebrews 8:13.

21. Read John 19:30. What three words did Jesus declare just before He died on the Cross?

We see that we, as partakers of the New Covenant, are saved by God's grace based on the finished work of Christ. We do not gain His favor by our good works. There is certainly an "outworking" of our faith, where our faith in Jesus gives us a reason to do those good works, in particular, to show His love to the world. But since Christ took our sins on Himself, we don't have to prove anything.



IN SEASON

Old Covenant/New Covenant

LESSON 3

22. Hezekiah prayed in his own name, on his own merits of good deeds, known in Scripture as “self-righteousness.” According to John 16:24, in whose name, and based on His own righteousness, do we pray today?

23. Read Philippians 3:8-9. Verse 9 summarizes this week’s lesson. Fill in the missing words from both verses.

“Yet indeed I also count _____ for the _____ of the _____ of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have _____ of _____ things, and count them as _____, that I may _____ and be found in Him, not having _____, which is from _____, but that which is through _____, the righteousness which is from _____.”

24. Finish this week’s homework by writing in your prayer journals a prayer of commitment for the remainder of time the Lord gives you in this life, based on 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

