

Lesson 112

God's New Covenant

The old sacrificial system was replaced by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus.

Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Introduction

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. The nations of Israel and Judah received God's punishment for their continued disobedience to God and his commands. The people of Israel were defeated by the Assyrians and exiled, or taken away, to their lands. Then the people of Judah were conquered by the Babylonians and exiled to their lands. The prophet Jeremiah told the people of Judah that they would have 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

Who remembers some of the exiles we have learned about so far? What young men from Judah were taken to serve King Nebuchadnezzar? Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

God blessed the faithfulness and obedience of these men while they were serving foreign kings. They faced some difficult times, like a fiery furnace and a lions' den, but God protected them.

Then we learned about another exile named Ezekiel. He was a priest and prophet living in Babylon.

What special and unusual thing did God give Ezekiel? A vision of God's glory.

Slide #3

Refer to Lesson 111 Theme Poster. Ezekiel was given a vision of God's glory. It was so amazing that it was hard for him to describe, but he used words like brightness, fire, lightning, gleaming metal, and even a rainbow! He was overwhelmed by the sight of the Lord on his throne, and he fell on his face. Another prophet, Isaiah, was also given a vision of God, and then the Apostle John recorded his vision of the Son of Man, Jesus, in heaven. God's glory and holiness overwhelmed these men with awe, and they were humbled before him by their own sin.

Have Illustrations and optional items ready to show. I'm going to hold up some pictures, and I want you to call out if the items are old or new (current). Ready? Hold up pictures, one at a time, and have students call out the answer. You may discuss some of the unfamiliar items with the class and how technology has changed or improved. If you brought items from home (i.e., VHS or cassette tape, vinyl record, DVD, old camera, smart phone), show those to the class and discuss along with the pictures.

The Two Covenants

Today our lesson is about a prophecy God gave Jeremiah about a new covenant. This message from God gave the exiled people hope as they were living far from

the promised land. The new covenant is also for us! We will compare the old covenant and the new covenant from God using our Class Notes.

Pass out the Class Notes.

Who remembers what a covenant is? Serious promise or agreement.

When God makes a covenant we know it will happen because God is faithful to keep his promises. God made a covenant with his people, the Israelites, in the Old Testament. We call this the old covenant.

The Ten Commandments were a big part of the old covenant. God gave laws to Moses and the people right after he brought them out of slavery in Egypt. The laws told people how to live, how to worship God, and how to interact with the nations around them. They had to obey the laws in order to get God's blessing.

The old covenant and all its laws were impossible to keep. That is because all men are sinners—even the high priests who offered the sacrifices. Because they were sinners, the people of Israel could not obey God's laws. They kept disobeying him. And God had to punish their sin.

But God had a plan, and he sent his prophet Jeremiah to tell of his plan. The message Jeremiah brought from God was of a new and better covenant. It included promises that would bring eternal hope for the people at that time—and for all ages to come!

Slide #4

Slide #5

Slide #6

Slide #7

Jeremiah 31:31–34

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn to Jeremiah 31:31–34. Who will read for us? Choose readers.

What was the Lord going to make? A new covenant.

Who was the Lord going to make this new covenant with? The house of Israel and the house of Judah.

The Lord was saying that he was ready to make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah, who were in captivity.

In the new covenant, where was God going to put his law? Within them, on the hearts of the people.

The old covenant was written on stone tablets—it included the Ten Commandments. But God promised that the new covenant would be written on their hearts.

What does that mean, that the law will be written on their hearts? Allow discussion.

It will be a personal covenant, one that people desire to keep in their hearts rather than laws written in stone.

Slide #8Slide #9Slide #10

Now look at your Class Notes. You will choose a picture to draw for each statement. Who will read #1 and tell us which picture goes with it? Choose a reader. Stone tablets. Have students complete drawing for #1.

And #2. Who will read that? What drawing goes with it? Choose a reader. Heart with writing on it. Complete #2.

Look in Jeremiah 31:34. God gave a very important promise about this new covenant. What did God say he would do for those in the new covenant? He will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more.

Remember that in the old covenant it was impossible to keep all the laws of God. Think about the Ten Commandments for a minute. How many times in a day do we disobey our parents? That's breaking God's command to honor our father and mother. How many times have we wanted something that someone else has? That's the sin of coveting. How many times have we lied or covered up the truth to get out of trouble? That's bearing false witness. The closer we look at God's laws, the more we realize we can't keep them perfectly. We are enslaved to sin—it's as if we are chained to it.

What will you draw to go with #3 on the Class Notes? Chains. Complete #3.

God demands perfect obedience. When we disobey, we sin. God must punish sin that is not forgiven. But, in the new covenant, God was promising forgiveness of the sins we all commit. How could we be forgiven if we can't obey God's laws?

The Perfect High Priest

Jeremiah was promising a Redeemer—someone who would die in the place of sinners and take the punishment for sin on himself through his death—a perfect sacrifice. And we know now that only Jesus Christ, the Messiah—God as man—could do that. Jesus was without sin. Jesus alone can offer forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven through the new covenant. His life, death, and resurrection offer everyone who will believe in him the promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Do we have to work or do anything good to receive the forgiveness Jesus offers? No.

Slide #11Slide #12

Ephesians 2:8–10

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn to the New Testament book of Ephesians. Who will read Ephesians 2:8–10? Choose a reader.

How are we saved? By what? By grace through faith.

And this salvation by God's grace through faith is described as what? A gift of God, not by works.

The new covenant through Jesus is a gift of God, not earned by works, lest anyone should boast, or say, "I'm so great that Jesus saved me." Verse 10 tells us that we should do good works to show our love for God, not to earn his favor or bribe him to overlook our sins.

Slide #13

Slide #14

On the Class Notes, what picture goes with #4 to show Jesus' gift of salvation? Gift. Complete #4.

Let's look at another big difference between the old and new covenants. The old covenant, back in the Old Testament before Jesus came, included lots of different priests. The high priests were men, and they were sinners. They made animal sacrifices to God to cover their own sins and the sins of the people. And they had to make the sacrifices over and over and over.

What picture goes with #5 to show the sinfulness of the priests? Black heart. Complete #5.

The sacrifices the priests made did not take the sins away—the blood of those sacrifices only covered the sins, and they had to be made over and over because the people continued to sin.

Slide #15

Slide #16

Hebrews 9:11–12

Now turn to the book of Hebrews. Who will read Hebrews 9:11–12 about the new covenant? Assign a reader.

What is Jesus called in Hebrews 9:11? High priest.

What was Christ the high priest of? The good things that have come.

When the priests of the old covenant made sacrifices, what were they sacrificing? Animals.

And how often did they need to make those animal sacrifices?

Allow discussion.

They made the animal sacrifices day after day. Over and over animals had to be sacrificed, and their blood would temporarily cover the people's sins.

In Hebrews 9:12, we see that Jesus did not come with the blood of animals like goats and calves. What did Jesus offer? His own blood.

And what did Jesus' sacrifice secure for sinners? Eternal redemption.

The phrase "once for all" in verse 12 means his death happened only once. Jesus was and still is the only perfect high priest. Jesus was without sin, so only he could offer a sacrifice—his own life—that would be worthy to redeem sinners and offer forgiveness of sins.

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

What picture goes with #6 to show Jesus' perfect, sinless life? White heart. Complete #6.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross put an end to the animal sacrifices that were offered over and over by the sinful high priest. His death on the cross offered forgiveness of sins to all who believe in him.

What picture goes with #7 to show that priests had to kill animals to cover their sins and the sins of the people? Knife. Complete #7.

What picture goes with #8 to show the end of animal sacrifices? Crossed out knife. Complete #8.

Do you see how the new covenant is better than the old covenant? The people didn't have to keep making animal sacrifices to cover their sins. Jesus made one sacrifice, allowing his own blood to be shed for the forgiveness of sins forever!

Imagine, if you can, that every time you sinned against God—whether it's disobedience, selfishness, lying, stealing, or anything, no matter how small—an animal had to be sacrificed. What if the blood of a sheep or a bird had to be shed every time you committed a sin? Every day you would have to bring an animal to be killed by the priest for the sins committed that day—even accidental sins!

That was how people lived under the old covenant. The priests had to keep killing animals to cover their own sin and the sin of the people. Their sacrifices could never take away sin or completely forgive sin.

But the new covenant was different, and the section of Jeremiah 31 we read is repeated in Hebrews 8:8–13. The promise given through Jeremiah was fulfilled in the new covenant. Jesus came—our perfect high priest. Jesus sacrificed his own blood to take away sin. And he only had to make that sacrifice once for all by shedding his blood and dying on the cross. Then he conquered death by coming back to life! That is the new covenant—God's promise of forgiveness through Jesus. Now, all who trust in him, turn from their sins, and receive his forgiveness will be saved.

Slide #20

Slide #21

Let's finish the last two pictures in the Class Notes. What will you draw for #9 to show the animal sacrifices? Lamb. Complete #9.

Who will read #10 and tell us what picture goes with it? Choose a reader. Cross. Complete #10.

Application

Slide #22

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. God's plan to forgive us from our sins and bring redemption to his people was in place from the beginning. For a long time, God's people lived under the old covenant that God gave to Moses. The old covenant included many laws that the people could never fully obey and a sacrificial system that demanded that animal sacrifices be made over and over, day after day. But God sent his prophet Jeremiah to tell of the new covenant. The new covenant promised to put God's law in the hearts of people who were redeemed—saved from sin. The new covenant offered one sacrifice—a perfect

sacrifice, Jesus Christ—who would offer forgiveness for all who believed and trusted in him.

You know, a lot of people still believe that they need to work and be good to get to heaven. The law for those people is still written on tablets of stone—they are still living under the old covenant. And the Bible is very clear that we can never obey the law perfectly because we are all sinners.

I don't think these people know about the new covenant we studied today. This new covenant is about God's grace and mercy to sinners. It is about the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ and his free gift of salvation. The new covenant is NOT about doing good things so that God will love us and let us into heaven but doing good works to show our gratitude to God for saving us. When we believe in Jesus, our sins are forgiven, and God's law is written on our hearts. God gives us the desire to obey him and the Holy Spirit to help us obey. Those who are forgiven, God's children, want to follow God and live in a way that pleases him.

But we don't need to "work" to gain God's love. Jesus did the work for us when he came to earth as a man, lived a perfect life, suffered, and died—all for sinners. God has shown his great love for us in Jesus Christ. God wants us to turn away from our sin. He wants us to ask forgiveness and believe the truth about Jesus as recorded in his Word, the Bible. That's all that sinners can do to please God.

When we truly repent and trust in Jesus, our hearts will be changed, and we will want to please God, glorify him, and honor him with our lives. We will want to obey God because we understand the love he showed us through Jesus.

Lesson Review

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

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