

PURPOSE OF STUDY: To show that the difference between the Old and New Covenants is not the law, but the hearts of the people; to point to the certainty of the better promises of God given in Christ.

TEXTS:

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| 1. HEB 8:6-9 | 5. DT 5:29 |
| a. v. 9 | 6. JE 11:1-11 (PS 78:10) |
| b. v. 7 | 7. HEB 8:10 |
| c. vs. 8-9 | 8. GA 3:16 (GE 15:1-6) |
| d. v. 8 (RO 9:4) | 9. PS 105:8-10 (AC 4:12) |
| 2. EX 19:5, 8; 24:7 | 10. GA 3:17-18, 24 |
| 3. EX 34:28 (DT 4:13) | 11. HEB 8:6; EZE 36:26-28 |
| 4. DT 5:23-28 | 12. HEB 13:20 (PHP 1:6) |

THE STUDY:

1. How many salvation covenants does the Bible speak of? HEB 8:6-9 (JE 31:31-33)

The Bible speaks of two covenants, the “first” and the “second,” now generally referred to as the “Old Covenant” and the “New Covenant.” According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a “covenant” is “a binding agreement; a formal sealed agreement or contract.”

a. With whom did God make the “first covenant”? v. 9

Those “fathers” who Moses (and ultimately, God) led out of Egyptian bondage.

b. Why did God propose to make a new covenant? v. 7

Because the first covenant was faulty.

c. What was the fault with the first, or old, covenant? vs. 8, 9

The problem was “with them” – the people – in that they did not keep their end of the agreement. The Bible says “they did not continue” in the covenant.

d. Who did God say He would make a new covenant with? v. 8 (RO 9:4)

The house of Israel and the house of Judah. It is important to note that both covenants – old and new – were made with Israel. There has never been a covenant made exclusively with the Gentiles. Their only hope was to be “joined” to Israel, thus becoming a part of “Spiritual Israel” (Rom. 11; Isa. 56:1-8).

2. What were the terms of the Old Covenant? EX 19:5, 8; 24:7

The first covenant was made between God and the children of Israel at the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, when the people told Moses to make a “binding agreement” with God that whatever He said, they would do “and be obedient” (Ex. 24:7), and God promised that if they would be obedient and keep His covenant, they would be His special people.

3. What was the foundation of the agreement? EX 34:28 (DT 4:13)

It is important to understand that the Ten Commandments were not the covenant itself, but were the basis upon which the covenant was made. God’s people had agreed to obey God’s commandments.

4. Did the people make a mistake in pledging to obey God’s commandments? DT 5:23-28

On the contrary. God told Moses to tell the people that they said all the right things.

5. Where did the real problem lie? DT 5:29

The people's hearts were sinful, and therefore they lacked the moral strength to obey God's laws in their own strength. The Bible says the fault of the first covenant was "with them," – the people – because "they did not continue" in the covenant. They broke their end of the agreement

6. What did this "heart condition" lead to? JE 11:1-11 (PS 78:10)

They refused to obey, but instead walked in the imagination of their evil hearts and broke the covenant.

7. What are the terms of the New Covenant, and how is it different from the Old Covenant? HEB 8:10

God proposed to put His laws in the minds (thoughts) and hearts (affections) of his people.

8. Wasn't there a salvation covenant through Christ before Sinai? GA 3:16 (GE 15:1-6)

Yes. God's promise to Abraham was through His "seed," or descendants, whom the apostle Paul identifies as Christ.

9. What else does the Bible call this covenant? PS 105:8-10 (AC 4:12)

The everlasting covenant (compare with Rev. 14:6 – "the everlasting gospel"). All the promises of salvation must come through Christ alone.

10. Was the Law intended to replace the salvation covenant in Christ? GA 3:17-18, 24

Not at all! The law was to complement the salvation covenant in Christ by pointing the sinner to Christ for pardon and transformation. The "Old Covenant" was not God's intended agreement between Him and His people. Although His people knew that perfect obedience to God's law was the condition of salvation and eternal life, they were unconverted, and therefore felt self-sufficient and fully capable of producing that perfect obedience in their own strength. God entered into the agreement with His people at Mt. Sinai so that they would come to realize their own spiritual helplessness. He had given the ceremonial laws along with the moral law to point them to the sacrifice and priestly ministry of Christ.

11. What makes the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant? HEB 8:6; EZE 36:26-28

The Bible tells us that what makes the New Covenant a better covenant is the "better promises" that it is based upon. Note that both covenants were based on God's Ten Commandment Law, but it was not the law that was the problem. It was the people's faulty promises. The problem with the Old Covenant was the faulty promises of the people unaided by divine grace. The New Covenant is based, not on man's weak and unsure promises, but on the sure promises of a covenant-keeping God, who says that He will "write His laws" in our hearts and minds, and "cause" us to walk in His ways through the power of the Holy Spirit and the new birth.

12. How are we to live under the New Covenant? HEB 13:20-21 (PHP 1:6)

We should seek to follow God's will in everything, trusting that God will complete His work in us.

APPEAL:

Because of our fallenness, we are unable to give perfect obedience to God, which is the requirement of eternal life. We may promise our obedience again and again, only to realize we have no moral strength to uphold our end of the contract. Yet God, who is rich in mercy, offered His own Son in behalf of fallen humanity to pay the debt of our broken agreement and to open a way by which He promises to cause us to walk in His ways and guarantees a faithful new life through the blood of the New Covenant. Wouldn't you like to put your trust in the "better promises" of God through Jesus Christ?