

“The New Testament – For You”

“Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Well, if this is the NEW testament – what is the OLD testament?

Our first reaction is to think of the first 39 books of the Bible, known as the Old Testament. But this OLD and NEW testament is more than just a division of the books of the Bible – it’s all about God’s promises to His people.

In Jesus’ day, God’s people lived in what we would call the OLD testament – they lived by faith in the promises given to them – prior to the coming of the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, with Jesus, there is a NEW testament – a NEW promise. But what is this testament all about?

In Hebrews, Jesus is spoken of as “the mediator of a new covenant” (or testament) (Hebrew 9:15). Jesus is the Great High Priest – the One who mediates between God and man – the go between – the One who goes into God’s presence, standing before Him on behalf on His people.

Now, under the OLD testament – no priest would ever do such a thing. However, once a year, the high priest would dare to go behind the curtain in the Temple in Jerusalem – into the Holy of Holies, to stand in the presence of God ----- but not without the blood of the lamb.

Why? Because a sinner cannot stand in the presence of the holy and sinless God and live. And it’s not that the high priest was without sin – rather, God invited him into His presence, to mediate on behalf of all Israel – promising that the blood of the lamb would atone for all their sin – and the high priest, standing in the presence of the Glory of the Lord, would not die, but live.

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” – but with the shedding of blood, with the blood of the lamb – the high priest, and all Israel, could LIVE in the presence of the Lord God Almighty.

Under the OLD testament – God promised to forgive sins through the blood of goats and bulls (and other sacrificial animals).

You might wonder – how can the blood of goats and bulls do such great things? Well, it's not the blood, but the promise. The blood of goats and bulls – in and of themselves – are but simple blood. But with the Word of God (with His promise), they are the very means by which God wipes away their sin – the means by which God makes the sinner to be holy in His sight.

But why blood? Why not by the presentation of the most beautiful arrangement of flowers you've ever seen – or the most aromatic baked bread one could offer – or with rubies and sapphires and diamonds?

Why blood? Blood makes us queasy, and faint. Blood seems so drastic so messyso bloody. Couldn't the Lord have promised the forgiveness of sins through a more pleasant way, something more sanitary?

No, it's blood for a reason. Blood is connected with life. "The life is in the blood," the Scriptures say (Leviticus 17:11). But you are not supposed to SEE blood. When you see it – it's not where it's supposed to be – inside of you, a living being.

When blood is shed, it signals death. So, with the OLD testament – with the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial animals – God was preaching both His LAW and His GOSPEL to His people.

The Law was obvious – "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Here, look at what your sin has done – it has caused the death of this animal. Under the OLD testament, you handed over the sacrificial animal to the priest – and you heard the awful sound, and smelled the sacrifice – and God says, you are responsible for this.

But at the same time God was also preaching His Gospel. The good news is that YOUR blood isn't being shed – but that of another. God, in His mercy, orders a substitute to die the death you deserve – and promises that with this blood, I forgive all your sin.

And so, God's people of OLD lived by faith in God's Word, trusting His promise – that God, by grace, accepted the blood and death of the substitute on their behalf.

If that's the OLD, then what is the NEW? The NEW testament is very much like the OLD – but now, what is new, is that it is the “holy, precious blood” of Jesus Christ that is shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins. Jesus Christ – true God and true man – is sacrificed for the sin of the world.

God sheds His blood for you. God takes your place in death. God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the Mediator of the NEW covenant – and God promises, that with His blood, by His suffering and death – you are reconciled to God.

As we walk through The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ in this Season of Lent – you will hear the good news that Jesus endured all of this “for you.” However, tonight, when you hear that He poured out His blood “for many” – your sinful nature reminds you that you are not worthy of such grace, and the devil deceives you into believing that there is no way YOU can be part of the “many.”

When Jesus says that His blood is poured out “for many” – He isn't saying that His blood is for some, but not for others. Rather, His blood isn't just for a few – it is poured out for a great number, for many – it is poured out for all sinners.

“For God so loved the world (no one is excluded) that He gave His only begotten Son” into death – to be sacrificed – to shed His holy precious blood, to atone for the sin of the whole world. (John 3:16)

And so that YOU may know that your sin is atoned for, that you are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ – He gives the NEW testament to you. Eat my Body sacrificed in your place – drink my Blood, shed “for you.”

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness – but with Jesus, by His blood, you are forgiven. And in that forgiveness – you stand before the Lord your God as His holy and beloved child – now, and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.