

NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM

WEEKLY SABBATH LESSONS



3RD QUARTER – 2024

THE CHURCH OF GOD at JERUSALEM ACRES
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“THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK – Part 5”

LESSON 1 ■ For week ending July 6, 2024

So far we have talked about the Spirit of Love, Preservation, Marking and Teaching. There's 3 more spirits to go! Remember, God's Golden Candlestick is a divine revelation of the work of the Holy Spirit which is manifest through seven distinct channels. Let's continue to investigate what God's Word says.

KEY TEXT: *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come”* (John 16:13, NIV).

1. THE SPIRIT OF PERFECTION.

- » Jesus said in MATTHEW 5:48, *“Be ye therefore perfect [complete, mature, whole], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*
- » Jesus did not give instructions to the Church that would be impossible to attain unto.
- » **The word perfection in the Scriptures is translated from the Greek teleios which means complete (as in mature or whole).**
- » These meanings indicate that perfection is an adjusting process toward the completion of our Christian experience.
- » This thought is summed up in Proverbs 4:18, *“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”*
- » As we follow Jesus and behold the glory of the Lord, we are *“changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (II Corinthians 3:18b).

2. The Spirit of Perfection is revealed by Jesus to the church at Sardis.

- » Jesus tells them to, *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God”* (Revelation 3:2).
- » God's Church will be continually moving on to perfection.
- » The Apostle Paul expands upon this in Philippians 3:12, (AMP) *“Not that I have already obtained it [this goal of being Christlike] or have already been made perfect, but I actively press on so that I may take hold of that [perfection] for which Christ Jesus took hold of me and made me His own.”*
- » It is the Holy Spirit working through the five-fold gifted ministry that will bring this perfection into reality in the Church.
- » Jesus, as the Lamb through which the Seven Spirits of God are manifest, gave His life for the Church, *“That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Ephesians 5:26,27).

3. THE SPIRIT OF PUBLISHING.

- » The Spirit of Publishing is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit which specializes in **COMMUNICATION**.
- » Most of us have a SMART PHONE of some sort. We now have the ability to *communicate* with people at any given time. God has placed a tremendous tool in our hand. Think of the possibilities!
- » The Spirit of Publishing is revealed in the message of Jesus to the church in Philadelphia in which He tells them, *“I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”* (**REVELATION 3:8**).
- » The word *publish* in the Scriptures means *to cause to hear*. This is what is meant in **MARK 13:10** when Jesus says, *“And the gospel must first be published among all nations.”*
- » In this context it is easy to see that at any time that we are proclaiming the Word of God, whether by voice, printed matter, or telecommunications, we are using the Spirit of Publishing.
- » **All of these means are tools that the Lord has given as a way to open doors for the proclaiming of the Gospel and the expansion of the Church.** PSALMS 68:11 says, *“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.”*

“THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK – Part 6”

LESSON 2 ■ For week ending July 13, 2024

We've identified 6 of the 7 Spirits of God in this series of lessons. Today we will talk about the Spirit of Evangelism. We must always acknowledge that God loves everyone on this earth. God *is* love. The scriptures tell us emphatically that God wants everyone to be saved. That's His will for mankind. Our job is to be that City that set upon a hill shining forth the Light of God so that all might see!

KEY TEXT: “*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:13-16 partial quote).

1. THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM

- » Finally, the seventh manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Evangelism, is revealed in the message of Jesus to the church of the Laodiceans in which He tells them, “*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*” (Revelation 3:15).
- » This work of the Holy Spirit is two-fold in that it both 1) stirs the believer to be enthusiastic in their own relationship with God while it also 2) stirs the believer to maintain a burden for the souls of those who are lost that they might win them to Christ.
- » Jesus gave us all a job to do. We call it the Great Commission.
- » Read the words of Jesus found in Matthew 28:18,19.
- » Notice the admonition in verse 20 regarding “*teaching them to observe all things...*” Here we can see another spirit of God at work: The Spirit of Teaching.

2. REVIVAL TONIGHT–YOU'RE INVITED!

- » An important part of the work of evangelism is the stirring up of the memory of God's people to the truths of the Scriptures and the operation of the Holy Spirit.
- » Peter wrote, “*...beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior*” (II Peter 3:1,2).
- » Through the operation of the Spirit of Evangelism, God's people will be “*a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (TITUS 2:14).

3. There is only One Spirit of God (Ruach HaKodesh).

- » There is only one Holy Spirit of God (Ruach HaKodesh); however, He manifests Himself through Seven channels which the Bible refers to as the Seven Spirits of God in Revelation 4:5b, “*...Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.*”
- » This is what God's Word says about the Holy Spirit, “*...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come*” (John 16:13).
- » One of the ways that the Holy Spirit leads and guides us is through the Seven Spirits of God.
- » These Seven Spirits are channels that you and I can utilize to share God's Word.
- » That's our job: to share the Good News that Jesus Christ saves. Once we identify these Seven Spirits, we can work along with the Holy Spirit to effectively share our faith and mature in our walk with God.
- » Use that SMART PHONE in your hand to share God's Word with someone today!

“NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM – Part 1”

LESSON 3 ■ For week ending July 20, 2024

There’s a lot of confusion in the Christian Kingdom regarding the Jewish Roots of our faith. This series of lessons will take an in-depth look at Judaism: God’s system of praise, worship and service. Saddle up your horses as we begin a great adventure to discover the Jewish Roots of our faith.

KEY TEXT: “That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past” (Ecclesiastes 3:15).

1. NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM

- » God has tasked The Church of God with a very interesting calling. That calling can be summed up with the phrase: New Testament Judaism.
- » That phrase is unique to The Church of God at Jerusalem Acres. So, what is New Testament Judaism? It is **“Teaching the Interrelationship of JUDAISM and CHRISTIANITY– the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”**
- » As Gentiles, most of us are at best confused when it comes to understanding the term *Judaism*.
- » The word *Judaism* is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as:
 - 1) a religion developed among the ancient Hebrews and characterized by belief in one transcendent God who has revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions;
 - 2) the cultural, social, and religious beliefs and practices of the Jews;
 - 3) conformity to Jewish rites, ceremonies, and practices;
 - 4) the whole body of Jews: the Jewish people.
- » The Jewish people define *Judaism* as: (the Jewish Religion) is defined as the totality of beliefs and practices of the Jewish people, as given by G_d and recorded in the Torah (Hebrew Bible) and subsequent sacred writings of Judaism (Talmud and Kabbalah). (Source: Chabad.org).
- » The Church of God defines *Judaism* as: God’s system of praise, worship and service. It’s important to note the *Judaism* is God’s system. While its modern-day definition may comprise the beliefs and traditions of man, true Judaism was authored by Yahweh God from the foundations of the world.

2. JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD!

- » Jesus is the Promised Messiah of Israel. His miraculous birth, His sinless life, His atoning death, and His glorious resurrection were all predicted by the Hebrew prophets of old (Isaiah 9:6,7).
- » His divine mission on Earth was encapsulated in this statement: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).
- » But, did Jesus start a new religion? Is He responsible for all the differing doctrines and practices which bear the name of Christianity today? Read I Corinthians 14:53. What changed? Read Hebrews 7:11-16.
- » Why is there such a startling difference between Christianity and Judaism, the religion of the Old Testament? Can two religions that claim to spring from the same God fail to have many–indeed, most–things in common? These are reasonable questions that deserve sensible, factual answers (Jeremiah 6:16).

3. THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED.

- » **JESUS WAS A JEW** – Jesus (Yahshua) was a Jew according to the flesh, an heir of the covenant of God through Abraham. His lineage was of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14).
- » He was reared in a Jewish family that was proud of the heritage of Judaism and that did everything according to its precepts (Luke 2:39). While Jesus often attacked the oral traditions that became the basis of Talmudic Judaism (Mark 7:13), He respected and honored Biblical Judaism, the religion of the Old Testament. Read and discuss the words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:17,18.

“NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM – Part 2”

LESSON 4 ■ For week ending July 27, 2024

Last week we discussed the meaning of the term *New Testament Judaism*. We established that God is the Author of true Judaism. This week we will examine Jesus has to say about the matter. Jesus' name in Hebrew is *Yahshua*. That term simply means: Yah(God)-shua(Savior).

KEY TEXT: “That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past” (Ecclesiastes 3:15).

1. THE RELIGION WHICH JESUS PRACTICED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE WAS JUDAISM.

- » If you think that the ministry of Jesus destroyed the Jewish religion, listen to His own words: *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled”* (Matthew 5:17,18).
- » Jesus completed the fulfillment of all the Messianic aspects of the Law and the prophets; however, He did not terminate all the Law any more than He fulfilled all prophecy (Acts 24:14).
- » **KEY: Jesus, then, came to fulfill—not terminate—the religion of the Old Testament.** Read Acts 24:14.

2. JESUS WAS THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR RELIGION (Hebrews 12:2,3) ●

- » Let's talk about THE TIME OF REFORMATION. Jesus was a reformer. It might be said that He was a reformed Jew, or should we say, the Reforming Jew. His ministry was Judaism's time of reformation (Hebrews 9:10). The Messiah simply did not come to destroy the oracles of God that He had given to the Jewish people (Romans 3:1-3). He did not come to replace a bad religion with a good one (Romans 7:12).
- » His coming brought a NEW COVENANT which reformed and perfected the ancient religion of Judaism (Jeremiah 18:1-6) **by taking away the superfluous, strengthening the meaningful, and adding the dimension of the Holy Spirit.**
- » **KEY: Jesus established an experience which makes it possible for men to live the righteous principles that Biblical Judaism espoused.** Read Romans 8:4 and Hebrews 8:10.

3. JESUS WAS A REFORMER, NOT AN INNOVATOR.

- » CHRIST, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS – The life and death of Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of divine justice for the sins of the human race. He became the perfect sacrifice when He voluntarily offered Himself once for all as a perpetual atonement for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 9:14,24). Because of this eternal work of redemption, Jesus stands as the only embodiment of the righteousness and justification of God for man (I Corinthians 1:30).
- » In justification by faith we see **the perfection which Jesus brought to Judaism.** *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”* (Romans 10:4).
- » **KEY: While we have the Messiah's word that He did not end the Law, we see that the use of the Law for justification or righteousness is ended.** Justification before God is no more a heavy yoke of works to establish self-righteousness; it is now a *righteousness of faith*. Still, the Law remains as a guideline for discipline and worship.
- » Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.
- » **KEY: By His atoning work on Calvary, Jesus transformed Judaism, God's religion, from an enforced fleshly ritual that was carried out in fear of death, into a voluntary spiritual experience that is carried out in love for the Creator.**
- » The righteousness of God is now a *faith* righteousness imputed to the heart of the believer when *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10).
- » Because the believer is justified by faith alone, the commandments of Judaism contained in carnal ordinances (rules governing fleshly works, animal sacrifices, and the like) became useless and were nailed to the cross through the body of Jesus (Ephesians 2:15,16; Colossians 2:14).

“NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM – Part 3”

LESSON 5 ■ For week ending August 3, 2024

One of the main points that we discussed last week was that Jesus Christ perfected the Old Testament Law by meeting all of the demands of the Law in His flesh. He then offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins which again, satisfied the righteous demands of the Law. We are made righteous today by faith in Jesus Christ alone!

KEY TEXT: “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*” (Romans 10:4).

1. BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED.

- » **A PERFECTED SYSTEM OF WORSHIP AND SERVICE** – The death of Jesus brought about a change in the Law (Hebrews 7:12).
- » **KEY:** **Though the eternal principles of Judaism remained the same, the manner of and motive for its observance were changed. The new covenant perfected Judaism by elevating its system of worship and service to God into the dimension of worship in Spirit and in truth.**
- » A classic example of the reformation and perfection of Judaism is the Passover. In Old Testament Judaism, the Passover commemorated liberation from Egyptian bondage with a supper of roast lamb and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:3-7,13,14).
- » In New Testament Judaism, the Passover commemorates liberation from the bondage of sin and death with a supper of the Communion of the body and blood of Jesus (I Corinthians 11:23-26).
- » **KEY:** **New Testament Judaism, then, is merely a perfected order of worship and service. It is not a method of establishing righteousness but a better way in which we may worship and serve the living God in obedience to His “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5).**

2. JUDAISM IS THE RELIGION WHICH GOD AUTHORED AT MOUNT SINAI AND PERFECTED AT CALVARY.

- » **THE CHRISTIAN’S HERITAGE IN JUDAISM** – There is only one religion (faith) given by God to mankind; He simply does not have one religion for the Jews and another for the Gentiles.
- » Every Christian, therefore, is involved in Judaism in one way or another, whether he is aware of it or not. Remember, Judaism gave the New Testament believer the two most important things the world has ever known: the Bible, which is Judaism in its purest form, and the Messiah, who is the Jew of Jews, and the Lord from heaven.
- » Christians who observe Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, are practicing Judaism by commemorating Passover (I Corinthians 5:7,8). Every believer who practices tithing is claiming his heritage in Judaism, for without the Old Testament, we could not understand tithing (Genesis 28:22). Most Christians observe the injunction of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 by abstaining from blood, a concept which is a direct product of Judaism (Leviticus 17:10).
- » Christians also claim their heritage in Judaism by other practices: abiding by the Ten Commandments for moral conduct, setting aside a day for rest and worship, using Old Testament prophecy to understand the world about us, appealing to a High Priest (Jesus), and so forth.
- » When the nation of Israel rejected the Messiah, He did not abolish Judaism, the faith (religion) of God. The Jews’ unbelief did not make the faith of God without effect (Romans 3:3). What their unbelief did was to extend God’s religion to both Jew and Gentile, so that all believers may become part of Abrahams’ faith race (Galatians 3:29).

“NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM – Part 4”

LESSON 6 ■ For week ending August 10, 2024

Have you ever binge-watched a miniseries on TV? You know that there is Part 1, Part 2, and so on. The same is true with God and His plan of salvation for mankind. The Bible contains multiple dispensations. The word *dispensation* simply means *the method or scheme according to which God carries out His purposes towards men*. The Old Testament was the *Dispensation of the Law*. We know that we currently are living in the *Grace Dispensation* (thank God!). When you understand that there are multiple “parts” to God’s overall plan for mankind you can better understand the transformation of Old Testament Judaism to New Testament Judaism.

KEY TEXT: “*For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law*” (Hebrews 7:12).

1. FAITH IN JESUS MAKES EVERY BELIEVER A JEW INWARDLY.

- » **A LEGACY DEPRIVED BY ANTI-SEMITISM** – The perpetuation of Judaism in the First Century Church is well established both by Scripture and by history (Acts 2:42).
- » The believers were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26), years after the ascension of Jesus. The question arises: “What were they called before that time?” The answer is clear: They were recognized as a sect of the Jews. Why then does modern Christianity not have more of an identity with Judaism? The answer is simple: First Century Jews and Christians had one common enemy—the Roman government.
- » Because the Jewish people and the early Hebrew Christians refused to adopt Roman polytheism (the worship of many gods), they became targets of Anti-Semitism, which is the hatred for and aversion to the Jews and things Jewish.
- » **KEY: As Gentile influence gained control of the Early Church, however, most of its liturgy and concepts based in Judaism were gradually modified to include Roman ideas. Finally, the Early Church and the state were united at the expense of the elimination of everything that had any obvious connection with Judaism (Isaiah 1:21).**

2. THE DEMISE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

- » The fall of the Early Church—and our Jewish Heritage—was prophesied by Scripture (Acts 20:27).
- » We saw the same thing happen in the Old Testament when King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and carried away the Jewish people—and the holy vessels housed in the Temple—to Babylon for a period of 70 years (II Kings 25:8-11; Jeremiah 29:10),
- » Satan’s plan has always been to destroy the things of God and the people of God. He is still hard at work on his plan today (I Peter 5:8).
- » The dissolution of all things Jewish was started by the Roman Emperor Constantine who worked feverishly to redefine the faith of the Early Church by restricting and outlawing anything resembling Judaism.
- » This is why your grandmother never heard about the 7th-Day Sabbath or celebrating Jewish Festivals. It was a systematic plan orchestrated by Satan to eradicate all things Jewish. It subsequently became against the law to keep the Sabbath Day (Saturday) or to celebrate the feasts of God.
- » The Prophet Isaiah talked about this very thing in Isaiah 1:21. Discuss the use of the word *harlot* in this scripture. It was the Roman Empire that mixed the holy things of God with pagan practices just like King Nebuchadnezzar did in the Old Testament.

3. ANTI-SEMITISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

- » Since that time, the spirit of anti-Semitism has seemingly characterized Christianity (Mark 13:13).
- » Even while overt hatred and abuse of the Jews themselves have not been manifest, Christian tradition has consistently brought sweeping indictments against Judaism.
- » Unfortunately the average Christian almost completely misses the advantage of Judaism and the profound legacy of understanding of the Eternal God that knowledge of His ancient religion affords (Romans 3:1,2).
- » The ingrained fear of anything that even remotely sounds Jewish has kept most Christians from discovering their roots in Judaism.

“NEW TESTAMENT JUDAISM – Part 5”

LESSON 7 ■ For week ending August 17, 2024

Last week we talked about how God’s Word can be compared to a mini-series with different parts (seasons). We discussed the role of Satan and how he used anti-Semitism to destroy/pollute the Early Church ultimately resulting in the formation of the Dark Ages (a time when God’s Church ceased to exist). We are still in the process of recovering from that assault on God’s Church and Biblical Judaism.

KEY TEXT: “Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1).

1. HATRED FOR JUDAISM IS IN REALITY HATRED FOR CHRISTIANITY.

- » **JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME** – Hebrews 13:8 tells us that “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*” This scripture is simply a restatement of Ecclesiastes 3:15: “*That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.*”
- » This is a declaration of the fact that God never changes (Malachi 3:6). Just as surely as the physical laws of nature are unchangeable (Romans 1:20), so are the eternal principles of God’s Word. With God there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning (James 1:17).
- » **If Judaism were ever God’s appointed religious system—and we have His Word that it was—then we must conclude that in some form it remains such.** God did not give up the Judaic Law and repeal it; He merely reformed and perfected it by adding the new covenant in the blood of Jesus and making it available to whosoever will.
- » **KEY: The fundamentals of the Word of God remain the same—not abolished—but given a new manner of observance.**
- » Discuss the fact that the blood of Jesus is still required to forgive our sins today (Hebrews 9:22). Also, we still have the principle of a High Priest presenting us to God (Hebrews 4:14-16).

2. “I AM THE LORD, I CHANGE NOT...”

- » **JUDAISM AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD** – Since God never changes, we might logically expect His use of the system of Judaism to continue.
- » It is altogether fitting and proper, then, that when Messiah Jesus returns to this earth to set up His Kingdom, He will use Biblical Judaism as a guideline for governmental order.
- » First He will make Jerusalem, Israel, the capital for world government (Isaiah 2:2-4).
- » Then all nations of the world will be required to observe the Feasts of Yahweh (Zechariah 14:16,17).
- » The pattern for judicial and executive government will also be that of Judaism (Matthew 19:28).
- » In short, perfect Messianic Judaism will be restored in its fulness in the Kingdom of God.
- » This is why the spirit of restoration is at work throughout the Christian world today. Christians everywhere are re-awakening to the inherent Jewishness of their faith and are thereby making preparation for the return of their Lord and His Judaic kingdom (Acts 2:30).

3. BIBLICAL JUDAISM IS THE PATTERN FOR THE WORLD GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST.

- » **A NEW AND LIVING DIMENSION** – The one word that encapsulates the nature and goal of New Testament Judaism is *restoration*.
- » While this concept is a new dimension in the world of religious thought today, in reality it is only the restoration of the First Century dimension of Judaism in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- » It is a “Jesus kind of Judaism” as defined by the New Testament.
- » We encourage you to search for the roots of your faith in the Eternal God and His Son Jesus Christ.
- » We believe that you will discover—as we have—that your Christian heritage is in New Testament Judaism: The Judaism that lifts up Jesus!

“A BETTER COVENANT – Part 1”

LESSON 8 ■ For week ending August 24, 2024

We’ve just spent 5 weeks talking about New Testament Judaism. One of the main lessons we learned is that God simply *reformed* Old Testament Judaism through the person of Jesus Christ. I don’t know about you, but I’m so glad He did! The Jews had a hard time following the Law in their flesh. You and I have it made! We don’t have to drag animals to church to offer as sacrifices. We are made righteous through the blood of Jesus Christ and we have the Holy Spirit, Himself, living inside us. We have a better covenant!

KEY TEXT: “For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing of a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (Hebrews 7:19).

1. LET’S TALK ABOUT GOD.

- » God’s name is Yahweh, which according to God, Himself, means: “I AM THAT I AM.” Consider God’s answer to Moses after he asked God what His name was: “*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you*” (Exodus 3:14).
- » While we often think of Yahweh within the constraints of our limited thinking and according to our earthly time framework, it is important to remember that God has always existed and is not defined by “time”. He is “I AM”: which means that He has always existed and He always will.
- » When we are reading God’s Word, both the Old and New Testaments, its important to understand that God has always had a “master plan”. In other words, everything that has happened in the approximately 6,000 years that mankind has occupied this earth has been part of God’s plan for mankind.
- » God, in His infinite knowledge, knows everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen in the future. So, while God was interacting with the Israelites in the Old Testament, He was already planning for the future and was already present in the future. His awareness, His plan, and His will for mankind was not limited by the fact that all this took place some 3,500 years ago. God was already planning for the future and eternity for that matter.

2. What does that mean to us?

- » When we read the Old Testament, we must understand that God already had a plan for Jesus to come and fulfill the Law and to ultimately reform it.
- » The Bible tells us clearly that Jesus was slain from the foundation of the earth (I Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 13:8). In other words, God, whom is all-knowing, already knew that mankind would fall and He had a plan to restore mankind from his fallen state.
- » The same is true with the Old Testament Law. God gave the Law to Israel with full knowledge that there would be a time coming when He would do away with the Old Testament Law in favor of a new and better covenant.
- » This new covenant was instituted by Jesus Christ, Himself. Galatians 3:19a, “*What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed [Jesus–Galatians 3:16] should come to whom the promise was made...*”
- » So, what does that mean to us? When we read the Old Testament Law, we do not need to interpret God’s Law as being God’s perfected system for mankind. In fact, we need to understand that God’s Law was a schoolmaster that brought us to Christ (Galatians 3:24; 2:16).
- » How did the Old Testament Law bring us to Jesus Christ? We’ll talk about it next week!

“A BETTER COVENANT – Part 2”

LESSON 9 ■ For week ending August 31, 2024

When I get a headache, I don't look for an old-fashioned aspirin. I want a new, improved, extra-strength, maximum dose pill that will take away my pain *quickly!* LOL. So many people are confused about the Old Testament and the Law. They think they will become perfect, or “better,” by following their hand-picked excerpts from the Law of the Old Testament. That simply is not true. You and I have access to a better covenant. Why is it better? Because it contains Jesus!

KEY TEXT: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).*

1. Last week we ended our lesson with the phrase, “How did the Old Testament Law bring us to Jesus Christ?” Let's find out.

- » The Scriptures tell us emphatically that no man was able to keep the whole Law except Jesus Christ (Acts 15:10).
- » So, our inability to keep God's Law helped us realize that we needed a Savior—in the person of Jesus Christ—in order to be righteous before God. Christ fulfilled the works of the Law for us and we approach God in the righteousness of Jesus—not our own self-righteous fleshly works which God views as dirty rags.
- » The point is this: It's time to stop looking to the Old Testament Law in order to make ourselves more righteous or more presentable to God.
- » The Old Testament Law was done away with—with regard to making one righteous—and we have access to a new, better covenant through Jesus Christ. Romans 10:4, *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*
- » Jesus Christ is the only way to come before the Father.

2. A NEW PRIESTHOOD.

- » Let's read Hebrews 7:11-19,
11 *“Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?”*
- » The Old Testament Priesthood came from the Tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:5-13).
- » So, what is the order of Melchizedek? It is God's eternal priesthood (Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:1,2,4).
- » Continue reading Hebrew 7:12-19. This passage tells us emphatically that the Old Testament covenant was WEAK and UNPROFITABLE. It made NOTHING PERFECT.
- » So, why would we want to rummage through the Old Testament covenant trying to look for things to make us better? Or, more perfect? Our righteousness and perfection comes through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ—and nothing else! We do not need antiquated works of the flesh to make us more righteous before God.

3. A NEW, BETTER COVENANT ESTABLISHED ON BETTER PROMISES.

- » Let's read Hebrews 8:6-13.
- » God is telling us emphatically that since the time of Jesus, the Old Testament covenant has become OBSOLETE and is vanishing away. Why would we want to re-establish it?
- » God's plan has always been to reform the Old Testament Covenant. It was only given for a specific amount of time. Read Hebrews 9:6-10.
- » The *“time of reformation”* came when Jesus Christ was sacrificed on the Cross of Calvary.
- » Read Hebrews 10:19-23.
- » After Jesus ushered in a new covenant, we are now able to boldly enter the holy of holies which is the presence of God. Talk about a better covenant! TELL YOUR NEIGHBOR: “We have it made!”

“A BETTER COVENANT – Part 3”

LESSON 10 ■ For week ending September 7, 2024

One only has to read the Old Testament to understand the struggles that Israel faced trying to keep the commands of the Law in their flesh. It was not a pretty picture! Peter put it this way, “...*why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*” (Acts 1:10). I am so thankful that Jesus saw fit to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we are now able to keep the Laws of God with His help. We have a better covenant today!

KEY TEXT: “by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant” (Hebrews 7:22)

1. Do you remember when we talked about God’s plan for mankind being like a mini-series on TV? There’s Part 1, Part 2, and so on.

- » The Old Testament Law was only Part 1 of God’s plan. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 where God talks about His plan for the new covenant that He will make with His chosen people.
- » What did God say happened with the Old Covenant? According to verse 32, God says that covenant was *broken* by Israel of old.
- » What is one of the benefits of the new covenant? According to verse 33, God says that He will write this new covenant “*in their minds...and in their hearts.*”
- » God did not send Jesus Christ to this earth because of the failure of the Israelites to obey the Law, it was always God’s plan to send Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of ALL MANKIND (Revelation 13:8).

2. JESUS MAKES IT BETTER!

- » Let’s read Hebrews 10:1-18. Again, these scriptures make it clear that the Old Testament Law could not make the people perfect. The question again comes to mind: “Why would we believe that the fleshly works or rituals of the Old Testament Law make us better—or more perfect—before God?”
- » Verse 4 says, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” Remember what we said in the introduction it has always been God’s plan for sins to be forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ—and none other? The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament still depended upon the impending once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.
- » Verse 14 says, “*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*” The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ cleanses our consciences from dead works. Because Jesus Christ lives within us, we can be free from the nature of sin. Read Romans 8:1-4.

3. JESUS PAID IT ALL!

- » Let’s read Hebrews 9:11-15. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary for our sins was a ONE TIME SACRIFICE. It will never need repeating. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ cleanses our conscience from guilty works.
- » Also, please note that Jesus’ sacrifice also was applied to the “*transgressions under the first covenant.*” That means that it was necessary for Jesus’ sacrifice to remit the sins of those who died under the Old Testament/Covenant Law because Jesus is the one-and-only true sacrifice that washes away our sins.
- » Jesus is the only sinless and perfect sacrifice Lamb of God that redeemed mankind through His atoning blood on the Cross of Calvary.

4. CONCLUSION

- » When we venture back into the Old Testament/Covenant Law to pick and choose fleshly commandments that we think will make us better or more “perfect” before God, we are essentially saying that the blood of Jesus Christ is not enough to wash away our sins and make us righteous before God.
- » All we need to do to stand before God and confess our sins. The blood of Jesus is then applied and we are made righteous through our faith in Him.
- » Brothers and Sisters: We have a better covenant because it contains the blood of Jesus!

“GOD CAN DO IT!”

LESSON 11 ■ For week ending September 14, 2024

God delights in doing for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. All of us—at one time or another—are faced with hardship or sickness. The good news is that we serve a God who is well able to deliver and heal us. We don't always understand why we go through the things we do; however, we know that if we will trust the Lord, He will be our salvation. We must let our faith arise. With God all things are possible!

—Deaconess Vickie Craig

KEY TEXT: *“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).*

1. Life can be a mystery. We wonder at times why we go through certain things, such as sickness and pain.

- » Jesus addressed this very issue in John 9:1-3.
- » It may be that the struggle you are facing is the very thing God will use to bring glory to His Name.
- » Discuss the reality that Jesus is still working miracles today (Hebrews 13:8).

2. Sometimes it is easier for us to believe that God will move on behalf of someone else, than it is to believe that He will meet our own needs.

- » Someone once said, *“Faith is more than believing that He can move, it is KNOWING that He will!”*
- » Consider this further as you read Mark 9:17-29.
- » Is there any situation in our lives that God cannot take care of if we will only believe?

3. A miracle occurs when there is something that needs to happen which is beyond our human ability.

- » It is when we cry out to God in our weakness, “I can't,” that God moves in and says, “I can!”
- » Discuss the great miracle which God performed for His people on the day they were trapped between the Red Sea and the pursuing armies of Egypt (Exodus 14:21-27).

4. Many of the great miracles that Jesus performed occurred on the Sabbath day.

- » Confirm this as you read the following passages: Matthew 12:10-13 and Luke 13:10-16.
- » The message of the Sabbath is that we must cease from our labors.
- » There are some things that we simply cannot accomplish by our works. Both salvation and healing are benefits that must come from God.
- » The New Testament Sabbath is symbolic of the rest that we receive from the Messiah (Matthew 11:28-30).
- » Matthew 11:28-30, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*
- » The Sabbath is about us *not trying to do what we can't*, and by letting God *do what He can!*
- » Conclude by reading the words of Jesus in Mark 10:27.
- » Mark 10:27, *“But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”*
- » We are serving a God who can do things that seem impossible. TELL YOUR NEIGHBOR: “God can do it!”

“YOU, ME AND THE PROMISE – Part 1”

LESSON 12 ■ For week ending September 21, 2024

What exactly is a *promise*? According to the dictionary it is “*an assurance that one will do something or that something will happen.*” Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He instructed His apostles “*not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father*” (Acts 1:4 partial quote).

KEY TEXT: *[Jesus speaking] “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...” (Acts 1:8a).*

1. So, what exactly is the “promise” that Jesus was referring to?

- » Jesus gives more details in verse 5: “*For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit...*” (Acts 1:5).
- » What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Was it just a phenomenon that happened some 2,000 years ago around the time of Jesus? Is it something that we need today?
- » The answer is simple—YES! The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the power to lead a life that is pleasing to God and it will cause you to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ as well. It’s the power to be victorious—an overcomer! Let’s see what God’s Word has to say concerning you, me and the promise of the Holy Spirit.

2. What happens when someone is baptized?

- » Jesus used the example of John the Baptist and his ministry of baptizing people in water. Unlike today, where baptisms can consist of sprinkling or pouring of water over one’s head, John completely submerged the saints in water.
- » Water baptism is revealed in type in II Chronicles 4:6, where we see the example that reveals to us the necessity of water baptism. In the Old Testament, before a sacrifice was accepted and offered on the altar, it was washed in water.
- » This reveals the fact that in order for us to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice which is acceptable to God (Romans 12:1), we must be baptized in water. While water baptism does not wash away sins, it is, nevertheless, an essential outward sign of the repentance and born-again experience that has been attained inwardly.

3. With this understanding of how water baptism works and what it symbolizes, we can better comprehend why Jesus referred to it when promising the upcoming baptism in the Holy Spirit.

- » The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a complete surrendering—or immersion—to the Holy Spirit.
- » This includes the surrendering of our tongue—or “speaking in other tongues”.
- » This includes setting aside your will, your characteristics, your methods, or your way of doing something and opening yourself up to be used by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s will in your life.
- » The baptism in the Holy Spirit is about submission: **You surrender your will to God.**

4. When an individual is seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit, can anything be done to prepare his/her life or environment that will quicken the infilling?

- » There are steps that, if taken, will assist seekers.
 - a. Understand that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift from God. It should be received with gratitude and giving of thanks to the Giver. It cannot be earned or merited. It can only be accepted with an open and willing heart.
 - b. Be fully persuaded that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is both biblical and doctrinally correct.
 - c. Confess any known sins in your life and resolve to live a righteous life with God’s help.
 - d. Begin to worship the Lord with expressions of praise and adoration.
 - e. Express to the Lord, who is the Baptizer, a desire to be filled with His Holy Spirit for His glory.
 - f. Yield to any deep “welling up” within your spirit and allow that inner urge to break through in expressions of worship, praise, and adoration in a language unknown to you but meaningful to God.

“YOU, ME AND THE PROMISE – Part 2”

LESSON 13 ■ For week ending September 28, 2024

Last week we started talking about how Jesus gave a promise to His Disciples just prior to His ascension to Heaven in Acts 1. Part of the instruction He gave them was “to wait for the Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4 partial quote). Why did they need to wait? What was so important about this promise? Let’s continue to investigate the matter in today’s lesson.

KEY TEXT: *[Jesus speaking]* “...but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5 partial quote).

1. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- » The Holy Spirit is the 3rd part of the Godhead which consists of the Father (Yahweh), the Son (Jesus-Yahshua), and the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh).
 - » An example of the 3 personifications of the Godhead shown together is found in Luke 3:22, “And the Holy Spirit *[Ruach HaKodesh]* descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him *[Jesus/Yahshua]*, and a voice came from heaven *[Yahweh]* which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”
 - » The Father was the voice from heaven; the Son was being baptized; and the Holy Spirit appeared in the shape of a dove. All three personalities of the Godhead were present and manifested in this scenario.
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2. The Holy Spirit leads and guides us into truth—which is none other than Jesus Christ.

- » John 16:13, Jesus speaking, “**However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**”
 - » “**But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God**” (I Corinthians 2:10).
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3. The Holy Spirit gives us power.

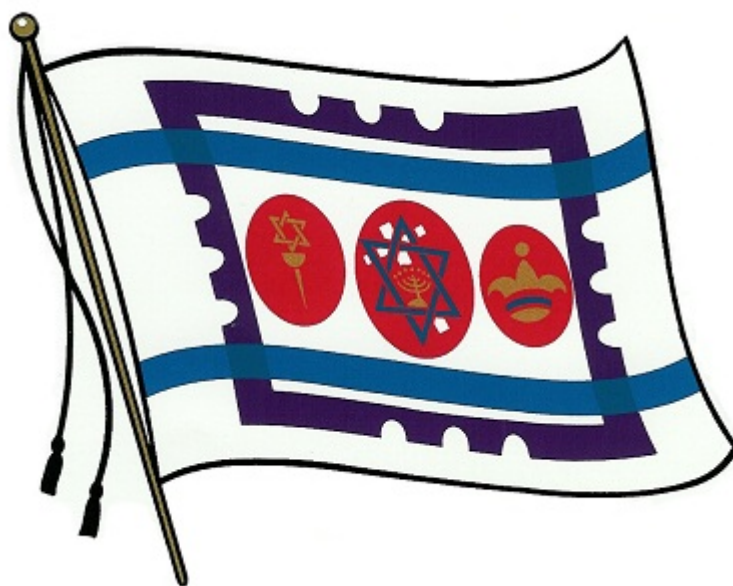
- » Acts 1:8, Jesus speaking, “**But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**”
 - » Luke 24:49, Jesus speaking, “**And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.**”
 - » Our most effective “witness” is to live a victorious life every day of the week.
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4. The Holy Spirit draws us.

- » John 6:44, Jesus speaking, “**No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.**”
 - » God uses the Holy Spirit to draw them. Jesus explained this in John 16:8 when He said, “**And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.**”
 - » Remember, the Holy Spirit is the *motive force* of God. Read Zechariah 4:6,7.
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5. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. The word *intercede* simply means to *intervene on behalf of another*.

- » Romans 8:26,27, “**Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**” [27] **For He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**”
- » The Holy Spirit gives us gifts (I Corinthians 12:1,7,8,11;
- » The Holy Spirit is our Helper and our Comforter. Read John 14:26.
- » God wants what is best for you. He gave the Promise of the Holy Spirit so you could be successful in your journey with Him. Do you have the baptism of the Holy Spirit working in your life?



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