

## Lesson 112

# God's New Covenant

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

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

The prophet Jeremiah told the people about the new covenant God would one day establish. It would be very different and much better than the old covenant in several ways. Then, 600 years later, Jesus Christ confirmed that his blood would be shed as the sign of the covenant. He serves as the high priest and mediator of this new covenant.

## Key Passages

Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ephesians 2:8–10; Hebrews 9:11–12

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

Contrast the old and new covenants.

Describe the change that happens when God saves someone.

## Memory Verse

1 Peter 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

## Prepare to Share

### Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

God made a covenant with the children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses, at the foot of Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments, the tablets of stone bearing the testimony of the covenant, were the very essence of that covenant—the old covenant (Exodus 34:27–29; Deuteronomy 9:9–11). And the Sabbath was the sign of the covenant (Exodus 31:12–18), just as circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:9–14). This old covenant is also referred to as the Mosaic Covenant (because of Moses' involvement).

The old covenant was meant to instruct the Israelites how to live to the honor and glory of God. It included many laws the people were commanded to keep—not only the Ten Commandments but also specific laws on how to live with one another and with the nations around them. It included laws of worshipping God through Sabbaths, tithes, offerings, and sacrifices. God said that Israel would be his treasured possession if they would obey his commands (Exodus 19:4–8). They failed . . . miserably.

As the time of the Messiah was drawing near, God revealed through Jeremiah a glimpse of the new covenant that would be established between God and his people (Jeremiah 31:31). Jeremiah revealed that in this new covenant, God's law would be written on the hearts of the people rather than on stone. The people would know God, and God would forgive them and no longer remember their sin (Jeremiah 31:32–34). This new covenant was made possible only by Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the old covenant through his perfect obedience and introduced the new covenant by the shedding of his own blood so that sinners could be forgiven.

God made connections between the old and new covenants in the book of Hebrews. For example, the new covenant is described as better: Jesus is a better deliverer than Moses (Hebrews 3:5–6); Jesus is a better high priest (Hebrews 4:15, 5:1–3); Jesus is a better sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12–14); and the new covenant is made with better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

### Covenant Contrasts in Hebrews 9 & 10

#### Old Covenant

#### New Covenant

High priests who sinned and had to offer sacrifices for their own sins (Hebrews 9:7)

Jesus, the perfect, sinless, eternal high priest has no need to offer sacrifices for himself (Hebrews 9:11)

An earthly tabernacle made with hands (Hebrews 9:11)

A perfect heavenly tabernacle not made with hands (Hebrews 9:11)

Offered the blood of bulls and goats to temporarily cover sin (Hebrews 10:3–4)

A spotless, perfect sacrifice to fully redeem people from their sin (Hebrews 10:12)

Sacrifices that had to be constantly offered (Hebrews 10:11)

Jesus' perfect sacrifice offered once and for all (Hebrews 10:12–13)

High priests as the temporary mediator (Hebrews 9:7)

Jesus Christ as the eternal mediator (Hebrews 9:15)

This new covenant was confirmed by Jesus himself as he passed the bread and wine to his disciples in the upper room: "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26–28). And so, Jesus established the new covenant between God and his people, promised through Jeremiah about 600 years earlier.

### Historical/Apologetics Background

The covenant God made with Israel at Sinai (Mosaic Covenant) included conditions that would bring either God's blessing or his cursing upon the people. The history of the Old Testament reveals a pattern of disobedience on the part of Israel. When the people willfully rebelled and forsook the Lord, God brought upon them the curses.

Leviticus 26 speaks about five stages of curses in response to Israel's disobedience: first, sickness and defeat by enemies (Leviticus 26:16–17); second, drought and famine (Leviticus 26:18–20); third, being overrun by wild

beasts (Leviticus 26:21–22); fourth, the sword, more pestilence, and more famine (Leviticus 26:23–26); and finally, and most severely, destruction of Israel's cities and exile from the land (Leviticus 26:27–39). All of this God promised to bring upon Israel for breaking his covenant (Leviticus 26:14–15). And throughout Israel's history, we see God being true to his promises and punishing his people for their waywardness.

Jeremiah was the last major prophet appointed to call Israel to repentance and to covenant faithfulness—and to bring the message of judgment. The final and ultimate curse would now come upon Israel in the land of Judah—destruction of their cities and the temple and exile to a foreign land. But along with the terrible news of judgment was also good news of God's future new covenant. That new covenant, according to Jeremiah 31:31–34, includes the promise of forgiven sins. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do," Paul said, "by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

The exacting laws of the Mosaic Covenant were given to show that we can never perfectly obey God. In fact, Scripture clearly states that the old covenant, consisting of laws that could not be perfectly kept, was intended to point to Christ. The Apostle Paul said that the law was a guardian (tutor) to lead us to Christ, but now that fullness of justification by faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under the Mosaic law (Galatians 3:19–25). The old covenant has been replaced by a better covenant established on better promises (Hebrews 7:22, 8:6–7, 12:24). Only the mediator of the new covenant—Jesus—is fully sufficient to cleanse sinners from their unrighteousness, and his perfect sacrifice on the cross is the only means to redeem a people for God's glory.

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