

“The Old has Gone, the New has Come”

1 Corinthians 11:25

April 9, 2020

SERMON 1906

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The sermon text is from 1 Corinthians 11:25, “In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (NKJV, only KJV has “testament”)

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

On that Maundy Thursday, Jesus celebrated the Jewish Passover, which was the inauguration of the old covenant. God’s people were in slavery in Egypt and God sent Moses to bring the Israelite nation out. As today’s reading from Exodus 12 states, the Passover lamb was killed, the blood was smeared on the doorpost and lintel, and the next morning the people were released. The Lord took them to Mt. Sinai in order that they might meet with God. With the old covenant, God saved them and bestowed His favor upon them. The obligations of the old covenant were delivered by Moses when he brought down the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Law.

With such a good beginning, we might have expected great things. Nevertheless, the people did not follow their part of the covenant. They grumbled and complained. They doubted God’s help and refused to enter the Promised Land. They were sentenced to 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The Scriptures say that God was not pleased with them.

Years later, when the people were going into Babylonian exile for their idolatry, Jeremiah the prophet remarks about the inadequacy of the old covenant and the need for a new covenant. He says in **Jeremiah 31:31-32**,

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.”

As far God’s side of the covenant, He was faithful, but the people were not. Once again, God is going to need to bridge the gap and do something. Just as the first covenant of redemption from Egypt was initiated by God, so once again God is going to make a new covenant with His people. This covenant is called a “new covenant” because of striking difference as compared with the old covenant. Jeremiah says that the new covenant will not be like the old covenant.

Jeremiah goes on to say in **verses 33-34**,

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ²⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (v.33-34).

God's people need to look forward to this new covenant. This new covenant will be based on the forgiveness of sins. **The old covenant included an external writing of the law on tablets of stone telling the people what to do. The defect with the old covenant was that it was broken by the people.** They couldn't keep the law any more than you or I can keep the law. God's Law is not only concerned with outward actions but it requires that "we fear and love God so that." It was impossible to keep. The law only shows us our sins and humbles us. Those who attempt to earn God's favor by keeping the law will be humbled by it and fall into despair at their failure.

Jeremiah assures the people that God will restore His relationship with them. He will be their God and they shall be His people. But with the new covenant, the defect will be fixed by placing the "law in their minds and writing it on their hearts." With this new covenant, the people's response to the new covenant will not be forced by outward rules. God will place inside them new desires to fear and love Him. What the Ten Commandments could not do, God will accomplish through His writing upon their fleshy hearts. He forgives them and gives them a new birth. It is with that promise from Jeremiah, that the people should have been ready for Maundy Thursday.

John 13 begins by expressing the great love of Jesus. Jesus loved them in His coming to take on human flesh. He loved them in His baptism to take upon Himself their sins. He loved them in His teaching and healing and miracles. But now here at the end of His life, Jesus truly "loved them to the end." Having complete the old covenant meal, Jesus washed their feet. This was not for hygienic or ceremonial or would have been done before the meal. This washing is teaching them that the first covenant wasn't enough. It is about the forgiveness of sins. Even after celebrating the Passover, they still needed a washing.

Then we see in 1 Corinthians 11, that Jesus celebrated the new meal, which we call the Lord's Supper. Everything about the words of institution should make us sit up and take notice. **Jesus says, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." Our response should be, "Yes, the new covenant is here!"** This is the new covenant, for which the faithful have been waiting. Jeremiah said that it would involve forgiveness, and a regenerated heart—and it does! The old covenant was able to be broken, but the new covenant is actually a last will and testament. Through the death of Jesus it goes into effect. And through the testament, the will of Jesus is expressed in the words of institution so that we receive all of the inheritance.

The old covenant had a slain Passover lamb; but the new covenant begins with sacrifice of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The old covenant has a release from slavery in Egypt. With the new covenant, Jesus rises from the dead on the third day to live forever. The Passover meal is replaced with the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus and for the forgiveness of sins. The born-again people of God don't grumble and complain that they are Christians, but they rejoice in their new life and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The obligations of the new covenant are not reluctantly imposed by Moses; they are graciously placed in us by the One who has washed away our sins. Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Love is the mark by which believers in Jesus are known.

In the post-communion prayer, the church understands that the new covenant definitely includes faith in God's promise, but she also speaks about love for one

another. It says,

“We give thanks to you, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore you that of your mercy you would strengthen us through the same in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ....”

I know that many of us are not able to gather and celebrate the Lord’s Supper as we are accustomed to do every Lord’s Day and on festival days. I am not trying to taunt you by speaking about something you can’t presently have. Like Jeremiah, exhorting the believers of his day, we can look forward to that day in which we can receive the new covenant in Jesus’ blood and the new testament of Christ according to His will. Unlike the old covenant which required that the Passover lamb be celebrated annually—and on a specific day of the year, Nissan 14—there is no law concerning the time to receive our Lord’s Supper. It is not bound. The words, “as often as you do it” compel no one to receive on specific or certain days. Know that you have not sinned, by the restrictions of the present quarantine.

Nevertheless, according to our opportunity we frequently partake. It is not a burden or a law that compels us. We are already Christians, and we have received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. We don’t need Moses forcing us to go. We belong to the time of the new covenant. Jeremiah 31 says, “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

In His final parting words, Jesus tells us that by His sacrificial death He is atoning for the sins of the world. Through His cup of the new testament in His blood, Jesus is giving out His gifts of forgiveness and new desires. And finally, he says to us, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” Our God creates in us a new heart and renews in us a steadfast spirit. Through His new covenant, He restores to you the joy of Your salvation.