



GRACE-LOVE-TRUTH COURSE.

PART 2A: GOD'S COVENANTS.

www.gracelovetruth.com

PART 2A: GOD'S COVENANTS

INDEX

1. GOD'S COVENANTS

- 1.1 WHAT ARE COVENANTS?
- 1.2 THE LAWS OF THE COVENANTS.
- 1.3 THE THREE MAIN COVENANTS PRIOR TO THE CROSS.
- 1.4 THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS FORESAW A NEW COVENANT
- 1.5 A BETTER COVENANT IN CHRIST

2. THE NEW COVENANT STARTS AT THE CROSS

- 2.1 THE CROSS REVERBERATED ACROSS TIME AND SPACE
- 2.2 WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED
- 2.3 JESUS FOCUSED ON THE ATONING WORK OF THE CROSS
- 2.4 THE CROSS DEALT WITH SIN ONCE AND FOR ALL
- 2.5 THE CROSS CHANGED JESUS' FOCUS FROM ISRAEL TO ALL MANKIND
- 2.6 GRACE IS NOW THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF GOD'S KINGDOM
- 2.7 THE CROSS CHANGED OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD
- 2.8 THE CROSS CHANGED OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
- 2.9 THE CROSS RELEASED REVELATION
- 2.10 THE CROSS REVEALED THE FULL GOSPEL OF GRACE
- 2.11 THE CROSS DISARMED SATAN
- 2.12 THE CROSS CHANGED THE COVENANT
- 2.13 THE OLD COVENANT
- 2.14 THE NEW COVENANT

PART 2A: GOD'S COVENANTS AND THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION

Our loving Abba Father has poured out his blessings and gifts to us through the grace of Jesus Christ. He has guaranteed his promises to us in the form of an agreement called the New Covenant which in a sense is a legal agreement sealed and signed in the blood of Jesus and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. This agreement reinforces our qualification and adoption as God's beloved children worthy in every way to represent him and to act in his name. This part of the course explains how this agreement works and will give you even more confidence as to your right standing with God.

As stated previously, an important part of understanding the grace is that we have a firm Biblical foundation on which this grace is established. This is so that the intimacy, hope and blessings that come with Jesus' grace cannot be undermined. As you go through this study course we ask you to spend time looking up all the scripture references quoted in brackets and allow the Holy Spirit to establish the Word in your heart and mind.



THE NEW COVENANT OF GRACE

The focus is always on Jesus and His obedience & performance.

Grace always gives us the help we need.
(Heb. 4:16)
(Titus 2:12)

Grace is very good news!

Jesus always blessed & loved those who sinned & fell short.

1. GOD'S COVENANTS

1.1 WHAT ARE COVENANTS?

A covenant is a solemn, legally binding, relational agreement between two parties which is normally activated and sealed by the shedding of blood. A covenant has terms and conditions that have to be fulfilled by each party. The closest example that we have in this modern era is the marriage covenant which has to be physically consummated for it to be binding. In days gone by a check of the marriage bed would take place for evidence of the blood of virginity, if blood was not found then the marriage was null and void.

An understanding of covenants is crucial for us as God has always related to mankind through covenants. There are a number of covenants found in the Scriptures and it is important that we understand what covenant applies to us, as believers, and what covenants are obsolete and no longer applicable. Also as with any agreement we need to know what the terms and conditions of that agreement are so that we can do our part and fulfil them.

1.2 THE LAWS OF THE COVENANTS

Romans 8:2-4 : "Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law [of Moses] was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

God interacts differently with people depending on the covenant they are under. Therefore it is important that we distinguish between the different covenants. God's response to people is based on the covenant and law system which they have been placed under or choose to live under. The above Scripture is very definitive in this regard and clarifies the three main law systems found in the Scriptures.

- 1) The Law of sin and death that came through Adam: You sin, you die.
- 2) The Law of performance that came through Moses: Do good get good, do bad get bad.
- 3) The Law of the Spirit of Life that came through Jesus: He died, therefore you are in grace and blessed by the Holy Spirit.

1.3 THE THREE MAIN COVENANTS PRIOR TO THE CROSS

i) The Covenant of sin and death. Agreed with Adam and his offspring (Genesis 3:15-21) and alluded to in Rom.8:1.

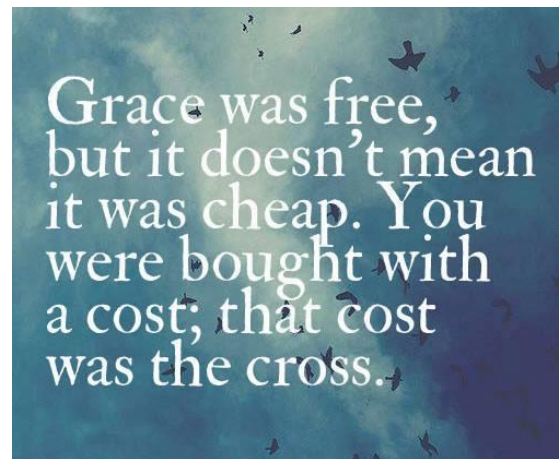
ii) The Covenant of faith and righteousness. Agreed with Abraham and his offspring through Isaac (Genesis 12:2-3 & 18:18) and ultimately through Jesus.

iii) The Mosaic Covenant, also known as The Law. Agreed with Israel through Moses. (Deuteronomy 29:1, Exodus 24:4-8, 34:27).

The significance of each of these covenants will be revealed during the course, so we will not go into detail at this stage. There were also a number of sub-covenants such as with Noah (Genesis 8:20-22, 9:12) and David (2 Chronicles 21:7). These are also important but space prevents them being dealt with in detail.

1.4 THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS FORESAW A NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:31: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."



These passages from Jeremiah prophesied the coming of a New Covenant. Similar promises about the new and better covenant that was going to come one day were made in Ezekiel 11:19 & 36:26 and elsewhere. Hebrews 8:7-13 & 10:16 declares that Jesus is the fulfilment of the promises of a new and better covenant.

Why was a new covenant so needed? Because of the hard and onerous terms and conditions of the Mosaic Law Covenant (Ezekiel 20:25), given on mount Sinai. Israel constantly failed to meet the terms of this covenant and came under the wrath and curse of the Law. The terms of the Law covenant were; *if you fail to obey you will be cursed*. The prophets of Israel foresaw the coming of the a new and better covenant that would be fulfilled by God's Messiah and Saviour, Jesus, who

would save God's people from the curse of the Old Covenant. The Messiah would set Israel free from and slavery of the Law. The good news is that we are blessed to live under this better New Covenant and that the Old Covenant of the Mosaic Law does not apply to us who are in Christ.

1.5 A BETTER COVENANT IN CHRIST

Hebrews 7:22-25: "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Covenant of the Law (Matthew 5:17) and of God's covenant with David. Jesus was able to become the originator and mediator of the better New Covenant that the Prophets had foretold. He would be the fulfilment of all the terms and conditions of the New Covenant of Grace through His punishment, death, burial, resurrection and glorification. This New Covenant is now the dominant and overriding covenant of all preceding covenants for those who would agree to it by dying to self and becoming one with Christ (Galatians 2:20) i.e. being "born again". This is the covenant that has released God's grace and blessings to all who would believe and become children of God (John 1:12-17). This is the covenant that we will now look at in more detail.

2. THE NEW COVENANT STARTS AT THE CROSS

2.1 THE CROSS REVERBERATED ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

Revelation 13:8, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world".

Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son".



The prophet Zechariah foresaw the coming of the Holy Spirit and grace and how this was linked to the crucifixion of the firstborn Son, Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation prophetically declares the eternal, timeless significance of the death of the Lamb of God on the cross. The cross is beyond doubt the most significant world changing event in history. There is nothing more significant either in the spiritual or physical realm. It is the most profound, earth-shattering event that reverberated both into the past and future. The cross of Christ is the core and under laying foundation of our

Christian faith and belief system. All Scripture, both before and after the cross, points to the cross and its affects. Without the cross, Jesus would be no more significant than any other religious teacher or guru. It is the cross defines Christ and Christianity. It is the great divide of history.

2.2 WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 1:23, "We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."

We do not just preach Jesus Christ, even Islam claims to do that. Even Israel was prepared to accept Christ as the Prophet, a Rabbi and even a Messiah King. No! We preach Christ Crucified. This is the uniqueness of Christianity. We preach Christ - His life, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification to the right hand of God. The Cross was and still is, a huge stumbling block to many, as it is offensive to all those who are religious, self-righteous and to those who feed on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

2.3 JESUS FOCUSED ON THE ATONING WORK OF THE CROSS

Matthew 16:21-23, "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."



Some of Jesus' closest disciples failed to see the significance of the cross. Jesus' whole earthly life had one ultimate purpose, the cross, and He would allow no one to distract Him from fulfilling this calling. Jesus knew the cross would change everything as the cross would deal with the divide between man and God. Peter acting in the flesh, opposed Jesus going to the cross and Jesus' shocking response was to call him "Satan!" Peter reacted in anger at Jesus' arrest and tried to resist with the sword – again, Jesus rebuked him. Eventually Peter was so upset with the prospect of the cross that he ended up denying Jesus three times.

Jesus' atoning work on the cross and resurrection was the start of the era of the New Covenant and these events are the foundation of the New Covenant of the grace of Jesus Christ.

From the incident with Peter we see man's fleshly nature and natural intellect cannot understand the cross and will always oppose the cross (1 Corinthians 2:14). The cross and its power ultimately has to be a spiritual revelation within the hearts of man, as to the natural man, it is just foolishness.

2.4 THE CROSS DEALT WITH SIN ONCE AND FOR ALL

Colossians 2:13, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins".

Before the cross there was no permanent atonement for sins. The Law of Moses was in force and these laws bought death and a curse on all (this is expanded upon in part 3). No one was righteous in God's eyes, no one could be saved. At the cross the power and dominion of sin was destroyed once and for all. For all those who would be saved the cross opened the flood gate of God's unearned and undeserved grace (John 1:17), the forgiveness of sins. The cross destroyed the power of sin and provided a way for man's "Adamic sin nature" to be put to death on the cross with Christ (Gal.2:20). Now for those in Christ, all sin - past, present, future - is atoned for (more on the issue of sin in part 4). This work of Jesus on the cross is the cornerstone of the New Covenant and grace.

2.5 THE CROSS CHANGED JESUS' FOCUS FROM ISRAEL TO ALL MANKIND



Matthew 15:22, "A Canaanite (Gentile) woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

Although Jesus is and always will be the Saviour of all mankind, Jesus' earthly ministry was firstly and primarily to Israel and its leaders - those under the Old Covenant Law of Moses (Matthew 15:24). Most of Jesus' gospel teaching was firstly directed at Israel's teachers, the Pharisees, who had wrongly interpreted the Law, did not understand the spirit of the Law and misapplied the Law. They had wrongly assumed that righteousness and salvation could be obtained by works (Romans 9:30-10:4). Jesus taught against their error, hypocrisy and self righteousness. To those who chose law Jesus preached law, to those "sinners" who were broken and

contrite Jesus showed grace and forgiveness. During this time Jesus alluded to the fact that He was going to bring salvation also to the Gentiles (John 10:16) but His ministry to the Gentiles only really came into effect after the cross, primarily through the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:15).

2.6 GRACE IS NOW THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Through the cross, the Law of Moses was fulfilled and effectively done away with for believers (Romans 6:14). The reign and rule of Christ and His kingdom is now brought into effect by the Spirit through the system of grace - not through religious rules, regulations and laws. The preaching of the kingdom now goes hand in hand with the preaching of the good news of God's grace (Acts 20:24) – his unearned, undeserved, forgiveness, blessing, favour and empowering.

2.7 THE CROSS CHANGED OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

Colossians 1:20 "Through Jesus He reconciled to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Under the Old Covenant we were enslaved to sin and alienated from God, God's wrath was upon all because of sin. But since the cross God is no longer angry or out to punish us for our sins. We are now at reconciled and at peace with God (Colossians 1:20). In the New Covenant, God no longer relates to us based on our good or bad performance, in fact He remembers our sins no more (Hebrews 10:17).

God now sees us as part of Jesus, as we have become the Body of Christ. We are no longer God's slaves or servants but God's beloved sons and daughters in Christ (Romans 8:15). God now relates to us as a loving and kind "Abba" Father (more on our new relationship with God in part 6).



2.8 THE CROSS CHANGED OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:7 "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor [The Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you".

Prior to the cross, under the Old Covenant, Holy Spirit came upon certain godly people at certain times for a certain purpose. But His presence was not permanent. Under the Old Covenant the Spirit was understood as the power of God that came and went as and when God determined. Due to man's un-atoned sin, the Holy Spirit could not live within people but only "come upon" them in a

temporary way. After the cross, under the New Covenant, the sin condition of man was dealt with and the Holy Spirit was able to come and abide in Jesus' Body, the Church i.e. all those who believed and were "born again". The Holy Spirit is now a permanent seal and guarantee within all those who are saved (Eph.4:30). In the New Covenant the Holy Spirit is understood to be the third person of the Trinity and not just a force or power. The power of the Holy Spirit is now released within and through believers for the ministry and work of God. It is living life by the Spirit that fulfils the purposes of the New Covenant (Galatians 5:16). Under the New Covenant it is ultimately the Holy Spirit that teaches us and leads us into the truth (Jn.14:26) about Jesus, his grace and his kingdom. The Holy Spirit now writes God's laws and decrees from within on our hearts and minds. Born again believers are guided from within by God's Spirit, in accordance with the Word and no longer by others imposing laws and rules on them.



2.9 THE CROSS RELEASED REVELATION

John 12:16 "At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him."

2 Corinthians 3:14 "But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away."

Before the cross there were certain aspects of God's kingdom and Jesus' teachings which could not be fully understood (Luke 9:44-45). Firstly because those under the Law of Moses were spiritually blind and had a spiritual veil over them which stopped them from understanding God's grace and God's true purposes. Secondly, because it is only the witnessing of the cross; Jesus, death, resurrection and ascension that clarifies and fulfils the Scriptures. Jesus warned his disciples that prior to the cross and the infilling of the Holy Spirit there were certain things that they simply could never understand (Matthew 15:16, 16:11) and other things that were still to be revealed, such as God's grace and gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17) which could not come through ministry of the earthly Jesus but only through the ministry of the heavenly Jesus, our great Heavenly High Priest.

2.10 THE CROSS REVEALED THE FULL GOSPEL OF GRACE

Galatians 1:12, "I did not receive the gospel (of grace) from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ."

During His earthly ministry Jesus never fully revealed salvation by grace, He simply alluded to it and displayed it in practice (John 8:1-11 and Luke 15). After the cross, the risen Jesus revealed more aspects of the kingdom and grace to the disciples (Acts 1:2) and later the ascended and glorified Jesus (John 12:16) revealed even more truths to the Apostle Paul (Galatians 1:12). In a sense, this was the final revelation and clarification of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His kingdom. All other Scriptures need to be interpreted in the context of Jesus' final revelations and scriptural teachings given to the Apostle Paul who was caught up into heaven and taught by the glorified Christ (2Co. 12:2).

2.11 THE CROSS DISARMED SATAN

Colossians 2:15, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross".

Under the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1) which was later reinforced by the Law of Moses, God allowed Satan to accuse and afflict those who sinned. However this Satanic power of condemnation and affliction has been removed through the cross. Satan no longer has any legal rights to attack or afflict those who are in Christ. In Christ, and through the cross, we now have victory over the enemy and we have a great High Priest and mediator in heaven, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us and defends us (Heb.7:25).

2.12 THE CROSS CHANGED THE COVENANT

Hebrews 9:15, For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

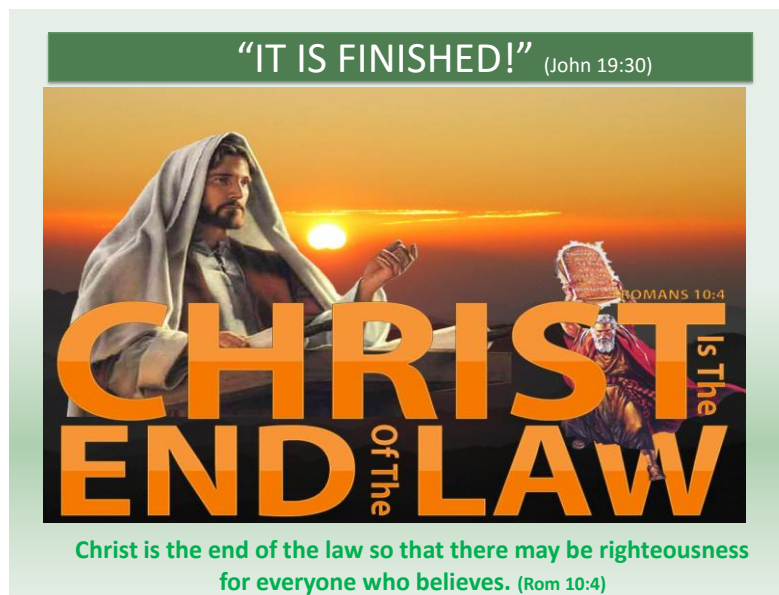
Colossians 2:14, Having cancelled the written code (the Law), with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.



New Testament believers now fall under the New Covenant alone, not a mixture of the old and new. Believers now reading scriptures from the time of Mount Sinai onwards need to understand that any conditions are not applicable to them as believers as they are fulfilled in Christ. The blessings apply but the curses and punishments do not as they were taken by Jesus.

2.13 THE OLD COVENANT

Prior to the cross the Law of Moses was the only covenant effectively in force through which people could relate to God. Gentiles who wanted to know God had to convert to Judaism and come under the Law of Moses. The terms of this covenant are harsh and deadly as it was based on an unattainable holiness and righteousness that no man could fulfil. There were blessing and curses (Deuteronomy 28) based on one's behaviour. However no one could be justified (just as if they never sinned) and saved through keeping the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:16) as they always failed. The sole purpose of the Law is to lead people to Jesus, God's Saviour (Galatians 3:24) and remind Israel of the Abrahamic foundation that righteousness and justification is actually by faith alone (Galatians 3:8).



2.14 THE NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 8:6-13 The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to the ministry of the Jewish High Priests as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the New Covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant [of the Law], no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the

greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and I will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

The Old Covenant was about us and our performance; "you must, if you, if you ..." Thus it was always doomed to fail because of our weakness (Read Deut 28). In contrast the New Covenant is focussed on God's grace and his performance and therefore guaranteed to succeed. In the above scripture God says "I will" six times because it's all about Him and not about us. The shedding of the blood of Jesus as atonement for all sin heralded in the New Covenant of grace in which sins are forgiven and forgotten. This New Covenant was no longer just for Israel but opened the door for Gentiles to be saved as well. The New Covenant fulfilled and replaced the Old Covenant for all those who believe in Christ. The good news is that the blood of Jesus, instead of our own blood, is the blood seal for the New Covenant. The terms and conditions of this covenant are fully and eternally fulfilled by Jesus and not by us. The New Covenant is unique in the sense that it is intrinsically between two persons who are one; God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We as believers, have access into this covenant not as ourselves but only as part of the Body of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) which we are included into when we believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. One of the easiest ways to understand the New Covenant is that it was prepared by the loving Father for His Son. It is a relational, marriage agreement between His Son, Jesus who is known as the bridegroom and His Bride, the Church (John 3:29, Revelation 19:7). The good news of the New Covenant is that unlike the Old Covenant, there are blessings upon blessing (John 1:16-17) and abundant overflowing grace.

In light of the above teaching spend some time reflecting on the finished work of the cross and write down what it means for you personally and what significance you believe it has today:

List any other Scriptures that link in with this theme of the finished work of the cross:
