

## **Msg #180 of Scripture Beneath The Surface**

*“Old Covenant - New Covenant”*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about the changes between the Old Testament and the New Testament; between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Sometimes churches teach a Bible class for new beginner Christians, and when they do this they may cover some of the questions concerning how the New Testament Covenant of Grace affects the reading of the Old Testament Covenant of the Law of Commandments. However, many people never experience a New Believer's Bible class, but just come to church and learn the basics of church doctrine from the pulpit, or from the regular Sunday School classes that cover all aspects of the Bible. They may even just get their understanding from family or friends in the church, but never come to really understand what the Old Testament Covenant of the Law of Commandments was, and what the New Testament Covenant of Grace is.

Now, get ready for some boring facts. As always, we have to lay a foundation in order to have something to build upon. And I know some of the things I say here are already known to many of you, but I'm sure there are also many who don't have a great bit of knowledge of some of the basic things of the Bible. So anyway, here goes.

Some time after the flood had destroyed the earth, and civilization had begun to thrive once more, there was a man called Abraham to whom God visited with a promise of inheriting a promised land. This was the initial physical happening that began to demonstrate the future coming of Jesus Christ and a plan of salvation for all people. In the most basic explanation of

this was a covenant from God to Abraham of inheritance and of being the Father of many nations.

Now, the covenant to Abraham was to many nations, not to many Israelites. This is because the people of Israel did not yet exist at the time of God establishing this covenant with Abraham. Actually, Israel was the grandson of Abraham who had not yet been born. His name was originally called, Jacob, the brother of Esau, but God changed Jacob's name to Israel many years later.

But the covenant that God first established with Abraham was a covenant of faith. This means that Abraham was to receive the blessings that God had promised by faith, by believing God, by believing that what God had promised, he would fulfill. This was not a covenant of law, but a covenant of faith.

And by the way, sometimes when Christians talk about faith, there is confusion because of a lack of understanding what faith really is. So here's a simple way of looking at faith. When you have faith, you believe something because you have spiritual evidence, and the spiritual evidence you have tells you that what you believe is real. Now, on the other hand, when you have facts, you have them because of physical evidence, and the physical evidence tells you that what you believe is real.

As Christians, we believe in God, and salvation through Jesus Christ, because we have spiritual evidence that helps us to have faith. Science and technology of this world gives us facts which help us to know what is real and not real. But God, who is a spirit, gives us spiritual evidence so we can have faith. So, what we believe is either based on physical evidence or on spiritual evidence. If our understanding is based on physical evidence, we refer to it as having facts, and then the facts establish the reality. If our understanding is based on spiritual evidence, we refer to it as having faith, and then our faith establishes the reality. Facts, as everyone knows, are measured by our five physical senses of touch, taste, smell, seeing, and hearing. However, faith is not measured by our physical senses, but by our heart. It is the heart of a man which can receive understanding by faith.

So, referring again to Abraham, Abraham believed God. And because Abraham believed God because of the spiritual evidence and not because of scientific physical evidence, therefore God accounted Abraham's belief as righteousness by faith.

Now Abraham had not done any physical works. He had not attempted to obey any of God's directions as of yet. But God gave credit of righteousness to Abraham just because Abraham believed God. And this was a very important part of God's covenant to Abraham. Abraham became the heir to all the nations of the earth just because he believed God, and not because he was perfectly obedient to God. Of course, Abraham's faith in God's word did bring about very good works on the part of Abraham, but the initial designation by God of Abraham being righteous was strictly because of Abraham having faith in God. He believed that what God had

promised, God would actually bring to pass. At that present time, he did not know when the promises of God would be fulfilled, but he believed they would be.

Now we move on to the next part. Abraham and his wife Sarah had a child, and named him Isaac. Isaac had two sons, the one called Esau, and the other Jacob. When Jacob was old, he went to live in Egypt because of a great famine in the land. Jacob had twelve sons, and this family of his eventually grew to be a very large group of people. They were then called Israelites, because Jacob was the father of this people, and God had changed Jacob's name, and called him, Israel.

Four hundred and twenty years after the beginning of God's covenant to Abraham, the Israelites, which probably numbered somewhere around two and a half million people, were under severe bondage to Egypt where they had resided for a long time. But it was then time to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and God used a man called Moses to deliver them. After a time of pouring out his wrath on the land of Egypt, which the Bible refers to as ten plagues, God enabled Moses to lead Israel out of the land of Egypt and eventually they ended up in a desert place called the Sinai Peninsula.

It was during this time that God initiated the Old Testament Covenant of the Law. It was represented by the two tablets of stone on which there were written ten commandments. These ten commandments were the basic tenets of the covenant, but there were many more laws and ordinances that followed. The Bible refers to the Old Testament covenant as the Law of Moses. It is called this because God gave the laws and ordinances to Moses who had the responsibility of passing on the information to the whole tribe of Israel.

Now here's something interesting that most people probably have not considered. We refer to the Bible in two parts. One is the Old Testament, and the other is the New Testament. But what does the word testament mean? The definition of the word, testament, means a person's will, or a covenant. A covenant is an agreement between two people. In the case of the Old Testament, it was God's will for Israel. It was an agreement made by God with the Children of Israel, and the Children of Israel were to be in agreement with God. Israel did not have a choice in this. It was God's will that he would design a contract that he and Israel would enter into. And this covenant, this contract, this testament, was the Old Testament, God's will for the earth at that time.

Now, here's another interesting part. In the New Testament we see that this original covenant between God and Israel, the Old Covenant, was intended to be for the purpose of instructing them; for the purpose of teaching them something. It was, as Galatians 3:24 says, a schoolmaster. A schoolmaster is a teacher. God intended the original covenant of the Law of Commandments to be a teacher. And what we were supposed to learn from it was that no matter how hard anyone tried to keep the laws and ordinances perfectly, they would fail. Failure to keep the laws of the covenant would mean that a person was worthy of death.

Well, we know that death comes upon all people sooner or later. Death is inevitable. It is our chief enemy. It will happen to everyone, no matter how they try to avoid it. You see, if we sin, if we transgress in any way against God, the only thing we can look forward to is dying. If we sin, we will eventually die. Death is something that every flesh and blood human being cannot avoid.

However, God was not taken by surprise. The Law was not a mistake on God's part. God knew beforehand that no man was able to keep the Law perfectly, and that by transgressing against the Law of God man would be guilty. Sin is transgressing against God's commandment. Yet God gave the first covenant, the Law, to the children of Israel in order that all people could be taught that they could not attain righteousness by their own attempt at keeping the Law. This first covenant between God and Israel was to teach them, be their schoolmaster, that as humans they would fail in their attempt to keep the law perfectly, and therefore be subject to death. Death would take every one of them because in one part or another, or in multiple parts, each person would fail to keep the Law perfectly.

So, why would God make a covenant with Israel that would automatically condemn them to sin and death? And the answer is, because God wanted us to know that we, in ourselves, could never overcome the bondage of sin by our own works, by our own attempt at righteousness. And by the time that Jesus came to earth, no one, not any person at all, had been able to keep the Law perfectly. Therefore, every person in Israel was guilty of transgressing against God and would automatically come under condemnation, and the result of that sin would mean that death would occur to everyone. Under the Law of Commandments, every person failed in perfect obedience to God, and every person would therefore die. Eternal life would not be attained by anyone, for all were sinners. And in fact, because the Law of Commandments had been established in the earth, every man, whether an Israelite or a person of any other nation, became guilty. Because the Law had come into effect, all men became sinners, and all men were automatically judged guilty by the Law, and all men would therefore be condemned to an eventual death. Death would reign over all the earth.

But here's the beautiful part. God never intended that the first covenant would give salvation to us. God never intended that the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, would deliver us from death. What he did intend was for the Old Testament Covenant of the Law to be our schoolmaster, our teacher, so that we would all come to the realization that in our own attempts to be perfect, we would fail. We were to learn that righteousness was unattainable by our own works.

So, what was God's next step in his plan for our salvation? It was for him to come to earth in the form of a man. Jesus is God in the flesh. Jesus, as God the Son, was obedient to God the Father, and kept the Law perfectly. And this is what was intended in the first place. Jesus, who is God in the form of a man, was to keep the Law of Commandments perfectly, including all the ordinances and rituals. Jesus, because he was God, could do it. We couldn't do it, but Jesus could because he is God in the flesh.

And this is what the Bible refers to when it says that Jesus came to fulfill the Law. He came to earth to fulfill the first covenant which no one else on earth had been able to do. Righteousness could not be attained by any human because they did not have the ability that God himself has. Therefore, Jesus kept the law perfectly, thereby defeating death. This is a great thing. We couldn't defeat death, but Jesus could. Therefore he fulfilled the requirement of the original covenant. He fulfilled it.

To fulfill something means to bring it to completion. Jesus completed the purpose of the first covenant, so that God's plan of salvation to earth could be brought to its fulness. You see, the Old Testament Law of Commandments was not meant to give us salvation from sin and death. It was only a schoolmaster, a teacher, until the time that Jesus would come and give us deliverance. Jesus, God in the flesh, would be our deliverance from the Law, delivering us from the guilt of sin, and therefore from the ultimate penalty of death. Our bondage to sin and death came to an end the moment that Jesus died on the cross for us. And by dying on the cross, after he had kept the Old Testament Law of Commandments perfectly, our lives took a decided turn. We would then have newness of life through him, and this not by our own works, but by his works. He did the works of the Law, fulfilling the Law, and we came into the New Covenant of Grace whereby we could attain the righteousness we needed just by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Our own works would never have been good enough to give ourselves righteousness. But when Jesus died on the cross, the Old Testament Law of Commandments was fulfilled and the New Covenant was established. This New Testament Covenant was a covenant of Grace. By grace we would be able to attain righteousness. God would bestow righteousness on us through Jesus. Jesus saved us from death, and we no longer have to try to be perfect by our own works. The tiny nation of Israel proved to us that our own works were insufficient to attain righteousness. But when the New Testament Covenant of Grace came into being, we attained righteousness without works. We ceased from our works, meaning that we ceased trying to attain righteousness by our own attempted work at perfection. Now, Jesus was our righteousness, and his righteousness came to us without any works on our part. All we had to do now was to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Jesus would save us by his own blood. He would take on all the sins of the world himself, and we would therefore no longer be guilty of sin. And because we were no longer guilty of sin, we would no longer be subject to eternal death. We have the promise of eternal life with Jesus because we are made righteous by Jesus, and not by our own works.

O.K. So! I know that's a lot of facts, some of it may be new to you and some of it may be what you already know. However, it is of great importance for Christians to realize that we are no longer under the Old Testament Covenant of the Law of Commandments, but are now under the New Testament Covenant of Grace. Grace is what God has done for us. Grace is the divine influence of God showered upon all those who will accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. By Grace, by divine influence, we are saved. It is the gift of God. Not by our own attempts at righteousness, for our own works were never going to accomplish perfection. But Jesus, because he is God the Son, accomplished the perfection of the Law of Commandments, thus fulfilling the

first covenant, bringing it to its rightful end, and ushering in the New Testament Covenant of Grace.

Now, think of this. There is no longer an Old Testament Covenant of the Law of Commandments for those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. However, to all those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord there is a continuation of the guilt of sin brought about by that first covenant. In order to escape from the condemnation of sin, every person must enter into the New Covenant of Grace by the blood of Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we no longer have to attempt to attain righteousness by keeping a set of Laws. Our righteousness is now a gift of God just because we believe in Jesus. Just as Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, so do we also attain righteousness just by our faith in Jesus. For all of God's children there is an entering in to the very presence of God, not by works, but by faith. In this way, the faith of Abraham has come to pass, and he has become the father of many nations. Not just the nation of Israel, but to all the nations of the earth who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through faith. Through faith in the name of Jesus, we are righteous. Through faith in the name of Jesus we are delivered from eternal death. Yes, all men will die in the flesh, but all those who accept Jesus as Lord will be given eternal life with new glorified bodies. We will live eternally with Jesus because we are his righteousness. We are no longer under the Law of Commandments, but are now under the New Testament, the New Covenant of Grace through the blood of Jesus. We are no longer in bondage, but are free from the condemnation of sin and death. And because of this we will praise the Lord of heaven for evermore.