

The Difference Between The Covenants

Hebrews 8 is a very important chapter in understanding the difference between the two covenants. Most religious people do not understand the difference between the two. I was reminded of this the other day when a gentleman jumped to his feet and left our study after I told him the Ten Commandments were not binding today. He failed to see the difference between what Moses (Old Testament, Law of Moses, etc.) had to say and what Jesus and the New Testament (New Law, Gospel of Christ, etc.) writers said. Let's look at the biblical distinction between the two covenants according to Hebrews 8.

First, the Old Covenant was imperfect. The inspired writer said, "*For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second*" (8:7). Due to the Law of Moses being an imperfect law, the occasion arose for a new and better law to be established. The ninth chapter of Hebrews tells us the author of this new and better covenant is Jesus Christ and that He brought it forth when He died on the cross (9:15-17).

Second, the New Testament (Covenant) was prophesied of by Jeremiah six hundred years before it came into existence. Verses 8-12 of chapter 8 were a direct quote from Jeremiah 31. God, through Jeremiah, stated that a day was coming in which He would institute a covenant with the house of Israel and Judah unlike the one He made with their forefathers upon their departure from Egypt (Law of Moses). Of importance to this point are vv 10-11, "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them.*" Paul showed the fulfillment of this prophecy in his letter to the Colossians, "*And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*" (Col. 2:13-14). The Old Law held no hope for mankind. Only this new law, this better law Jesus instituted, could save us from our sins.

Third, the inspired writer declared the first covenant obsolete. "*When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear*" (8:13). If something is obsolete, it is no longer in use. Apart from the other passages we've considered already, this one passage (v 13) shows the Old Law is no longer in use nor needed.

The Old Testament (Law of Moses) is no longer in effect and therefore we have no need to observe it or follow it. That's not to say we can't read it or study from it because we can. There are many good lessons to be learned from those that lived under that covenant. However, it is no longer our authority or that which we must follow. Our authority is the gospel of Christ and one we are expected to follow. May God bless you as you strive to live according to the New Covenant.

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