

## Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Jesus, *the Mediator of the New Covenant* – 12-18/02/2022

**C**hrist “is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The old covenant, made by the people, was ratified by the blood of beasts, which could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4, 11). But the new was ratified by the blood of Christ which “taketh away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).

**Sunday: The Need of a New Covenant** – The Lesson writer is wrong to say, “The fact that a new covenant was necessary does not mean that God was unfair with Israel when He gave them the old covenant” – God never ‘gave’ that old covenant. What is called “new” came first before what is called “old” covenant. The “new” did not start at Sinai, it started in Eden and was already instituted when at Sinai the people entered into the “old” covenant. Abraham, way before Sinai, lived under the “new” covenant. The “new” is also called the covenant of grace. On the genesis of the “new” covenant, Ellen White tells us this: “The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head” {PP 370.2}. “This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ” {PP 370.3}. “Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant. The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law” {PP 370.4}. “That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God — the “two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.” Hebrews 6:18” {PP 371.1}. On the “old” covenant, Ellen White says, “Another compact — called in Scripture the “old” covenant — was formed between God and Israel at Sinai” {PP 371.1}. “The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Exodus 24:7” {PP 371.4}. God never gave Israel the Old covenant, for the old covenant is the promises of the people, and the New Covenant is the promises of God. The two covenants are not matters of dispensation or time: they run side-by-side all through history since the fall of man. The two covenants are matters of heart conviction. It was possible for people living in Old Testament times to be under the New Covenant if they had true faith in Christ; it is possible for us living today to be under the Old Covenant if we do not understand the gospel that was preached to Abraham. Abraham’s descendants, coming out of Egypt 430 years later, fall into the Old Covenant when they made a promise to the Lord, “all that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:8). God did not ask them to make that promise; they broke it soon afterwards. In the New Testament, Peter’s promise never to deny the Lord was an Old Covenant (Mark 14:29-31).

When the Jews at Sinai volunteered to work God’s works for Him, they undertook their own salvation. They ignored the history of Abraham, and God’s covenant with him, to which their attention had been specially called. But God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and so, in harmony with His covenant with Abraham, He did not cast off the people, but instead He endeavoured to teach them of Himself and His salvation, even out of their unbelief. He gave them a system of sacrifices and offerings, and a daily and yearly round of ceremonies that were exactly in keeping with the law which they had elected to keep, namely, the law of works. Of course, this sacrificial system could not save them any more than could the broken law of works out of which it grew. Any man who had understanding enough to know the nature of sin and the necessity for atonement, had sense enough to know that pardon and righteousness could never be obtained by the ceremonies connected with the tabernacle. The very offering of a sacrifice indicated that death is the wages and fruit of sin. But anyone could see that the life of a lamb, a goat, or a bullock, was not worth as much as a man’s own life. None of those

animals, nor all of them together, could answer for the life of a single man. Thousands of rams, or even a human sacrifice, could not atone for a single sin (Micah 6:6-7). The faithful among the people understood this well. David said, after he had committed a great sin, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psalm 51:16). And God, through the prophets, taught the people: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" "I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats" (Isaiah 1:11). "Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me" (Jeremiah 6:20). There was no virtue in them, for the law had only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," and could "never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Hebrews 10:1). It would of course have been better, nay, the very best thing, if the people of Israel had preserved the simple and strong faith of Abraham, in which case they would have had no tabernacle but the one "which the Lord pitched, and not man" (verse 2); no High Priest except Christ Himself, "made an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (verse 1); no limit to the priesthood, but every one of them a priest "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5); no law but "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ" (Romans 8:2); in short, only the reality, and not the mere shadow. But since the people did not believe, it was a wonderful exhibition of God's kindness and love and forbearance, that He gave them what must have served as a continual object lesson. The very "weakness and unprofitableness" (Hebrews 7:18) of the law of works was always apparent to every thoughtful person; and when the soul became awakened, that law whose only profit was conviction, and whose only power was death, directed them to Christ, to whom it shut them up for freedom and life. It made evident to them that in Christ, and in Him alone, they could find salvation. The truth as it is in Jesus, is the truth that sanctifies.

**Monday: New and Renewed** – The Lesson writer is wrong, again, to say "the new covenant is a renewal of the old covenant". In their Egyptian bondage, the people had lost the knowledge of God and so they failed to appreciate the "New" Covenant when it was put to them at Sinai; failing to realise their sinful hearts, failing to realise that without Christ they cannot keep the law, they made their own promise to keep the law, and formed the "Old" Covenant; after the people realised that their own covenant could not save them, "Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant" {PP 371.4}. When God in Jeremiah 31:31-34 made a new covenant with Israel, He was simply directing their attention to the covenant with Adam and renewed with Abraham. And the clear proof of this is found in the fact that all who are heirs of the promises, are children of Abraham (Galatians 3:29).

**Tuesday: The New Covenant Has a Better Mediator** – Paul says, "And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). Thus here we see that when sins committed under the first covenant were forgiven, they were forgiven by virtue of the second covenant. Remember first covenant is "old" covenant and the promise of the people to keep God's law.

**Wednesday: The New Covenant Has Better Promises** – There was no forgiveness of sins in the "Old" covenant, it depended wholly on the people, when they broke it, they had failed their promise and had no claim upon the Lord. "The terms of the "old covenant" were, Obey and live: "If a man do, he shall even live in them" (Ezekiel 20:11; Leviticus 18:5); but "cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." Deuteronomy 27:26. The "new covenant" was established upon "better promises" — the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.... I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:33, 34" {PP 372.1}.

**Thursday: The New Covenant Has Solved the Problem of the Heart** – From Adam to Abraham to Israel to us today, the plan of salvation for sinners is a matter of the heart. The law produces conviction of sin, drives the sinner to seek freedom, having accepted Christ, and being justified by faith, follows on the living of a life of righteousness by faith in Christ.