

Historical Old and New Covenants

Historical Old Covenant

- Spans the period of spiritual history extending from Creation to the incarnation of Christ (i.e. the entire Old Testament period)—“when the old covenant [i.e., Old Testament] is read..” (2 Cor 3:14)
- Purpose: To save people living in the Old Testament era through the initial covenant God made with fallen Adam and then expanded through covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses/Israel, David, etc., and to groom them into a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, who would take God’s message of salvation to the whole world. (Gen 3:15; Gen 6:17-18; 9:8-17; 12:1-3; 15:1-18; 17:1-16; Ex 19ff; Dt; 2 Sam 23:5; Ps 67; Isa 45:22; 49:3,6; 55:3; 56)
- Characterized by the preaching of the gospel. (Rom 10:6-16; Dt 30:11-14; Gal 3:8; Heb 4:2)
- Characterized by miraculous and redeeming acts of God on behalf of His people. (Neh 9; Ps 78; 104-106; Acts 7)
- Characterized by a system of moral and civil laws based on love and the Ten Commandments, expectations which everyone in this era fell short of—“there is no one who does not sin.” (1 Ki 8:40; Ex 20-24; Lev 19:18; Dt 5:6)

Historical New Covenant

- Spans the period of spiritual history extending from the incarnation to the second coming of Christ (i.e. the entire New Testament period)—everything after Jesus came being considered “new,” even if it had existed earlier. (cf. 1 Jn 2:7-8)
- Purpose: To save people living in the New Testament era through a “new covenant [God made] with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” and to groom them into a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, who would take God’s message of salvation to the whole world. (Heb 8:8-12; Mt 28:19-20; 1 Pt 2:5,9)
- Characterized by the preaching of the gospel. (Heb 4:2)
- Characterized by the redemptive act of God in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world and the reconciliation to Himself of all things in heaven and earth. (2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:19-20)
- Characterized by an intensification of moral expectations based on the fuller revelation of love and Ten Commandments as seen lived out in the life of Jesus Christ, expectations which everyone in this era has fallen short of—“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23,10-18; Mt 5:19:16-21; 22:35-40; Jms 2:10-11)

Historical Old Covenant

- Characterized by an elaborate ceremonial system eventually focused in a localized sanctuary which represented both God's presence among them and His greater sanctuary in heaven from which He ministered to them. (Ex 25:8-9; Heb 9:1-7)
- Characterized by a human priesthood from the tribe of Levi who administered the sanctuary services, ministered imperfectly to the people, and represented God to the people and the people to God. (Num 3:5-9; Zech 3:1-7; Heb 7:11,28)
- Characterized by animal sacrifices which could never take away sin but served as an anticipatory type and shadow of the atoning ministry of the Messiah who was yet to come. (Lev 4:27-35; Isa 53:1-7; Heb 10:4,11)
- Characterized by the convicting, converting, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to save and empower for ministry. (Gen 6:3; Ex 31:1-3; Ps 51:9-12; 1 Sam 10:6-10; Eze 36:25-27; 37:1-14)
- Means by which the Holy Spirit birthed in many living during the Old Testament era a *new covenant experience* with an eternal hope assured. (Heb 11)
- An *old covenant experience* with no eternal hope realized by many living during the Old Testament era due to unbelief and rejection of the everlasting gospel. (Rom 10:16; Heb 4:2)
- Ratified by the blood of animals. (Ex 24:8; Heb 9:22)

Historical New Covenant

- Characterized by a simpler ceremonial system consisting of baptism and the holy communion which represented the finished work and atoning sacrifice of Jesus who continues His ministry on our behalf from His sanctuary in heaven. (Lk 22:19-20; Col 2:11-12; Heb 8:1-2)
- Characterized by Christ as our perfect high priest in heaven, having represented God to us through His ministry among us, and now representing us before the Father,. (Jn 7:39; Heb 7:23-28; 8:1-2)
- Characterized by the once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ through which all believers in both historical eras were granted forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God by which we obtain access to eternal life. (Jn 1:29; Heb 9:12-15,23-28)
- Characterized by a greater understanding of the multifaceted ministry of the Holy Spirit than was available to believers in the Old Testament era and a new phase of the Spirit's ministry based on the accomplished sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. (Jn 7:39; 16:7; Rom 8:4-17; 1 Cor 12)
- Means by which the Holy Spirit birthed in many living during the New Testament era a *new covenant experience* with an eternal hope assured. (1 Pt 1:3-9)
- An *old covenant experience* with no eternal hope realized by many living during the New Testament era due to unbelief and rejection of the everlasting gospel. (Mt 7:13-14; Lk 18:8; Gal 3:10; 4:21-26; 5:4; Heb 10:26-31)
- Ratified by the blood of Jesus. (Lk 22:20; Heb 9:22-28)

