

Q2 L10 - The New Covenant - 2021-06-05

Rod Thompson: Good morning, everyone. Happy Sabbath. Want to welcome you and thank you for joining us. This is the Granite Bay Hilltop Church "Sabbath School Study Hour," and we are continuing our study in the Sabbath school lesson on "The Promise." And today, we are going to be looking at lesson number ten, "The New Covenant."

I want to point you to our free offering today. It is a "Love That Transforms," and you can get that by calling 866-788-3966 and ask for Offer No. 710 or you would prefer a digital download. You can text the number 40544 and the code SH003.

Our teacher today is going to be Pastor Jean Ross, but before he comes out, let's begin with a word of prayer. "O loving Father, we thank you for the Sabbath Day. And Lord, we thank you that you have provided a way for us to be restored to you. And as we look at our study today, we pray for wisdom, we pray for understanding, and more importantly, Lord, we pray that you would show us what you would have us do, and that you would be with our speaker and our teacher, put your words in his mouth, that you might speak through him to us, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Jean Ross: So we're on lesson number ten in our Sabbath School quarterly entitled "The Promise." The New Covenant is our theme, and we have a memory verse. It's one that I think most of us are familiar with. Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31 says, "Behold, the days are coming, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."

Now, you've probably heard about the new covenant. You've also heard about the old covenant. Today, we're going to be looking at what is the relationship between the new covenant, the old covenant, and let me add an additional covenant that I think is even more important than both, and it's the everlasting covenant. Really, the everlasting covenant existed before the old covenant and was reaffirmed in the new covenant, and we'll see how that comes together in our study today.

From our lesson quarterly, we have the following statements. It says, "In the new covenant, the Lord will provide a new heart to know that I am the Lord." That's Jeremiah chapter 24 verse 7. "He will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh." Ezekiel chapter 11, verse 19. "And will give a new heart and a new spirit to them." Ezekiel 36:26. "He also says, 'I will put my spirit within you,' and this work of God is the foundation of the new covenant."

Now, I want you to notice in the verses that we just looked at, that God is the one that does a special work in the hearts and the lives of those who place their faith in Him. Jeremiah 31:33 says, "But this is the covenant that I'll make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord." Notice the next part, "I will put my laws in their mind, and I will write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The new covenant says that God's going to write His law, where? In the heart. And He says He's going to write it on the mind. The Ten Commandments were written on tables of stone, but that same law in the new covenant is written upon the mind or upon the heart.

Now, there's something else interesting to note about this new covenant promise, God writing His law on the mind in the Bible, the forehead often represents the mind or the heart, the thoughts. We find in Revelation that there is another special marking that occurs in the forehead of God's people. Revelation chapter 7, verse 2, "Then I saw an angel flying or ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have,'" what? "Sealed the servants of God," where? "In their foreheads."

Now, where is the new covenant promise? The law is written where? In the mind. It's interesting to note that the new covenant promise has a fulfillment in the calling of God's people in the last days. That's why the Bible tells us Revelation chapter 12, verse 17, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the remnant of her offspring, who," do what? "Keep the commandments of God and they have the testimony." And later on in Revelation 14, it says, "The faith of Jesus."

So the new covenant promise, God's law written in the heart or written on the mind, finds its fulfillment here in Revelation chapter 7, also Revelation 14, Revelation 12. It's found amongst those that surrender themselves to Christ. They have the seal of God; His law is written in their minds. They are entered into this new covenant promise or this new covenant experience.

So is it important for us in the last days to understand the importance of the new covenant? Absolutely, especially when you compare that with what we find in Revelation. Now, of all the books in the New Testament, probably the one that does the most in expanding the new covenant, is the Book of Hebrews. Now, this is actually from our lesson quarterly it says, "The Book of Hebrews places a heavy emphasis on Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary."

In fact, the clearest exposition of the new covenant in the New Testament appears in the Book of Hebrews with its emphasis on Christ as our high priest. This is no coincidence. Christ heavenly ministry is closely tied to the promise of the new covenant."

So, we are going to give the bulk of our time today to take a look, and the lesson does as well, to look at what the Book of Hebrews tells us about the new covenant. And the question we're going to be asking ourselves in the study this morning, is how can we personally enter into that new covenant experience? Now, for some of us, we might already be in that new covenant experience, and not quite understand. Maybe we have not yet entered into that covenant experience and we want to know how. How can I have God's law written in my heart or written in my mind? How does that work? Well, Paul tells us in Hebrews how this works. And it centers in Jesus and his high priestly ministry. So, let's take a look.

We're going to start in Hebrews chapter 8. You'll find probably the most or at least the clearest explanation of the new covenant in Hebrews, in Hebrews chapter 8. And it says in verse 1, "Now this is the main point of the things that we are saying." So Paul is going to zoom right in. He's going to focus right in on the essence of the new covenant. So if you want to know what it is, listen to what Paul says. "We have such a High Priest." So the focal point of the new covenant is Jesus, our High Priest, who is able to save to the utmost, all of those that come to God through him.

The focus of the new covenant is Jesus. Sometimes, we are led to believe that the focus of the new covenant is us, and our performance, and our works. But in reality, the focus of the new covenant is Jesus, His performance and His work. Who's the one that writes the law in the heart of the believer in the new covenant? It's Jesus. Thus Paul makes it clear that the focus of the new covenant, the sum of these things is Jesus. He is our High Priest; He's ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. It says of Christ, "He is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." That, of course, is God the Father, to sit at the right hand of the throne of God, testifies to the high honor, the glory and the power that belongs to Christ. Not only because He is God, He is the Creator, but He is also the Redeemer. He is our high priest. He is our sacrifice. He is the creator of a new heart, the one that puts a new spirit within us. Thus Jesus becomes front and center in the new covenant experience. Verse 2 says, speaking of Christ, "He's a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man."

Now, if you have a priesthood and you have a high priest, there is a special work that the priest does and he does it in a special place, and that place is called the sanctuary. In the Levitical priesthood, the

Levites, the priests would minister in the tabernacle. And we look at this a little bit. "The true tabernacle is the heavenly sanctuary," of course, "which the earthly was but a shadow or a type." "Exodus chapter 25, verse 9, "According to all that I have shown you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle of the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."

So during the 40 days that Moses was on Mount Sinai, God gave some specific plans as to the building of the tabernacle. And God emphasized that this was to be a miniature, a pattern of the heavenly, because what the earthly taught was what Jesus is doing in the heavenly. So it had to be exact. And they were very specific guidelines and rules established dealing with the Levitical priesthood, dealing with the sacrificial system, all of which was a shadow and a type of what Jesus, the true Lamb of God as well as the priest is to do.

Now the earthly tabernacle of which, you know, it's a miniature of the heavenly. The earthly tabernacle was comprised of three parts. You had the outer courtyard where you see the altar of burnt sacrifice. You had a basin, the laver where the priest would wash his hands and feet before going into the first compartment. And we call that first compartment the holy place. It had three articles of furniture, table of showbread, seven branch candlestick, the altar of incense.

Then there was a veil separating the holy from the most holy. And in the most holy, you found the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat. Under the mercy seat, which was the lid of the ark, you find the Ten Commandments. Remember, central to the new covenant is Jesus writing something on the hearts and the minds of His people. What is it that Jesus writes? He writes His law. You see, the law defines what love is. If we love God with all of our hearts, soul, and mind, we will keep the first four of the Ten Commandments: have no other gods before Him, don't worship idols, don't take His name in vain, remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. And if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we will keep the last six: we'll honor our parents, won't kill, won't commit adultery, won't steal, won't bear false witness, won't covet.

So really, the Ten Commandments defines for us the kind of love relationship that God wants us to have with Him, and the relationship God wants us to have with our fellow man. But the problem here is that the Ten Commandments were written on stone, and they were placed in the ark in the tabernacle. Where did God really want His law to be written? Simply on tables of stone? Was that the end? Was that the accomplishment of the task?

No, God didn't just want the law written on stone. He wanted the law written where? In the minds and the hearts of his people. The reason the old covenant failed is because the Israelites were content with having the law written on stone, hidden in the most holy place. They liked the idea of having the law over there. The problem is they didn't want the law over here. You see, that was the problem. And of course, Paul gets to this a little later in the study. Now Psalm 77, verse 13, very important verse, "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great as a God or so great a God as our God?"

Now, often we think of the sanctuary, and we think of steps, as to how we ought to approach God, and it's true. We first come to Jesus. He's our sacrifice. He's the Lamb of God. He died for our sins. We're receiving, that's justification by faith. We're then baptized, symbolizing the laver, and then we go into the holy place, we feast on the living bread, the Word of God. We share our faith. We have the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the candlestick, and the light and prayer, the altar of incense and so on. And so, yes, you can almost see the journey of the believer moving closer to God. But this verse says, "that your way, O God is in the sanctuary," not only our way, but more importantly, God's way.

You see, Jesus is the focus of the new covenant. How is Jesus going to fulfil the promise of the new covenant? The Bible says it's in the sanctuary. If we want to know how God is going to write His law in

the heart and in the mind of the believers, look at the sanctuary. And if you look at the sanctuary, you can see it over a long period of time, it's been playing a very important role in the fulfillment of the new covenant. The altar of sacrifice, there in the courtyard. 31 AD Jesus died on the cross. He ascended to heaven. Entered into the first compartment, AD 31, He began to minister as our High Priest in that first compartment of the sanctuary.

Of course, Revelation chapter 1, Revelation 2:3, that makes it clear. Even Revelation 4:5. But then at the end of the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, you find Jesus moving from the holy place into the most holy place. Not only Jesus, but God the Father. According to Daniel chapter 7, it's actually God the Father who moves first, with much pomp and fanfare with the angels. God the Father moves. His throne goes from the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place. And then Daniel says, "I saw one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven, coming with the angels, and he came in before the Ancient of Days." The court was seated, the books were opened.

So at the end of the 2300 days, 1844, Jesus enters into the Most Holy Place with the Father to do a special work connected with the new covenant promise, that He's writing His law on the hearts and the minds of His people. And friends, we're living in that time, even now. Verse 3 says, "For every high priest, he is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices."

In order to be a priest, in the Old Testament, you had to come from the people of Israel. More specifically from the tribe of Levi. One of the requirements was that you were to be subject to their weaknesses, meaning you had to be a human. An angel couldn't do the work of a priest. It had to be somebody that understood the trials and difficulties that people are going through so that he could have compassion upon those to whom he ministers. He had compassion for the people, and he ministered by offering gifts and sacrifices, so likewise with Christ.

You know, for Jesus to be our High Priest, he had to lay aside His kingly robe, the scepter of the universe, give it back to His Father, and Jesus took upon Himself humanity and was born a man. He's familiar with our trials and difficulties, our human weakness. He was there. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. And He understands and He knows, and He offers Himself as our sacrifice. And even now, He is our High Priest.

It is the Son of Man who stands before the Father representing you and I, amen, our great High Priest in heaven. "And therefore, was necessary that this one," speaking of Christ, "also have something to offer." The high priest was required to offer sacrifices for the people. If Jesus, then, is to function as our High Priest, He must also offer a sacrifice on our behalf. The Bible makes it clear. Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

So the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary is a very important part of the new covenant promise. Christ's sacrifice brings forgiveness. It brings justification. Christ priestly work brings sanctification. Both are equally important. You can't have sanctification without justification. And in some ways, that's what the religious leaders and the Jews were trying to do in the time of Christ. They were trying to somehow justify themselves, and they rejected the sacrifice that could justify them and that being Jesus.

But there are many Christians today who are eager to accept Christ's justification on their behalf, but they end up rejecting His sanctifying work that He wants to do in their heart and in their life. They, in one sense almost stuck under the old covenant. They don't allow God to write His law on their heart and on their mind. And this is what Paul brings out. Verse 4, "For if he were here on earth," speaking of Christ, "he would not be a priest." Only the those of the tribe of Levi were eligible to be priests, and Christ belonged to the tribe of Judah. His is an independent, heavenly priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

Now who is Melchizedek? You read in Genesis chapter 14, verse 18 to 19. "Then Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine and he was priest of God Most High." Very interesting character. He is a priest. He is also a king, and he brings out bread and wine and he gives it to the great patriarch Abraham or Abram. And Abram, in return gives him a tithe.

Now, can you think of any Old Testament Bible character other than Melchizedek who was both a priest and a king? You can have a prophet and a king. You can have a priest and a prophet. But you won't find a king and priest, except for Melchizedek. Melchizedek is a type of Christ. His priesthood is more distinct and higher than that of the Levitical priesthood. Now Psalm 110, verse 4, it says, "The Lord has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" And that, is of course, talking to Jesus. Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

In "Review and Herald," we have this published statement. It says, "It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world." We don't have much recorded about Melchizedek. We don't know where he came from, we don't know when he died. The Bible doesn't tell us. Just these few verses talking about him being priest. Incidentally, where was he the king of? A place called Salem. Eventually became Jerusalem. So you have the king of Jerusalem who is also a priest, to whom Abram gives a tithe. Last part of the verse says, "Since they are priests who offer gifts according to the law."

In other words, when Jesus is on the earth, He wouldn't be a priest in the Levitical system. The rules of the Levitical priests were strictly enforced, and if Christ were on the earth, He would not be able to qualify. He was of the tribe of Judah. Verse 5, "Who serve the copy and the shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle." The Levitical priests and the sanctuary were but a reflection of the heavenly, and the ministry in the work of Jesus.

Here's an interesting verse. God speaking to Moses, "And let them make me a sanctuary that I might," what? "Dwell amongst them." What is the purpose of the sanctuary according to this verse? So that God can dwell amongst his people. The next question is, well if God wants to dwell amongst his people, why does he need a sanctuary to do that? After all, can't God just dwell wherever God chooses to dwell? If God suddenly appeared in the camp of Israel, His glory unshielded by the sanctuary, what would happen to the Israelites? Now, they would have been consumed. So in order for God to dwell amongst His people, he dwelt in the sanctuary. And the purpose of the sanctuary is to take care of the sin problem so that God's people can dwell in his presence.

The purpose of the sanctuary is to take care of the sin problem, so that God can dwell with His people. The purpose of the new covenant is to take care of the sin problem so that we, by God's grace, can dwell in His presence and see His face. That's the goal of the new covenant.

Now if you look at the sanctuary, you'll notice just that very thing, the sin problem was taken care of. A person with sin, they would bring their sacrifice, the sacrifice would be slain, a symbol of the Lamb. The priest would take the blood into the first compartment representing Jesus interceding for us. On the day of Yom Kippur, the high priest would enter into the most holy place and perform a special work of atonement, a special work of cleansing. And once that work was finished, then the high priest would remove his priestly robes.

In the case of Christ, He removes His priestly robes, and Jesus will put on His kingly robe and He will say, "He that is holy, let him be holy still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Probation will close and Jesus now, will come not as priest but as King of kings and Lord of lords, three phases to Christ's ministry on our behalf. He is our sacrifice, He is our priest, and soon He will come as our King. King of kings of Lord of lords. So the sanctuary takes care of that sin problem.

Now, how many different types of sanctuaries do we read about in the Bible? Those of you who have been attending Granite Bay for a while, you should be able to answer this question, because I think I've asked it many times before. How many sanctuaries do we read about in the Bible? Show me your fingers. How many sanctuaries? I've got three. Any more? Any more than three sanctuaries? I see it. Someone's been listening. We had somebody hold up five fingers. Five sanctuaries?

Does the Bible speak about five sanctuaries? Well, let's think about it. Number one, you've got the heavenly sanctuary, right? That's clear. The earthly was a shadow of the heavenly. So the one is the heavenly, and then you have the second which would be earthly one, the one that God told Moses to build. Now, that one was eventually replaced by the one that Solomon built in Jerusalem, and then that one was destroyed by the Babylonians and rebuilt after the captivity, and that temple was eventually destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans. But we're going to call all of those to the earthly. So we only have two so far. We have the heavenly and we have the earthly, but there's three more.

Can you think about what those three other sanctuaries or temples might be? What did Jesus say when he was in Jerusalem? He said to the religious leaders, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up again." Was Jesus talking about the heavenly sanctuary? Was Jesus talking about the earthly sanctuary? What was Jesus talking about? He was talking about Himself. So in the Bible, we find Jesus being referred to as a temple. So that's number three. But not only is Jesus referred to as a temple or a sanctuary, the Bible tells you, "Do you not know that your body is," what? "The temple of God," the temple of the Holy Spirit. So there's number four, right?

What's number five? It's all of us. The Bible tells us, "that we are all living stones built together on a firm cornerstone of Christ." The church is a temple. You have the heavenly, you got earthly, you've got Christ, you've got the individual, and you got the church.

Now, what's the purpose of the sanctuary? It's so that God can what? Dwell amongst His people. The earthly sanctuary was here so that God could dwell amongst Israel, but in order for that to happen the sin problem had to be taken care of.

Why did Jesus come to this earth? Jesus came to this earth to take care of the sin problem, to die a sacrifice for sin, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to cleanse us so that we could dwell in the presence of God. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer? To cleanse us from sin. So that we can dwell in the presence of God.

What is the purpose of the church in the world today? It is to preach the gospel, to take the great commission, to preach the everlasting gospel to take care of the sin problem so that we can dwell in the presence of God. You see, the purpose is all the same, the purpose of the sanctuary, the purpose of the new covenant is the same so that we can dwell in the presence of God. But in order for that to happen, the sin problem is taken care of through Christ, through what Jesus has done for us, what Jesus is doing, and what Jesus will do on our behalf, thus we enter into that new covenant experience. Last part of verse 5 says, "For he said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern that was shown you on the mount.'"

Moses was given the plans of the sanctuary during the 40 days he spent upon Mount Sinai. Now, here's another interesting question, how many people in the Bible went without food for 40 days? Well, who's the one that comes to mind right away? Jesus went without food for 40 days. But there were two other important Bible characters that also went without food for 40 days. What was Moses eating for 40 days when he was on Mount Sinai in the presence of God? Nothing. He was supernaturally sustained by the presence of God. What happened to Elijah when he fled out into the wilderness? He ate some special, heavenly food. And the Bible tells us, "In the strength of that food, he went 40 days and 40 nights."

So you've got Moses, you've got Elijah, and you got Jesus. Who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration? You had Jesus, you had Moses, you had Elijah. Rather interesting that all of these three characters went without food for 40 days, and of the three, Moses and Elijah, they were supernaturally sustained. Spiritually, we are supernaturally sustained by what Jesus did for us. But Jesus was not supernaturally sustained. The Bible tells us the devil came to tempt Him, and it says, "He hungered." He was not supernaturally sustained in the way that Moses and Elijah were. Verse 6, "But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry," speaking of Christ. With this verse, Paul now begins to discuss Christ as the mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises. And as much as He's a mediator, Christ is the mediator between God and man. 1 Timothy makes it clear, "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men."

Notice the way he words it, "The Man Christ Jesus." Why do you suppose Paul says, "The Man Christ Jesus?" What was the requirement to be a priest? You had to be taken from the people so that you could sympathize with their weaknesses. The phrase that Jesus liked to use more than any other with reference to Himself was the Son of Man. And so, Paul recognizes this, and he says, "The Man Christ Jesus." It is the Man who is in heaven, interceding on our behalf. Boy, that's comforting. Verse 6 says, "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

Now, what about this better covenant? This is a better covenant because it produces holiness of heart and a transformed character, not merely the observances of external rites and ceremonies. As mentioned before, the Israelites were content to have the Ten Commandments hidden away in the sanctuary, in the ark. But God wants the Ten Commandments in the heart and in the mind of believers. It says, "Which was established from better promises."

The promises of the old covenant look forward by faith. The new covenant promises are ratified by the reality of the sacrifice of Christ. So, in the Bible, we find two different covenants. Two covenant between God and man. The one is everlasting and changeless, and this is called the new covenant.

It's interesting to note, the new covenant existed before the old covenant, because the old covenant came after the everlasting covenant. The everlasting covenant was made right after Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis 3:15, "I'll put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." That's the first reference of the everlasting covenant. It's God writing his law on the hearts and the minds of those who love him, who trust in him. All right, the other was temporary and transitional, and that, of course, is the old covenant.

The everlasting covenant or the new covenant was first made in Eden as we mentioned and consisted of God putting enmity or mutual hatred between the serpent and the woman. And it resulted in three things: number one, a change of standing that is freedom from condemnation. "A lamb has been found to bear our sins and die in our place."

Secondly, a change of heart. Jesus said, "Except you be born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And then a change of behavior, that is obedience to His law. Jesus said, "If you love me," do what? "Keep my commandments." Only those who are in the new covenant relationship with Jesus can keep His commandments. "For the carnal mind is enmity towards the law of God. It is not subject to it, neither indeed can be."

So if we're going to keep God's commandments, we have to seek this new covenant experience that Paul is talking about. Verse 7, "For if the first covenant had been faultless." The first covenant included not only promises but also ceremonial system, the Levitical priesthood which came to an end when Jesus became High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, then no place would have been sought

for a second. That is the new covenant which contains better promises, a better sacrifice, a high priestly ministry of Jesus. So this everlasting or new covenant was ratified at the death of Christ.

Prior to Christ, it was based upon the promise of a coming Redeemer. After Christ, it's based up on the reality that the Savior did come. When ratified by Christ, it is called new, in that it is now based upon historical evidence instead of future promise, and how grateful we are for that, otherwise we'd still be sacrificing animals today. We're glad that Jesus came. Its purpose, however, remained the same, that our forgiveness which results in a change of standing, justification; restoration, that is a change of heart; sanctification which results in obedience, a change of behavior, that then gives way to glorification when Jesus comes.

So the purpose of the new covenant is the same as everlasting. And really, the goal of the old covenant was to do this very thing: forgiveness, restoration leading to obedience. Verse 8, "Because finding fault with them."

See the problem wasn't with God wanting to write His law in their hearts. The problem was that they were unwilling to receive that law. It says, "The weakness of the first covenant was not in the covenant itself nor did the fault lie with God. It was the people who were at fault."

How were the people at fault? Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 29. The Book of Deuteronomy is really Moses's final sermon to the children of Israel, and he's recounting their experience in the wilderness. And here, in particular, he's talking about when he went up onto Mount Sinai, and God gave him the law. And then he went down, and he spoke to the children of Israel. "And the children of Israel said to Moses, 'We don't want God to speak to us 'cause it's scary.'" "But you go up and you speak to God, and then whatever God tells you, you tell us, and we will do it."

So Moses went back, and he told God this. He says, "God, the children of Israel have said, 'Whatever you tell them, they will do.'" And this is what God said. Here's God speaking, "O that they were such a heart in them, that they would fear me always, and keep all my commandments that it might be well with them, and with their children forever."

Why did the old covenant fail? Because the children of Israel said, "We will do whatever you want God, but we don't want to be close to you." You see, the reality is we can never do what God asks us to do if we don't draw very, very close to Him. They were content to have God at a distance. They weren't willing to make God, King of their hearts and of their lives. The middle of the verse says, he says, "Behold the day is coming, saith the Lord."

Ever since Sinai, God had been trying to lead the people to a higher spiritual experience, but they were content with their rituals and their ceremonies. Last part says, "Then I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." "When the Jews turned down their religious privilege, the kingdom of God was eventually taken away from them and given to another people. The Christian church is the inheritor of the spiritual privileges and responsibilities that once belonged to literal Israel, and to them, the covenant promises are given."

Now, this is amazing thought. Galatians chapter 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." You see, that promise that God gave Abraham, "that he would write his law upon the hearts of those that serve and love him." That promise repeated way back in Genesis, and then throughout the Old Testament, for us that promise is given. We are spiritually Abraham's seed. Heirs according to the promise. Verse 9, "Not according to the covenant that I made with them and their fathers, when in the day, I took them by the hand and led them out to Egypt." Though the Israelites promised to do all that God had said, because their hearts were not right, they

broke the covenant. "Because they did not continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them, saith the Lord,"

This is the summary of the history of the Israelites as recorded in the Old Testament. Time and time again they would obey God for a little bit, and then they would turn away from God, and then they'd fall, and then an army would conquer them, and they'd go into captivity. And finally, God would deliver them, and bring them back, and they went back and forth continually. Matthew chapter 21, verse 43, "Jesus said to the religious leaders, 'Therefore, I say unto you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing its fruits.'" 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9 and 10, "But you, speaking of us, you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you might proclaim the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Have you experienced that marvelous light that Peter is talking about? Have you been called out of darkness? As we have been called out of darkness into his marvelous light, we want to share the good news with others, amen. Verse 10 says, "For once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God," would obtain mercy. You didn't obtain mercy, but now you have obtained mercy. Verse 10, "For this is the covenant that I'll make with the house of Israel after those days saith the Lord. I will put my laws in their mind, write them in their hearts."

Under the new covenant men, do right, not by their own strength but because their hearts have been changed. The reason we do right is not to save ourselves, for we are saved by the blood of Christ. The reason we do right is because we are saved by the blood of Christ. Do you see the difference? We seek after righteousness not because our righteousness saves us. We seek after righteousness because we have been given the righteousness of Christ, full and free. We will never truly understand sanctification until we come to grasp justification in all its fullness and glory. It then goes on, "I will put my laws in their mind, write them in their hearts."

Only God can put his law in the hearts of his people. Romans 13:10, "Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law." Now, you cannot change your heart. You cannot, of yourself, give to God its affections, but you can choose Him. This is Steps to Christ by the way. You can choose Him. You can give Him your will. "He will then work in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure."

Too often, we try to somehow generate love for God in our hearts. But the Bible says, "We love him because," what? He first loved us." As we draw close to God, His love will fill our hearts. You'll never love God if you don't spend time with God, if you don't commune with God. "Desire of Ages," page 668, "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent," this is one of my favorite quotes, "if we consent, he, God, will so identify himself with our thoughts and our aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to his will, that when obeying him, we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."

What do you think of that? First time I read that I thought, "Well, that can't be true." But it is. What a wonderful promise. "If we allow, God will so identify himself with our thoughts, our feelings, that our impulses will lead towards righteousness." That's the experience of the new covenant. Verse 11, "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." "Under the new covenant, the believer is to have a personal knowledge and relationship with God. Through Christ, we are led by the Spirit and we are taught of God, in order to be filled with all the fullness of God."

Now, that was one of my favorite statements from "Desire of Ages," that I just read, and here is one of my favorite statements from the Apostle Paul. You ready for it? Here it is, Ephesians chapter 2. Notice

this, "Now to him," that's God, "who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power," dunamis, "that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, amen."

God is not limited in what He can do in the heart and the life of somebody who is surrendered to Him. The sky's the limit, so to speak. After all, all things are possible with Him. Verse 12, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." The Christian is promised forgiveness, full and free, through the blood of Jesus. God will no longer hold our sins against them or against us but will cast them behind his back into the depths of the sea. Sins is gone. Verse 13, our last verse here, "In that he says, 'A new covenant,' he has made the first obsolete. Now that which is becoming obsolete is growing old, ready to vanish away."

The ceremonial system was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross. Yet it took time for the New Testament believers, especially the Jews, to transition from the old covenant symbols and types to a full realization of the new covenant and its promises. That's why we find Ephesians chapter 2, verse 15 speaking of Christ, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity that is the law of commandments, containing ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace."

So the old covenant comes to an end when Jesus died on the cross. The new covenant is reaffirmed, which is in essence, is the everlasting covenant. The everlasting covenant is the experience that God wants each and every one of us to have. The ultimate goal of the everlasting covenant is to be in the presence of God. That's what we want. We want to see the face of God. But in order for that to happen, there has to be a special work of transformation. There has to be a special work of forgiveness. And that's the work that Jesus proposes to do, to write his law in our hearts, and in our minds.

So, let's look at the contrast between the two covenants. In the old covenant, you had the Levitical priesthood. In the new covenant, you got the Melchizedek priesthood, where Jesus is our High Priest. In the old covenant, you had animal sacrifices, all of which pointed forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God, the true sacrifice. The old covenant you had an earthly sanctuary; in the new covenant, our focus is in heaven, the heavenly sanctuary.

And here's one of the most important, the old covenant was based upon man's promises, all that God has said we will do. The new covenant is God writing His law in the hearts and the lives of His people, those of us surrendered to Him. The old covenant was for literal Israel. The new covenant, in a special sense is for spiritual Israel, God's people.

Okay, a few practical steps then. You can't talk about the new covenant experience without trying to make it as simple as possible. How can we enter into that new covenant experience? And by the way, this is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The Apostle Paul says, "I die," what? "Daily."

The surrender of self is a day-by-day, moment-by-moment experience. So how can we make that practical? Because we want to be parchment upon which Jesus can inscribe his law, that our obedience comes from the hearts. That's the goal. All right, just some practical steps.

Number one, ask the Lord to awaken you in the morning. Now, you might think that's kind of odd. But I encourage you to do that. One of the last things before you fall asleep at night, say "Lord, please wake me up tomorrow morning." It's funny how that works. You have an alarm clock, and that's been many, like I've doing this for years. And three minutes before the alarm goes, sometimes 30 seconds before the alarm go off, I suddenly wake up. And you know what? Guess what the first thought is that pops into my head when I'm woken up? I wake, I think, "Oh, the Lord woke me up." And it reminds me to do something.

So what are we to do when God wakes us up in the morning? Number one, you want to surrender your will to God. Philippians chapter 2, verse 13 says, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure." So you say, "Lord, here I am. New day. I'm going to start by surrendering my will to you."

Secondly, surrender your mind. Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Notice the word "Let." God does not force this upon us. We have to ask for it. We say, "Lord please, let your mind be in me today." Surrender your heart, your feelings. Proverbs chapter 23, verse 26, "My son, give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways."

Notice, in order for us to observe His ways, we must first give Him our heart. That's our part. Our part in the new covenant experience is to surrender ourselves. Say, "Lord, here I am. I give you my will, I give you my mind, I give you my heart."

What else do we need to give God? Surrender your body. You don't always think of that. Sometimes, this is a bit of a challenge. The Bible says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it to the glory of God." And sometimes, we need God's special help to live to the glory of God. We can surrender our body to him. Surrender your plans, your plans for the day, say, "Lord, here are my plans, but you work them out according to your will. I lay it all at your feet. You direct." It says, "In all your ways, acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths."

Notice the statement from the book "The Upward Look" that says, "Consecration is a very simple thing." We always think this is complicated. Enter into this new covenant, that must be hard. No. "When brought daily into our individual lives and practice, we shall know far more by consecration and by trusting to an experience. Each day, each hour, let the heart go out to God and say, 'Here, I am. I am, Lord, I am yours. I'm your property. Take me, use me today. I lay all my plans at your feet. I will have none of my own way in the matter. My time is thine. My whole life is thine.' Let the heart be constantly going forth to God for strength, for grace every moment."

And just as surely as we do this, every day, the promise is, if we draw near to God, what will God do? He will draw near to us. And He'll be able to do a work within us that we cannot do for ourselves. After all, Jesus looked at the Jewish people, who for so many years were trying to earn their own way, trying to generate righteousness that they thought was enough to save them. They were burdened down. And Jesus looked at them with compassion and he said, "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The good news of the new covenant is that we can come to Jesus. Just the way that we are, we can come to Jesus. Charlotte Elliott was born in England. She grew up in the finest society that England had to offer. The family was wealthy. She attended the best schools of the day. But when she went to college, she became very sick. It was a lung issue that she had, that made her very weak. At times, she would end up spending weeks in bed, very feeble. And they tried different things back in the day, but nothing seemed to help. She kept getting weaker and weaker. Finally, she had to quit school and just pretty much stay home. She began to get really discouraged, and even a little angry towards God.

Now, they were somewhat of a religious family but not that religious. I mean they claimed to be Christians. Around this time, an evangelist was traveling through England, preaching evangelistic meetings. And Charlotte's parents went to the meeting. And after, like good evangelists, after the meeting, he went around and visited all of those who came. And he came to the house, and he was visiting with the parents, and Charlotte was there.

The preacher asked, he said, "Charlotte, have you come to Jesus? Have you given your heart to Jesus?" And this made Charlotte think. And finally, she responded and said, "Well to be honest, I don't know

how I ought to go to Jesus." She says, "I'm not good enough to go to Jesus." The evangelist smiled and he said, "Charlotte, you can come to Jesus just the way that you are."

Later that night, she knelt beside her bed and said, "Lord please, I want to come to you just the way that I am. I can't clean myself up. It has to be you." Her life began to change. What a peace entered her heart. She had joy. She had a purpose for living. But unfortunately, her health didn't seem to get much better. It actually kept getting worse, until finally, she had to move to a different part of England, in the southern part, where the winters weren't as severe.

But a few months after this, while she was thinking back of that experience, she picked up a pen and paper and she began to write these words, "Just as I am without one plea. But that thou blood was shed for me. And that thou bid'st me, come to Thee. O Lamb of God, I come."

It has been said that no other song has led more people to Jesus than Charlotte Elliott's song Just As I Am. Sometimes friends, we can overcomplicate the simplicity of the gospel. Jesus says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

Let us pray, "Dear Father, we are indeed so grateful for that wonderful gospel invitation. An invitation that is for all of us, irrespective of our backgrounds, our joys, our sorrows, our trials. And Jesus, you can save to the uttermost, those who come to you by faith. Thank you for the new covenant promise. Thank you for a special work that you want to do in our hearts and lives. Father, we choose you today, to commit ourselves in your keeping. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen."

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing, free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544 or visit the web address shown on your screen. And be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with "Amazing Facts," wherever and whenever you want. And most important, to share it with others.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts: Changed Lives."

Christine VanOrder: I was born into a family of criminals. When I got older and I started breaking the rules, no one ever taught me about, "Thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not lie, though shalt not commit adultery" or anything like that. When I became a runaway at 14, I was just a wild and lost child. I had somebody tell me, "Hey, you want to earn some money by cleaning this guy's kitchen?"

So I went to this house on a different side of town than I was used to. Someone kept giving me alcoholic drinks. And being 115 pounds and 14 years old, it really didn't take much time before I was so inebriated that I had no control over what was going on around me. He took me to another location, another town, and I was put in isolation. I would come out to be abused between three and eight times a day. I was degraded, I was humiliated, that I had no value as a human being. And I learned very quickly that what I felt, and what I thought, and how this made me feel, did not matter to him at all. If I even thought about not doing what he wanted me to do, I would have a gun to my head, a knife to my throat.

There was one time in particular where he had been tormenting me, psychologically. And one day, he said, "Oh, you'll never kill yourself. You'll never do it." And almost defiantly, I was like, "Yes I will." And he handed me a big, old handful of pills and I took 'em. While I was overdosing, and I had been overdosing all night, I cried out to a God that I didn't even believe in.

And at that very moment, in the most powerful way, God shone his light on me, and he gave me peace of mind like I never had. And he let me know, right then and there while I was on that bathroom floor,

that he was real, and that he was love, and that I did not know how at that time, but he was going to help me.

A little less than a year later, I became pregnant at 15. I loved my son with my whole heart. He also became something that my abuser could use against me in order to pump more fear and coercion. I had finally got away from my abuser, and I had finally built up a support system to help me stay on the move and stay on the run. And I was at my grandmother's house, and on my son's third birthday, he took my son. And when I called the police, said, "My son's just been kidnapped," they said, "He's the father. We can't do anything about it."

After my son was gone, I lost my mind. I started doing drugs, and within a month and a half, I robbed a convenience store. So I was sentenced to 70 months, five years, 10 months in prison, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I started attending the church services in prison, seven days a week. It blew my mind. I was hooked. And then we went through, it was "Millennium of Prophecy" and "Net 99" that just solidified my faith in such a powerful way, and I knew God, that God was leading me. Even the guards there commented on how much I had changed.

And since I started doing the studies on "Amazing Facts," I was so excited about what I was learning, that I was coming back from there and trying to convert my hardened, criminal friends with the Storacles of Prophecy. Every question I ever had, every worry, everything that I ever wondered about, the Bible answered everything, and it was so clear and so easy to understand.

It's been 11 years since I've been out of prison. I am married to an amazing, wonderful man. My first non-abusive relationship in my whole entire life. Before we got married, we watched the "Millennium of Prophecy" series together. And it was just such a blessing to be able to see him learn and see him grow. And I feel like my life now is just a gift, that every single thing that happened to me bad in the past is nothing compared to the joy, and happiness, and stability that I have now, My name is Christine VanOrder, and my life has been changed by Jesus Christ, and "Amazing Facts."

Michael: I had the oldest at a young age. That's where it really sank in. I had to do something with my life. And I was trying to provide for my family and working nights and stuff. I came home early one morning, and I caught my ex-wife and the other guy that she was seeing at the time. They were right there in the front room. My daughter was sitting right there by the TV. "Hi, Daddy, hi, Daddy." She was excited to see me." And I was full of different emotions at the time, but with a softened heart. And I remember setting my stuff down, I picked her up and I hugged her, told her I loved her. Told him, I said, "You need to leave."

At that point, I went to my room and grabbed my rifle. As I walked--walking out of the room, when I first moved there, I put this picture right there in front of the door. Every morning, I would go out that door, but I'd see that picture. It was all three of my kids. And that given moment, when I seen that picture, rifle in hand, I melted to my knees, gun in hand. That's when I prayed to God, and I hadn't prayed to God in years. I said, "I am so sorry. You know what we're going through right now. I'm trying to do what I thought was right. But evidently, it's all blown up and I don't know what to do."

Got back up, and I went back out and I told her it was over. I decided that I was going to go to California and start over. That's my roots. So while I was out in California, and I had a lot of time on my hands, in between loads, while I was driving truck, and my uncle, he gave me a little pamphlet from "Amazing Facts," and I started reading that.

It got my attention, but then "Amazing Facts" had this series of seminars, Tyler Long was the speaker at that time, at my uncle's church, Modesto Central. But I remember my folks, they kept inviting me over and over. So did my uncle. And I was like, "No, no, no. I'd rather sit here and drink." You know, I mean

because I was hurting. I was hurting internally from missing my kids and plus the divorce. Everything, it just like I had nothing. I was empty. I went ahead and went. And I tell you, that seminar is like God was speaking specifically to me. I just like melted, collapsed right there into the pew. Tears just started gushing. The only thing I can say is that God spoke to me that day.

After attending these "Amazing Facts" seminars, I started going through, you know, these "Amazing Facts" study guides and I finished those. I mean just all these truths were jumping out at me, and I was so hungry, I couldn't put them down. And after I finished the study guides, I made the decision to follow Christ and to be baptized. And my parents also made that decision as well to be baptized. My name is Michael. Thank you for changing my life.