

Comparison of the Old and New Covenants

Part One – When and Where do we Worship God?

In the time of the Old Covenant all religions had developed the concept of “*place*”, they all believed that God dwelt in a place and that you had to go to that place to meet with and worship God.

Ancient Greeks thought that God lived on top of Mount Olympus.

Many Africans believed that God lives on Mount Kilimanjaro or Mount Kenya and this is where you would go to find God.

This concept of “*place*” exists in many forms of religion today.

This concept of “*place*” also exists in our understanding of the Old Covenant.

Moses and the burning bush.

Exodus 3:1-5 [NIV] “*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight, why the bush does not burn up.” When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”*”

A holy place.

The Tabernacle also expresses the idea of a “*place*” where you met with God.

In paganism that surrounded Israel you have the concept of “*place*” in the “*high places*”.

In the Old Covenant we have the concept of the temple as God’s dwelling place.

The concept of “*place*” exists as a strong feeling in the Old Testament under the Old Covenant.

When we come to the New Covenant there is a dramatic shift in focus.

The New Covenant informs us that God does:

not live in any particular place; nor in a physical temple or synagogue

The New Testament informs us that God is everywhere, and can be worshipped at any time.

Under the Old Covenant there were specific times and days that were “*holy time*” when we were to worship God.

Under the New Covenant worship that is pleasing to God can be any time, all time is holy.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.*”

The New Covenant act of worship.

John 14:15-18 [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.** I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

God in the person of Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ will be with and in us, wherever we are.

Matthew 18:20 [NIV] *“For **where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.**”*

Wherever we gather in Christ’s name.

This is very different from Old Covenant thinking.

Paul reveals that the New Covenant church is the temple, the dwelling place of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19 [NIV] *“Do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;**”*

God is in his people, they are the New Covenant “temple”.

This change of concept has a large number of implications for practical ministry of the church.

The Old Covenant concept of “place” is still in the minds of many people.

They believe that a building is where we worship God, that a building is the church.

Can we break out of this Old Covenant mould?

Realise that under New Covenant the concept of where we meet with God and the church is so much more flexible that it ever was under the Old Covenant.

The New Testament [the New Covenant] does **not** command that we act according to the Old Covenant ways of being the assembled [church] of God.

The concept of where and when God is to be worshipped has changed with the New Covenant.

The concept that we meet with God in certain places at certain times that ruled under the Old Covenant has gone.

For under New Covenant God is to be found everywhere.

Under the Old Covenant the **people sought to find God** where they believed He dwelt.

Under the New Covenant, **God** in the Person of Jesus Christ **came seeking people** to bring them salvation, by dwelling in them.

Acts 17:22-23 [NIV] *“Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.** Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”*

We don’t know which day of the week this was, but **Paul follows the New Covenant concept by going to the people when and where they assembled** to reach them with the gospel message.

This is the concept we should follow, **go to people at a time and in a place that will maximise the effect of our witness.**

Why did God choose the day of Pentecost to send the Holy Spirit and start the New Covenant Church?

Pentecost was a maximum opportunity to reach the widest possible audience for the first witness of the New Covenant Church.

Acts 2:5 [NIV] *“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.”*

People assembled from every nation on earth!

We under the New Covenant can have special celebrations whenever and wherever we want to have celebrations.

Choosing a time that will maximise the impact of our witness to un-churched people.

Un-churched people expect to worship God on a Sunday.

Christmas is a time when we can tell people why Christ was born.

Easter is linked in the minds of the un-churched with the death of Jesus Christ.

Even if they do not know who He was.

[Hollywood has helped us focus this in the minds of many people with their epic films].

Under the New Covenant we base our time and place on the audience we are approaching.

Remember God in us goes to the people **not** the people come to God in us.

Who can attend the assembly of God’s people?

Under the Old Covenant there were laws governing who could **not** come into God’s presence, or even offer a sacrifice to worship God.

Leviticus 17:8-10 [NIV] *“Say to them: ‘Any Israelite or any alien living among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice and does not bring it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD, that man **must be cut off from his people**. ‘Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and **will cut him off from his people**.”*

Limits to offering.

Deuteronomy 23:1-3 [NIV] *“No-one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD. No-one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.”*

Limits to assembly.

The temple had restricted areas for certain people.

- a) Court of the Gentiles
- b) Court of the women
- c) The court of Israel, men only

d) The priest's court

When we get to New Covenant everything changes.

John 6:35-37 [NIV] *"Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."*

2 Peter 3:9 [NIV] *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

All come to repentance and receive salvation.

No-one is refused by God.

Luke 3:6 [NIV] *"And all mankind will see God's salvation."*

Romans 10:12-15 [NIV] *"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

1 Timothy 2:4 [NIV] *"who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."*

The message is different in the New Covenant, for the church of God has changed from exclusive to inclusive.

This change must also show in how we "conduct church".

Matthew 9:9-13 [NIV] *"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

The church is for sinners.

How is holiness attained when we compare Old and New Covenants?

Under the **Old Covenant**, holiness was attained by the "works of the law".

Holiness was attained by what you did on the outside of yourself by certain ceremonies and sacrifices.

Under the **New Covenant** holiness is attained through grace by faith, from what is **inside us**.

What we believe **not** by what we do.

Romans 4:18-25 [NIV] *"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had*

power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

Christ’s righteousness or holiness is credited to us as a result of our faith in what God has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

John 14:15-18 [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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

Christ’s righteousness is in us through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Holiness under the New Covenant is a gift, not something we work to attain.

Holiness is now attained under the New Covenant **not** as a result of behavioural expectations but through faith in a person, Jesus Christ.

If we don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God and our Saviour then we have no holiness, no matter how many laws and days we may observe.

Let us all meditate on what we have just been shown in the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

Accept totally the New Covenant that has been brought to us by “*the light of the world*”, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

John 1:1-9, 14 [NIV] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” ... “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

John 8:12 [NIV] *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

When we accept Jesus as the bringer of the New Covenant we move from darkness into light.

John 14:6 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Christ is the only way to truth and eternal life, through the New Covenant He brought with Him from God the Father, and ratified through the blood sacrifice.