

# From People to Personal

**The constant theme of the Old Covenant was if the people, as a whole, obeyed God's commands, then and only then will God be faithful to them.**

The laws and statutes were designed to govern the nation as a whole.

The Old Covenant as expressed by God to Moses was designed along the lines of a covenant between a ruler of an empire and his subject peoples.

The empire has the power and if you joined the alliance and keep all the laws and decrees of the empire, then the emperor will protect you.

If you disobey the rules seriously you are in danger of being cut off from the empire and destroyed.

Everything centred around the nation as a whole, and God's relationship was "n" [nation] shaped, from earth to heaven then back to earth.

The New Covenant that Jesus brought is the other way up "u" [you] shaped, from heaven down to earth then up to heaven again.

**The emphasis of this New Covenant is very personal. The key to success is our personal relationship with God, as individual children of God.**

**Matthew 18:2-4** [NIV] *"He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

The central model Jesus gave was the personal relationship between a child and its father.

**Romans 8:14-16** [NIV] *"because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."*

"Abba" is a very personal, intimate term for the relationship between the child and their father.

Clearly the context of Jesus' teaching, especially in the parables, is that "abba" Father loves the children not because they are good children, but because they are His children.

**Romans 5:6-8** [NIV] *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Christ showed this great love the Father has for His children by dying for us while we still rebelled against our Loving Father.

**Romans 5:9-11** [NIV] *"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."*

By accepting what God has done for us through Christ we are reconciled to our Father and can begin this close personal relationship.

**The Old Covenant was a learning process to teach us what sin was.**

**Romans 7:5-7** [NIV] *“For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed **I would not have known what sin was except through the law.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”*

The history of Ancient Israel proved that by human effort no-one can keep the law for they never did keep it perfectly.

It showed that by our own human effort it was impossible to please God by keeping all the laws it commanded, [**Romans 3:20**].

**John 15:5** [New King James] *“Without Jesus Christ we can do nothing of lasting value.”*

The Old Covenant also pointed to the solution to this inability to keep all the laws written to control a nation of people.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** [NIV] *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

God was to come down from heaven and taking on the human form become sin for us that we may share in God’s righteousness, [**Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24**] by faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us.

How did Christ do this?

**Matthew 5:17** [NIV] *“Do not think that I have come to **abolish the Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them **but to fulfil them.**”*

How did Christ fulfil all the law and prophets?

### **The Law**

**Romans 13:9-10** [NIV] *“The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.”*

**John 15:12-13** [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

Christ showed this commandment fulfilling love by laying down His life for all humanity, [**John 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4**].

### **The Prophets**

All that the prophets said that the Messiah would be and do was completed in the physical life of Jesus Christ.

**John 13:34-35** [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

We love other people in the same way the God in Jesus Christ has loved us in sacrificing His life.

**Philippians 2:1-8** [NIV] *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, **taking the very nature of a servant,** being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

Develop the same nature and character of Jesus Christ.

#### **How do we do this?**

**John 14:15-17** [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

Receive into our lives the Holy Spirit Whom God will send.

**Galatians 5:22** [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.**”*

These “*fruits*” sum up the very character of the Creator God.

These “*fruits*” of an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit, Who is God, will “*rub off*” on us, become a part of our nature.

The major one of these “*fruits*” is love.

#### **What will be the result of this love in our lives?**

**2 Corinthians 5:16-20** [NIV] *“So from now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: **Be reconciled to God.**”*

The life message driven by God’s love for us, is to implore others to be reconciled to their Creator God by their first accepting His love for them as shown in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

#### **This response could be costly.**

**John 16:1-4** [NIV] *“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.”*

Costly but the great reward of being an instrument in God’s Hands to bring about reconciliation of others to God has to be experienced to be believed.