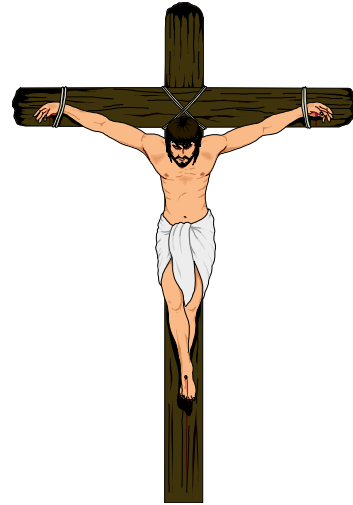


CHAPTER 3

THE MYSTERY REVEALED IN THE NEW COVENANT OF JESUS CHRIST

*"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, **through the blood of the everlasting covenant**, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."*
(Hebrews 13:20-21)



Everything Jesus accomplished at the cross for us will never be properly understood until we approach it with a blood covenant mentality. As we push ahead you may notice that I repeat certain things. Saint Paul repeated himself many times and considered it as something not "burdensome" but beneficial to the hearers. The importance of covenant thinking needs to become part of our spiritual awareness. Jesus established an everlasting blood covenant at his crucifixion—by shedding His blood and being resurrected from the dead. If we allow a covenant mindset to be redefined or explained away, we are "cheated" out of many of Christ's benefits. This happens more than we know in today's intellectual society. One purpose of these writings is to sound a warning about how the truth of the gospel is being watered down and corrupted in more than 90% of all Christian congregations. It's happening in many "Bible believing" churches. The Bible itself gives us the same warning where it says:

*"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and **not** according to Christ."*
(Colossians 2:8)

Many of us have been cheated. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross has been reduced to forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven some day. Physical healing has been minimized or explained away. The gifts of the Holy Spirit,

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

which operated in the early Church, is spoken of as being part of an earlier "dispensation" and not for us today. Many of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit have been "rejected" and replaced with "Christian psychiatry." Much effort is put forth by "counselors" within the Church to heal the mind using "proven methods" and "self help techniques," while using the Scriptures to validate their procedures. It finds acceptance because it has limited success. Yet, the real problems people face are rooted in the spiritual dimension of man, not in the intellect. Treating the mind may give some relief but, without dealing with man's spirit—the root problems remains.

Not long ago I was part of a Church that was "philosophy" oriented. I attended meetings where leaders would offer their "philosophies" concerning some proper course of action. I would share how the youth group had a need for more Bible based teaching. The response was, "Well, my philosophy is...we need to have more fun activities." or, "I think the philosophy that such and such ministry used last year will work great." Personal "philosophy" was elevated to such an extent that God's Word was neglected. Yet, when I turn on Christian radio, that is what I hear from so many ministries...personal philosophy. The problem became clearer one night as I attended a meeting of young singles at the church. The subject of ministry priorities came up and the question was asked by one outspoken young man, "Don't you think we should concentrate more on teaching the Bible?" The overwhelming majority downplayed the question by saying that they had enough teaching. They wanted more ski trips, game nights, and social activities. The problem was that most of them couldn't articulate even some of the most basic fundamentals of the Christian faith. Substituting methods that get short-term results in the place of those priorities that give eternal results are destroying the effectiveness of the church. The Bible says that the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God. The preaching of the cross is one of those "eternal" priorities that are so neglected.

Pragmatism, an ideology that looks for a method that gets immediate results, is the biggest threat to the Church today. Pragmatism is easily found in many "church growth" programs. In religious circles, pragmatic thinking throws out God's ways (which are unpopular and may take a long time to get results) and substitutes what seems to be a better philosophy or method. Pragmatic thinking is based in relativism (rejects absolute values

like right and wrong) and dominates the religious world by replacing principles of Scripture with man's ideas that "sound Biblical."

The reader may ask, "Why are you spending time talking about philosophy and pragmatism when your subject is the New Covenant?" Here's why—the New Covenant has been displaced with philosophical and pragmatic "theology" in most churches in our land. The message of the cross is diluted with man's way of thinking—an act that ultimately neutralizes its power. The Gospel means "good news." Many Christians pray that our nation will turn back to God and be healed. The scripture in II Chronicles 7:14 is often quoted as God's promise to heal our land if we will pray.

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

I see something in this promise that is over-looked. One of the conditions is that God's people will, "turn from their wicked ways." Many view this as the worldly activities and lifestyles that some participate in. Remember that God is talking to **His people** in this scripture. I wonder if we have stopped to consider the "wickedness" that can so easily be found in the Church. This wickedness is caused by perverting God's ways and God's Word by the traditions, philosophies and teachings of man. How many people have turned away from the Church because of this kind of "wickedness"? How many will spend an eternity separated from God because they didn't get the real Gospel but a counterfeit? How many died from disease and sickness when they could have been healed—because they didn't get the "good news" of what Jesus provided through the cross? How many spent their whole life under church doctrine that produced spiritual bondage instead of encouragement and joy? I personally believe this type of religious "wickedness" far exceeds anything else because the consequences are eternal. Some "Bible believing churches" are guilty of this act. Do you want to know why Jesus rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees (the religious leaders of his time) and forgave the thieves and harlots? The answer can be found in this form of religious wickedness. So far, many church leaders in America have not turned from their wicked ways and our land is still in need of healing.

In Matthew 15:3-9, Jesus makes this point to the religious leaders...

*"But He answered and said to them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your **tradition**? For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and your mother, and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say, Whoever says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from me has been dedicated to the temple—is released from honoring his father or mother. **Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.** Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, **teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**"*

The sin of changing what God has said in His Word and replacing it with man's ideas has been with us for a long time. This practice follows religion and religious thinking which dominates America. This is why it is so important to have our minds renewed on God's Word. When you begin to understand the "good news," it will seem to be either unbelievable or too good to be true. For many this will be a normal reaction. Most of us have never experienced the true unconditional love of God found in the blood covenant of Jesus Christ.

THE NEW COVENANT CONTRASTED WITH THE TRADITIONAL BLOOD COVENANT CEREMONY

Earlier in our study, we discussed the ceremony that sealed the making of a blood covenant. If we break this ceremony down into its simplest form—it has four distinct parts. First, there is the animal sacrifice and the spilling of sacrificial blood. Secondly, there is the cut of the covenant where each participant spills his own blood on behalf of the covenant. Thirdly, there is the exchange of life, symbolized by the exchange of coats, weapons and gifts. Last of all, there is the covenant meal, usually made up of bread and wine. The exact sequence of events do not necessarily have to follow the ones we present in this book. Some cultures do things differently.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a blood covenant ceremony on a global scale, which began at the Last Supper in the upper room where Jesus had the covenant meal with His disciples. It ended on resurrection morning three days later. At the cross God gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin--in the place of man. The cross was where God joined Himself in an everlasting covenant with man and used His own blood and body to seal the transaction. The cross was where God and man officially became one. The covenant of Jesus Christ is a "**faith**" covenant. When a person recognizes their sinful condition and lost state and places their faith in Christ's "covenant of blood", a miracle takes place. They are changed into a new creature. This transformation is **not symbolic**. When you receive the covenant of Jesus Christ, a change has to take place. God takes your old life, along with its sin nature, and crucifies it on the cross with Christ (Galatians 2:20). In God's mind—you are put to death with Jesus and the penalty for your sins are satisfied by His death—once and for all time. When Jesus died, all your sins died with Him. When Jesus said, "It is finished," the authority sin had over your life ended. God replaced your old life with a new life energized with His divine life. This is what it means to be "born again." The change takes place on the spiritual level. The soul (man's mind, will, and emotions) and the body remain initially unchanged for the most part. The process of changing our soul and body begins immediately following this transformation.

Let's consider the New Covenant of Jesus Christ in the context of the four "ceremonial" parts we just talked about.

THE SACRIFICE

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...." (I Peter 1:18-20)

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

Jesus is called the "Lamb of God." The body of Jesus Christ served as a sacrifice in two important areas. The first area, as we studied earlier, had to do with the Levitical priesthood that was established by God to minister and serve God's people in the area of atonement under the old covenant. Remember that atonement under the Mosaic covenant is the covering of sin through the shed blood of an animal. Instead of someone dying because of sin—an animal was substituted so that the sinner could go free. It was the job of the high priest to take the sacrificial blood once a year into the Holy of Holies before God's presence on behalf of the people. It is no accident that Jesus was tried and found guilty by a kangaroo court headed up by Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest that year. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, became the final sacrifice under the old covenant. This sacrifice was performed by Caiaphas, the high priest of the Levitical order.

The old covenant form of atonement is like a giant charge account. Every time someone sinned, an animal's life was forfeited in the place of the sinner's life. Because an animal was an imperfect substitute, each time a person sinned the account received a debit. This went on for thousands of years. The problem with any charge account is that, at some point you have to pay the debt. Paying this account of "sin debt" was one of the missions of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, was slain to satisfy the sin-debt of the people. God Himself paid the debt in full using His own blood. God was the only one who could make the payment. Man's blood was worthless for this purpose. Man could not pay the debt by being good enough or through his "good" works. Payment had to be made in blood. The sacrifice of Jesus, however, did more than just "zero out the account". The blood of Jesus Christ was so sufficient that it also provided "eternal payment" for all the sins committed in the future and forever. It's like having a Visa charge card with a five hundred-dollar balance and then paying off the account with a check for a hundred trillion dollars to cover anything that will be charged in the future! Even though this is a poor example, it gives you an idea of the price Jesus paid. None of us can even imagine what Jesus experienced at the cross. The Bible says that this sacrifice caused Jesus to undergo a transformation. This transformation was the reverse of what happens when a person is "born again". II Corinthians 5:21 says that Jesus "became sin for us." He didn't just bear our sin....the Scripture says HE BECAME SIN.

The second purpose of the sacrificial Lamb of God was to be slain on behalf of the covenant ceremony. Jesus' blood was not only to atone for man's sins but was to seal God's New Covenant. Jesus' blood is called the "blood of the everlasting covenant" (Luke 22:20 & Hebrews 13:20-21). This leads us into the next part of the covenant ceremony.

THE "CUT" OF THE NEW COVENANT

Some readers might have problems following the flow of the New Covenant when comparing it to the traditional blood covenant model discussed earlier. The New Covenant is different in one important way. Earlier, we looked at the blood covenant being cut between two individuals, or "heads". In this example, it was easy to see what was happening. Yet, at the cross, we seem to be talking about only one person—Jesus. There could be some confusion about how any kind of a blood covenant was being cut without involving another party. The answer to this question gives us another look into God's "Mystery" and why Satan could not figure out what was going on until it was too late. Jesus represented **both** covenant heads. Jesus is called both the son of man **and** the Son of God in Scripture. Jesus is the God/man. He was both fully God and fully man. In Jesus we see both covenant heads. Jesus is God, representing Divinity's side of the covenant. Jesus is also a man, representing humanity's side of the covenant. This remains a mystery to most Christians today. When Mary conceived Jesus, the Bible tells us that the "seed" for her conception came from God. This is how Mary, being a virgin, came to be with child. She did not have sexual relations with any man to conceive Jesus. Old Testament prophecy called it a "sign." In other words, God was Jesus' biological Father. Jesus received his Divine nature from his Father (God) and his human nature from his earthly mother. Since the curse of sin comes through the male seed, Jesus was born without a sin-nature. This uniquely qualified Him as the sinless, spotless, Lamb of God. The only other man in history that existed in this condition was Adam before his transgression. This is why Jesus is referred to in I Corinthians 15:45 as "the last Adam." The first Adam lost his (and his descendants) righteous position before God because of sin. The last Adam (Jesus) restores man's righteousness before God. Jesus represents a new beginning for all those who put their faith in Him. There will not be another "Adam." Jesus is the last.

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

Understanding these facts, we see how the New Covenant was cut. The moment Jesus was crucified, the blood of the covenant was spilled. God's blood was spilled and man's blood was spilled at the same instant. The Bible says in I Corinthians 2:6-8 that if Satan had known "**the mystery**," he would have never crucified the Lord of Glory! I might add that if more of us would come to know "the mystery," we would not live lives of defeat. When the blood of Jesus was spilled, it sealed an everlasting covenant between two formerly hostile parties: God and the human race.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

The next event in the blood covenant ceremony is the exchange of life. As we covered earlier, coats, weapons, names and gifts each have its own meaning and are part of the exchange. All these have a place in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, except on a much larger scale. Isaiah 53:5 gives us one of our first glimpses into "The Great Exchange."

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

Notice that Jesus got the wounds for our transgressions and the bruises for our iniquities...we didn't. Notice that we got peace—Jesus received chastisement. Jesus received stripes—we received healing.

Below, we will cover nine major areas of exchange that occurred when the New Covenant of Jesus Christ was cut. There are more. You will find **that every Divine attribute that Jesus possessed was given to us as a result of the blood covenant "exchange" of life.** The apostle John wrote, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world." (I John 4:17)

THE NINE MAJOR EXCHANGES

1) Jesus gets our sin...we get His righteousness

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (II Corinthians 5:21)

We have never stopped to consider the full meaning of this section of Scripture. Some theologians redefine this passage by saying that Jesus was only our "sin bearer" and that Jesus never actually "became sin." Interpreting this Scripture with Jesus only "bearing" our sin diminishes the awesome price Jesus paid at Calvary. Jesus "bore" our sins through a transformation that occurred when the sin of mankind was placed on Him. The transformation was the Son of God taking on the very nature of sin. The Scripture above says, "He made Him to be sin." Jesus bore our sins by becoming sin. Some people can't understand why Jesus cried out to the Father as he hung on the cross, "My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" Why did God the Father forsake His Son? The reason is that God hates sin, and the cross is the most graphic representation of God's hatred for sin. When the sin of mankind came upon Jesus causing the transformation to take place, God had no other choice but to turn away. God was not forsaking His Son. God was forsaking the sin that His Son had become. This is a hard concept for the intellectual person to understand. The natural, religious mind tends to reject such thinking.

The second half of the story shows us the result of Jesus becoming sin, "that we might be made the righteousness of God." Notice that this righteousness does not come from our performance. It came through what Jesus did—not what we do. Also notice that it is "God's righteousness." Jesus became what you were (sin) so that you could become what He is—the righteousness of God. This is one of the first "life exchanges" that comes to you from the New Covenant of Christ. At the start, you had sin and Jesus had righteousness. When the covenant was cut, all your sin went to Jesus and all His righteousness went to you. This is the legal transaction that took place—two covenant heads became one—God and man.

When you become the righteousness of God, you can't have any higher (or lower) form of righteousness. It puts you on an **equal** level with your Heavenly Father. Possessing God's righteousness is what makes a personal relationship with Him possible. This is the same relationship level that Jesus has with the Father. You can approach God without fear or inferiority because the relationship is equal! You don't come as a sinner. You cannot be the righteousness of God and a sinner at the same time because they are two **opposite** relational states. You might have been a sinner at one time, but the crucifixion of Christ changed all of that. Now you are the righteousness of God and a **new creature** in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). This is

why God commands us to come **boldly** before His throne (Hebrews 4:16). This relationship of "equality" produces boldness. Boldness comes no other way. The majority of Christians never approach God with a righteous boldness. Most Christians use the "humble sinner" approach. This is one reason prayer goes unanswered. God will not honor this approach, even though it is sincere in most Christians. The "humble sinner" mentality is a form of false humility because it disagrees with God's Word. It approaches God with a sinner's unrighteousness rather than with God's righteousness. Christians make a serious mistake by thinking that God respects our sincerity and good intentions. Many think, "if my intentions are good enough, then God will approve." God bases all His dealings with mankind on a legal document, His Word. Remember that God is a "judge." The Bible calls him "the Judge of all the earth". If our actions are not in agreement with the legal standard of God's Word (and His ways), failure is the result no matter how good the intentions are. Good intentions do not prevail in a court of law. This is why the knowledge of God's ways is so important. The next area of exchange is directly related to this area of sin and righteousness.

2) Jesus gets our sin nature...we get His divine nature

This exchange can be seen in three Scriptures...

"Knowing this, that our old man (sin nature) is crucified with him (Jesus), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." (Romans 6:6-7)

"I (my old nature) am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I (the new creation in Christ) live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

*"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might **be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (II Peter 1:4)*

We should read the above scriptures carefully. The first two passages reveal an exchange that took place at the crucifixion. The Apostle Paul said

that our “old man” (sin nature—the old life) was placed on Jesus and crucified with Him. Jesus took your sin nature on Himself and destroyed it through the crucifixion. In return, Paul says that you receive another nature—Christ’s life, which is lived by the faith of the Son of God. The Bible says that your “old man” or sin nature brings forth death. A person outside of salvation has the nature of death in their spirit. Jesus took your sin nature of death and gave you His nature of divine life. Peter makes it clearer by saying that we (those of us who have believed on Christ) become partakers of God’s divine nature through the precious promises of the Word.

At this point, we can begin to see one of the incredible truths of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Earlier, we learned that Jesus was the God/man. Jesus pre-existed (before Mary conceived) as God. In the first chapter of John’s gospel, we read that Jesus existed in the beginning as the Word...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1). In John 1:14 we read, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...” The act of the Word becoming flesh is what Bible scholars call “the incarnation.” Don’t confuse the term “incarnation” with the term “re-incarnation.” The false teaching of re-incarnation is found in many of the eastern religions. At the incarnation, Mary conceived Jesus from the seed of the Holy Spirit and Jesus was born in the earth as human. The incarnation was where the Word became flesh. This is where God took on Himself human flesh and became a man—the God/man.

When we participate in the exchange at the cross, we experience the reverse process. Because of the “exchange” at Calvary, Jesus took on Himself our “sin nature” and gave us His divine nature, to bring about the new birth transformation. In the “born again” experience all of us started our existence as a mortal human. When we placed faith in Jesus Christ, we were “born again” as a new creature—something that had never existed before. This “new creature in Christ” (II Corinthians 5:17) is the man/God. When we are born again, we don’t stop being human; but we do partake of God’s divine nature. If we have the Holy Spirit (you do if you are saved or born again) then you have God’s divine nature in you. God’s Holy Spirit is divine. You don’t have a sin nature and God’s divine nature. Your sin nature was nailed to the cross and destroyed. In short, Jesus was born as the God/man so that you could be born again as a man (or woman) with God’s divine nature. He took the curse of your humanity so that you could become a partaker of His divinity. No one becomes a member of God’s family

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

unless he or she has become a partaker of God's divine nature. God's "divinity" is what qualifies you to be in God's family!

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as He is." (I John 3:1-2)

Most Christians have been taught all their life that they are "just a sinner saved by grace". For this reason, many cannot receive what has just been said. They consider it blasphemous to think of themselves as being on such a high level. The "sin consciousness" that has been placed in most believers through wrong (yet sincere) teaching is one of the most serious forms of wickedness that religion has perpetrated on the church. It prevents believers from entering into a healthy, fruitful and powerful relationship with God their Father. The balance to all of this is that a Christian who embraces God's righteousness will never forget that what they enjoy is a "gift" from God (Romans 5:14-17). It is not something deserved. Religion always seeks to keep you down—the truth raises you up and sets you free! Jesus is the truth.

3) Jesus received our name (son of man)...we get His name that carries all authority.

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatever ye shall ask in **My name**, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing **in My name**, I will do it." (John 14:12-14)*

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God..." (Acts 3:6-8)

Many sermons have been preached about the “name of Jesus.” One day, I began to see the real meaning behind the words of Jesus in John 14:12-14. The English language is not nearly as detailed as the Greek. For this reason, we can miss important meanings behind general English words. Jesus was giving believers the authority to use His name. This type of authority is very closely related to what our legal system today would call “power of attorney.” Power of attorney is an authority we give someone else to conduct business on our behalf. It is not an authority to be given carelessly. The person who has power of attorney can conduct any kind of business in your name, using your resources. Think of the authority the Son of God carries and the resources available from heaven. It is this kind of authority that is available to believers through the name of Jesus.

Christians tend to use Jesus’ name as a “tack on” to end a prayer. Used in this way, it carries no authority. The name of Jesus only carries authority when there is faith behind it. It loses its significance when we throw it around carelessly and without thought. Such a precious thing as the name of Jesus should be valued, honored and revered. I believe that many in the Church use “the name” as a byword in casual conversation. The more we throw “the name” around carelessly, the less precious it becomes and the harder it is to have faith in it.

About a year ago, the Lord led me to study some of the foundational doctrines of His Word. As I studied about the name of Jesus, I began to understand how faith operated in relation to His name. It is founded on the blood covenant. Earlier, we talked about the covenant ceremony and how participants would take the other’s name on themselves. We looked at the example of the covenant between God and Abraham. The same thing happens in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. When the New Covenant was cut, Jesus took our name and in exchange gave us His name—the name that carries all power in heaven and earth! In a blood covenant your new name is not just a token or a symbol. Your name is permanently changed to reflect the demands of the covenant. This new name is now **your name**. How do we have faith in the name of Jesus? We receive His name as our own. We use it as our name. It becomes **our possession**, not just some “magic” word we use to get our prayers answered. In a marriage covenant, the wife takes on her husband’s name. This new name is now her name. The New Covenant of Jesus Christ is not just a blood covenant; it is a **marriage covenant** between Christ and the Church. The Bible says that we

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

(believers) are the Bride of Christ. As Christ's bride, we get His name and the right to use it as our own. If we will meditate on this truth, it will change our prayer life forever.

Notice in the passage quoted above from Acts 3:6-8...Peter said to the lame man at the gate, "Silver and gold have I none; **but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.**" What was it that Peter had? He had the name of Jesus. What gave him the right to use it? It belonged to him as a result of the New Covenant. It was Peter's name to use. Few Christians understand this truth. Further down in the same chapter, Peter explains how the lame man was healed, "And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong..." (verse 16)

4) Jesus gets our sickness and disease....we get His healing

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (I Peter 2:24)

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:17)

Many different beliefs exist in the Church about divine healing. Most Christians believe that God sends sickness as a form of discipline or training to make us more pious and humble. It is commonly believed that we should not seek healing because God is wiser than we are and He will heal us if that's the best thing for us. Well, I've got good news. God decided that sickness and disease was not good and declared that healing is His will for us. God's will concerning healing can easily be found in His Word. All through the gospels Jesus performed more healings than any other miracle. In the story of Luke 8:43, a woman with an issue of blood who had been sick for a long time came up behind Jesus in a crowd, touched the border of his garment, and was instantly healed. When confronted, the woman came forth and told the whole story before everyone. Jesus told her, "Your faith has made you well." Jesus didn't say, "Because it was my will, you have been healed." At first, Jesus didn't know who had touched Him. Jesus credited this woman's faith as the reason for her healing. A lot of spiritual truth can be learned in this story. God has committed Himself to a blood covenant. This covenant operates through **faith**. When faith is present, the

benefits of this covenant can be freely received just like the woman with the issue of blood did in Luke chapter 8. Even though it is God's will to change a situation in your favor (read Matthew 13:54-58 and Mark 6:1-6) the absence of Biblical faith will hinder or stop the flow of God's power. Christians commonly believe that God does whatever He wants. If He wants you healed, He will heal you. If an accident occurs, then it must have been God's will since He does anything He wants. Some people treat salvation this way by saying, "If God wants me to be saved then He'll save me." With this kind of misguided faith, many will spend an eternity in hell and those who are in desperate need of healing will never get it. The majority of "Christian" churches teach people to believe this way. This kind of counterfeit faith greatly warps our conception of God.

In Matthew 8:17, the Bible clearly says that **Jesus took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses**. Isaiah 53:5, we read, "...and with his stripes we are healed." This phrase is repeated in the New Testament in I Peter 2:24 with a change in tense. The New Covenant says, "by whose stripes ye **were** healed." Under the New Covenant, healing is past tense. Our healing occurred at the cross where we continue to see the "great exchange" in operation. Jesus took our sickness and disease. In exchange, we receive His healing and divine health. Healing is yours as a result of the blood covenant "exchange." This confuses a lot of Christians because they want to make healing conditional upon God's will. The Scriptures plainly show God's will about your healing. You can't make divine healing conditional upon God's will when He has already told you plainly what His will is. He wants the best for you. God, as any loving father would, wants **YOU** healed.

5) Jesus gets our poverty....we get His prosperity

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (II Corinthians 8:9)

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (III John 1:2)

The word "prosperity" has been greatly distorted in American Christianity. Some Christians view Biblical prosperity as God's stamp of

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

approval to indulge in a hedonistic lifestyle. In some churches, an extreme prosperity message has put believers in a form of bondage where financial resources and material possessions measure how “spiritually mature” you are. If you have a big bank account and expensive possessions then you must be in God’s will. If your resources are meager then you have sin somewhere in your life. Trying to live the “prosperous” Christian life has caused this important area of Christ’s redemption to be misunderstood and slandered throughout the Church.

On the other side of the coin, there are Christians who believe that poverty is a mark of spiritual maturity. The poorer you are, the more “humble” you become and the more pleasing to God you are. Riches and material possessions are looked on as “sinful” and worldly.

Both of these extremes are wrong. The real meaning behind Biblical prosperity is having the resources to abundantly meet your own needs with enough left over to give to others. It is not that God is against material possessions. There are many examples in the Bible of God providing an abundance of material possessions, such as Abraham, Job, David and Solomon. God has no problem with possessions—as long as the possessions don’t dominate your life. Money is **not** the root of all evil, as some would have us believe. The Bible says that the **love** of money is the root of all evil. Poverty is a curse. If you want to read something interesting, study Deuteronomy chapter 28 where it talks about the blessings and the curses of the law. God clearly calls poverty a curse. Being in need is never considered a blessing. At the cross, we see another exchange take place. Jesus receives our poverty and we receive his prosperity. This involves always having the benefit of Divine resources to meet our needs.

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

Understanding that poverty is a curse leads us into the next area of “exchange.”

6) Jesus gets the law’s curse...we get the blessings of Abraham

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come

on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:14-15)

If you read Deuteronomy chapter 28, you find that it is divided into two parts. The first part is the “blessing.” The second part is the “curse.” In this chapter, God defines the blessing and the curse of the law. When Israel agreed to the “law of the covenant” at Mount Sinai, two spiritual forces (the blessing and the curse) came into play. Under the Law of Moses you had to keep all the commandments in order to live under God’s blessing. The blessing was the benefits and privileges that God bestowed on righteous Abraham, also known as “the blessings of Abraham.” The moment you failed to keep the law your life would begin to be dominated by the curse. We know this to be true from what God says in Deuteronomy 28:1-2...

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God...”

Further down in verse 15 of the same chapter, God addresses the subject again.

“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...”

It is astounding how many modern day Christians live under the requirements of the law found in Deuteronomy 28. So many think, “If I obey the rules, I will receive God’s blessing—if I disobey, I will be rejected.” This kind of thinking takes many forms.

- ◆ If I get up early and read the Bible, I will experience God’s acceptance.
- ◆ If I pray more, then God will love me more.
- ◆ If I go to church every Sunday, God will allow me into heaven when I die.

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

- ◆ If I increase my commitment to evangelism, God will approve of me more.
- ◆ If I do more service projects in the church, maybe God will answer my prayers.
- ◆ I would like to call myself a Christian, but I don't live like I should.

I call this kind of mentality “performance based Christianity,” even though it has little to do with the authentic Christian life. Performance based Christianity is a counterfeit based on the requirements of Old Testament Jewish Law. Authentic New Testament Christianity is based on faith in Christ and resting in His **finished** work.

The good news is that Jesus Christ has changed the conditions upon which we experience the blessing and the curse. These conditions are now based on the new covenant in Christ's blood. Christians are to be living under the terms of the new covenant, not the old covenant. The Bible says in Galatians chapter 3 that **Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus.** In the book of Galatians we clearly see this amazing exchange. Jesus receives the curse so we can enjoy the blessings of Abraham. The conditions for being able to enjoy the blessings of Abraham is no longer dependent upon obedience to the law of Moses. The condition is now **faith in Christ**. If you do a study on the subject of obedience in the New Testament, you find that faith is equated to obedience and unbelief (dependence on anything else except Christ) is equated to disobedience.

You might ask, “If this is true, why do so many Christians seem to live under a curse?” Wrong believing (unbelief) is one thing that causes the blessing to be short-circuited in so many lives. Christians have an incorrect understanding of covenant and of the “ways” of God. It comes through wrong teaching. Most Christians believe that blessings (like healing and prosperity) depend upon God's will that changes day to day. God may want one to be healed and another to remain sick for some reason. Tomorrow, God may do things differently. Many believe that God can decide this because He is “sovereign.” Yet, the blessing and the curse never operate in this manner. Most Christians cannot see the contradiction in this way of thinking. If Christ became a curse so that believers could have the blessing of Abraham then God is violating His own Word if He decides that one

person can get the blessing of healing while someone else gets the curse of disease. Thinking this way makes God's Word appear to have a double standard. However, it is man's religion that has the double standard. The blood covenant of Jesus Christ was given so we could have faith in what God said. The blood covenant lets us **know** God's will. We know that the blessing of Abraham **belongs** to us because God spilled His blood to make it so.

The blessing comes to us through faith. Real Bible faith takes ownership. God has already set the blessing of Abraham to your account. When we fail to appropriate what God has freely given by faith, the curse is waiting to take over. There is no "fence sitting" on this issue. In whatever measure you fail to live in God's blessing, you live in the law's curse, even though Christ has taken it out of the way for you as a Christian. The deciding factor is your faith.

7) Jesus is forsaken as a son...we become sons of God

*"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, **why have You forsaken Me?**'" (Matthew 27:46)*

*"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, **that we should be called the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, **now are we the sons of God**, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (I John 3:1-2 KJV)*

*"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, **that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**" (Romans 8:29 KJV)*

*"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons unto glory**, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:10)*

All Christians are familiar with the position Jesus Christ holds as "the Son of God." It is this position as God's Son that made Jesus special. The Holy Scriptures provide us with all the tools necessary to defend the

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

Divinity of Jesus Christ against the accusations of those who try to pull Him down to a mere human level. It is understood that the Son of God had a place of equality with God. This is plainly stated in John chapter 5 during a confrontation Jesus had with the Jews. In verse 17 Jesus said...

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

Because of this statement, the Bible states that the Jews sought to kill Jesus. Verse 18 gives us the reasons...

“...because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”

Jesus called God His Father because He is God's Son. The Jewish people at that time took great offense at Jesus' saying. However, Jesus was the only man who had the right to make this statement. No other human being at that point in time could make this claim. To do so was considered blasphemy and punishable by death. That's why the Jews tried to kill Jesus. This confrontation occurred before the cross. When Jesus went to Calvary and was crucified, an exchange took place that continues to shake the very foundation of religious thinking today. Jesus was forsaken by His Father when the sin of mankind came upon Him. As we studied earlier, the Father turned His back on Jesus when He became a curse for us on the cross. As a result of the exchanged life of the covenant, the ability to become a son of God was given to all those who placed their faith in Christ.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (John 1:12 KJV)

After the cross and the resurrection, Jesus did not remain the only “son” of God. The Bible says that Jesus became “the firstborn of **many** brethren.” The apostle John said, “...now are we the sons of God.” Who are these “many brethren?” Who are these “sons of God?” They are all those who place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Now, we have God as our Father and we are His sons (Rom. 8:15, II Cor. 6:18, Eph. 2:18, Eph. 4:4-6). Jesus is the “firstborn” Son. It is this position of being “the firstborn” that sets Him apart. Our sonship occurs as a result of the exchanged life found in the blood covenant of Jesus Christ. God's plan is “to bring many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). Jesus experienced His Father's rejection through

our sin in order that we could experience the power to become God's sons in righteousness. This is one of the most incredible truths of the New Covenant and is worthy of an in-depth study.

8) Jesus experienced rejection from God's presence...we get His fellowship with God

"...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (I John 1:3-4)

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (I Corinthians 1:9)

In this aspect of the "Great Exchange," we see another powerful truth. Many of us in the Church have heard that Jesus went to the cross so that we could be saved and have fellowship with God. Often the full meaning of the word "fellowship" is never realized. Have you ever stopped to ask yourself the question, "What is the fellowship of the Son of God?" I Corinthians 1:9 says that we are called into "the fellowship of His Son."

Nothing has changed history more than the cross. Most Christians have been taught about the Trinity. It is in the "doctrine of the Trinity" (one of the Bible's most foundational truths) that we learn of God's existence expressed in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not teach that they are three separate Gods but that God is **one God** expressed in three persons. Some refer to the Trinity as the "three in one" or the "God-head." God has always had perfect fellowship within the Trinity. Something happened that would forever change the nature of this divine fellowship. God the Son came to earth and took on Himself a human body and, for a period of three days while Jesus was in the grave, this holy fellowship of three was broken. In all of history, nothing this monumental had ever taken place. For the first time, God the Father turned his back on His Son because of His identity with our sin—and the fellowship that Jesus enjoyed as God's Son was broken off. We cannot understand the power, holiness and authority that existed in the God-head. All of creation came forth from within it and is held together by it. Is there any question as to why Jesus cried out with a loud voice when this broken

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

fellowship occurred? Is there any wonder why the sun was darkened and the earth shook? We cannot even begin to comprehend the awesome price God paid for our salvation. It is here we see the effect of man's sin—broken fellowship that shook the very throne of God.

JESUS—OUR HIGH PRIEST

The broken fellowship was not permanent. Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, having paid the price for man's sin, and the fellowship within the God-head was restored. However, things were different now. The God-head now has for the first time a human being as a member...Jesus Christ the God/man. Jesus did not lose his humanity after the cross. This is one reason the book of Hebrews calls Jesus our high priest. Jesus went to the cross on our behalf and presented His own blood (the blood of the New Covenant) before God to atone for the sins of humanity.

*“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, **but with His own blood** He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, **how much more shall the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*
(Hebrews 9:11-14)

Under the Mosaic covenant, the high priest went into the tabernacle and appeared before God in the Holy of Holies on behalf of the nation of Israel once a year. This was a dangerous and privileged position. The high priest could not just go into the presence of God whenever he wanted—any way he wanted. If the procedure for purification and sacrificial offering were not followed precisely, the high priest would die when he entered the most holy place and the presence of God. Sin cannot stand in God's presence. This is the reason so many Christians do not experience a powerful prayer life. Believing they are being humble, believers come before God as a poor, needy sinner saved by grace. This kind of consciousness produces timidity and uncertainty. Religion calls this reverence and humility. God calls it

unbelief. God commands Christians to come **boldly** before Him. This is a totally different mentality from that of the average Christian today. God demands a “righteousness” mentality in His people.

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

*“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19-22)*

Remember some of the events that took place at the cross when Jesus died?

“Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised...” (Matthew 27:50-52)

Notice that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. It is reported that the veil which protected the Holy of Holies was several feet thick and was more than 15 feet high! It was torn **starting at the top** down to the bottom. Only God could tear a curtain like that! God Himself destroyed the barrier between His presence and the human race. No longer was the holy place closed to everyone but the high priest. Because of the cross, any believer can enter God’s presence by the blood of Jesus. In the old covenant, the high priest entered the holy place with sacrificial blood. Under the New Covenant, we enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus. In both cases, entrance is gained through blood.

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

Jesus took on a body like we have so He could represent us before the Father. The changes in the God-head, however, are even greater for us. In the Gospel of John chapter 10 verses 7 to 9, Jesus calls Himself “the door” of the sheep. It is “in Christ” that we have access to the Father. Jesus is our doorway into the very fellowship of the Godhead—a place where man had never been allowed before. In Christ, we have been called into the same fellowship that Jesus Himself enjoys with the Father—the God of the Universe! It is a place of supreme power and honor. It is a call to the highest position man can hold. It is the fellowship of the Son of God—the New Covenant Holy of Holies. No wonder the Bible tells us that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-7). You don’t enter here as a sinner. Only the very righteousness of God can enter here—something that every believer has as a free gift by being “In Christ.” (Romans 6:15-21, II Corinthians 5:21)

*“For through Him we both **have access by one Spirit to the Father.** Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the house-hold of God.” (Ephesians 2:18-19)*

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7)

9) Jesus received Satan’s domination...we are set free from Satan’s Authority

*“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. **For you will not leave my soul in Sheol,** nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” (Psalms 16:9-10)*

*“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, **which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they***

known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
(I Cor. 2:7-8)

*“Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, as a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; **the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierce My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.**”*
(Psalm 22:12-18)

“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:19)

Both Psalms quoted above are Old Testament prophecies foretelling the sufferings Christ would endure at the cross. In Psalms 16:9-10, the Scripture speaks about the soul of Jesus being in Sheol, representing the final triumph of Satan over mankind. Notice that the soul of Jesus did not immediately go to heaven as some teach. Paul clarifies this by giving the credit for Christ’s crucifixion to “the rulers of this age.” Paul said that these “rulers” crucified the “Lord of Glory.” Most Bible scholars agree that these “rulers” were demonic spirits who controlled the affairs of men. They are not human, earthly rulers. In the prophetic writings of Psalm 22:12-18, Jesus is speaking about His experience at the cross. Notice He says...”the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierce My hands and My feet.”

From these sections of Scripture, we see that Jesus was handed over to the forces of Satan at the cross. Earlier, we read about how God the Father forsook Jesus as He was made sin. There are only two spiritual kingdoms: The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. You are in either one or the other. When God turned His back on Jesus, this left only one kingdom in control (though only temporarily). That kingdom was Satan’s kingdom. Psalm 16 tells us that Jesus literally went to hell on our behalf. **Jesus experienced hell for us so that we wouldn’t have to.** Can you imagine the

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

celebration that must have took place in Satan’s domain when Jesus showed up in hell? Satan thought he had won. Satan thought he had thwarted God’s plan of redemption for mankind. What a surprise when God raised Jesus from the dead three days later. Satan’s victory suddenly turned to defeat—with no chance for a rematch. The price for man’s disobedience had been paid in full and, as a result, the grave could not continue to hold Jesus. It was impossible for Jesus to remain in hell or in the grave any longer after the wages of sin had been paid in full.

*“Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, **because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**” (Acts 2:23-24)*

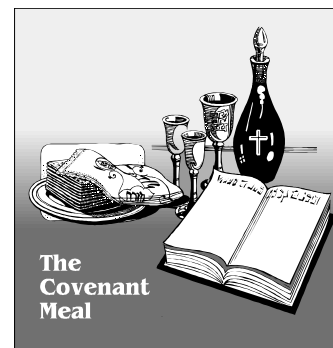
Jesus bore this part of the “Great Exchange” for you. He gave up His dominion over Satan for a season so that through His name we could enjoy dominion over Satan forever. (Luke 10:17, Mark 16:17)

“And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (Revelation 12:11)

THE COVENANT MEAL

In Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24 and Luke 22:20 Jesus is having “the Last Supper” with His disciples. The term “last supper” fails to reveal the full meaning of what Jesus was doing on the night before being betrayed by Judas Iscariot. Jesus said in all three of these Scriptures that the wine during dinner represented the “New Covenant” (or New Testament in the original King James) in His blood.

The dinner was not just the “Last Supper” before His death. The supper in the upper room was the “covenant meal” of the New Covenant. In some denominations the covenant meal is called “Holy Communion” or the “Lord’s Table.” Some churches understand it as “the Eucharist.” No matter what term you use it is one of the most holy observances in the Christian Church. For many, tragically, it is nothing more than a tradition or a religious practice. For others, it is a solemn act



that is done in remembrance of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished at the cross.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’” (I Corinthians 11:23-25)

The two covenant heads at the conclusion of a blood covenant ceremony practiced the covenant meal. In this case, Jesus initiated the covenant meal before the cross. In either case, the covenant meal symbolized the union of two individuals as **one**. In the same way, the covenant meal of the New Covenant represented the **union** of God and man; the most monumental, holy event in earth’s history. It is traditionally celebrated with wine (representing Christ’s blood) and bread (representing Christ’s body).

In I Corinthians 11:17-34, the apostle Paul corrected the Corinthian Church for its disorder at the Lord’s supper. In the first century church, the Lord’s supper was not just a small cup of grape juice and a wafer. The Lord’s supper was a complete meal that the early church enjoyed together. It was a regular occurrence. Paul discovered that some people, because they were hungry, came to this holy event and started to eat before every one had arrived. Others were coming drunk.

This lack of respect for the covenant prompted Paul to rebuke those who acted in this manner and to write the warning found in verses 27-31...

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”

This is a sober warning to all of us who fail to understand the importance of the New Covenant meal. God takes it seriously because of the price He personally paid so that we could enjoy its benefits. Notice that Paul said the reason many were sick and some had died was because they approached the New Covenant meal in an unworthy manner. Could this still apply to us today?

THE COVENANT MEAL—A SPIRITUAL TRUTH

In a traditional blood covenant, the covenant meal was symbolic. The participants fed each other the bread and the wine. The bread represented the body of each covenant head. As the bread was served they would say, “all that I am is now coming into you.” The wine represented the blood, which was the life of the covenant head. The one serving the wine would say to the one drinking, “This is my blood, my life which is coming into you and I will lay down my life on your behalf, if necessary.” The covenant meal was a solemn act. **Symbolically**, they were eating each other’s body and drinking each other’s blood to demonstrate that they had fully received the reality of their covenant union. The covenant meal demonstrates a radical commitment.

Now let’s look at the words of Jesus in John 6:53-58...

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

The disciples told Jesus that His sayings were hard to receive. In verse 66 of the same chapter it says that many of Jesus’ disciples went back and walked no more with Him because of these sayings.

In John chapter 6 we find some of the strongest covenant language in the Bible. Jesus was talking about eternal life in the context of eating His

flesh and drinking His blood. Jesus said that He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26). Jesus is the embodiment of eternal life. This is a **spiritual** truth. Eternal life is not the result of joining the right church, praying the right prayer or trying to live a godly life. Eternal life is imparted through participating in a Divine blood covenant. When we eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood at the Lord's Table (as presented in I Corinthians 11:23-25), it is symbolic of the fact that we have fully taken into ourselves everything that Christ represents. It is fully identifying with Christ. What Jesus Christ is—is what we are now (I John 4:15-17). What you used to be is gone. You can't suffer eternal damnation anymore because you have Christ's eternal life. You can't be a sinner anymore because you have Christ's righteousness. You can't be sick anymore because you have Christ's healing and health. You can't be poor anymore because you have Christ's riches in glory. You can't be a mere human being anymore because Christ has given you His Holy Spirit and Divine nature. These realities should grip our heart whenever we partake of the Lord's Table.

NEW COVENANT CIRCUMCISION

Earlier, we studied some of the major covenants of the Bible. In the Abrahamic covenant, we were introduced to circumcision (Genesis chapter 17). God called circumcision “the sign of the covenant.” God stated (in Genesis 17:14) that failing to observe circumcision was breaking His covenant. It was performed on every male child who was eight days old. Circumcision is the cutting of the male foreskin and is considered to be the “mark” of the Abrahamic covenant. In the ceremonial blood covenant example, we saw two people make a cut in their hands or wrists, allowing blood to flow. They then clasped hands in a handshake, which allowed the blood to mingle, symbolizing that two lives became one. In many cultures, the wounds made at this “cutting” of the covenant had a foreign substance rubbed into it so that it never cleanly healed. This visible wound is called “the mark of the covenant.” This mark identified the men as “blood brothers.” In the same way, circumcision “marked” a man as being one of God's covenant people and one of the offspring of Abraham.

The mark of circumcision is not to be taken lightly. In the New Testament, the Scribes and Pharisees identified circumcision as the deciding factor in whether you were a true Jew or not. In the new covenant in

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

Christ's blood, however, the old covenant mark of circumcision did not carry the same weight. Actually, it had no significance at all because the old covenant was passing away (Hebrews 8:13). This caused a great deal of persecution from the Jewish religious leaders of the old covenant (under the Law of Moses) against the early apostles who were proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the New Covenant). In some places, this battle over circumcision and the Law of Moses continues today. Scriptural references about these disputes are not hard to find (read Acts 15:1-11 and Titus 1:10-11). These confrontations were frequent in the early church because the truth concerning New Testament salvation was in jeopardy.

When the Bible talks about "the circumcision," it's many times referring to Jewish believers in Christ who continued to observe the Mosaic Law. This false gospel acknowledged salvation through faith in Christ—but added the requirement of keeping the Law of Moses for true salvation to be realized. These Jewish evangelists had very persuasive arguments and led many astray. It continues today under different names. When Saint Paul went to a city to preach, many would believe on Jesus Christ for salvation. Paul would then establish a fellowship (usually a home-based church) and appoint pastors and elders to care for it. As soon as he left, those of the circumcision came in to deceive the people with their false teaching. This constantly troubled Saint Paul and his evangelistic team. It was so serious that Paul made some very strong statements against these "people of the circumcision." An example of this situation is seen in Acts 15 starting in verses 1 through 5...

“And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and

*they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees **who believed** rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.'*"

If you read the entire account in Acts 15, you learn the final decision on the subject of adding circumcision and the keeping of the law to the requirements for salvation...

"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." (Acts 15: 10-11)

The Jerusalem Council didn't stop there—they sent an official letter to Gentile believers stating:

*"Since we heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling to your souls, saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the **law**'—**to whom we gave no such commandment**—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:24-29)*

This is just one example of the conflict. Circumcision was a controversial and divisive issue. (also read II Corinthians 11:1-15 and Galatians chapters 1-3)

In Romans 2:25-29, Paul makes some statements about circumcision that was sure to anger those who were still under the Law of Moses...

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

“For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law, but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision IS THAT OF THE HEART, IN THE SPIRIT, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

Romans chapter 2 speaks to us about the nature of New Covenant circumcision. It is not in the flesh outwardly **but of the heart**. Many people wonder what this “circumcision of the heart” is. The Scriptures gives us some examples to look at concerning this important work of the Holy Spirit that occurs at the new birth. In Ezekiel 36:26-27, the prophet takes us into the future, after the cross, concerning the effect of the new birth upon the believer...

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

In Ezekiel, God performs a type of “heart” surgery. He “cuts” out the old, hard, stony heart (the life of sin) that once dominated your life and replaces it with a new, soft, heart of flesh (the life of Christ). In this process, God puts His own Spirit in us. Because God’s Spirit is now part of us, His Spirit directs our lives so as to cause us to walk in His ways. Instead of God’s law being something that we try to obey through our own strength (and failing in the attempt), God’s law will naturally be walked out because His Spirit controls us from within. This is the Christian life—a life that is lived from inside out—in the power of the Holy Spirit, not outwardly in the power of the flesh and our own self-efforts (Zechariah 4:6). A circumcised heart is one basic difference between the old covenant and the new. Most modern day Christians try to live in the New Covenant by using Old Covenant methods.

THE GRAFTED OLIVE BRANCH

In Romans 11:17-24 we see another perspective on the “cutting” related to a circumcised heart as Paul compares Gentile believers to a “wild” olive branch.

*“And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be **grafted** in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more will these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?”*

Paul is primarily speaking of how Israel was “broken off” from the life of the olive tree and uses the grafting process in gardening to describe a spiritual truth. The olive tree represents the life of God, the covenant and the promises. God said Israel was broken off because of unbelief. The life of the “good” olive tree is the Holy Spirit. Paul talks about God being able to “graft” Israel into the olive tree again. He continues in verses 25 and 26 to describe a time in the future when all of Israel will be saved. That time is quickly approaching. The key word in this text is **graft**. Gentile (non-Jewish) believers are described as a wild branch that was grafted into the good olive tree. When a gardener performs a graft, he takes a knife and cuts. First, the branch to be grafted gets **cut off** from its native vine. Next, the gardener cuts the vine or stalk on the good olive tree where the branch is to be grafted in. He then affixes the two together so they cannot be moved or separated until one grows into the other. When this “in-growth” is

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

finished, the grafting process is complete. The grafted branch and the vine are now “united” as one. As a result, a **union** has been formed. The wild olive branch now receives its life from a new source.

At the new birth, man doesn’t just get a new heart. Man’s spirit is “**grafted**” into the life of the good olive tree. In this process, man’s spirit and God’s Holy Spirit become **one**. The Bible does not teach that the Holy Spirit comes into a person at the new birth and remains separate from him. The Bible strongly supports the idea that the Holy Spirit comes into a believer and **joins** Himself to him. This is the core meaning of covenant. The blood covenant joins and **unifies** two parties. In this case, the two parties are God and man. Consider the writings of Paul in I Corinthians 6:15-17...

*“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, He says, shall become one flesh. **But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.**”*

Paul said that if we are joined to the Lord we are **one** spirit with Him. This does not mean two different spirits in one body--but **one** spirit. This was the basis for Jesus being able to say to Philip, “When you see Me, you see the Father.” Jesus and the Father were one. They were one Spirit. In the same way, we can say, “When you see me, you see Jesus.” Why? Because we are one spirit with the Lord. This mentality should motivate you to live a life worthy of the Lord. Do people see Jesus when they see you? The New Covenant gives the world the right to judge Jesus Christ according to how you conduct yourself as a Christian. This is the reason a Christian saved freely by God’s Grace should be careful to maintain good works. The works are an advertisement for Jesus—they are never performed to “earn” eternal life. It’s an awesome responsibility to represent the Lord Jesus Christ to the world.

THE EXTENDED COVENANT

At the end of chapter 2 we discussed David's covenant with Jonathan, King Saul's son. We learned how this covenant affected the way David related with Saul's family even when there was war between them. Toward the end of the struggle, we read in II Samuel chapter 9 where David asked the question, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" David's heart was still focused on the blood covenant he had cut with his friend Jonathan. Jonathan was dead and David was the only covenant head still alive. As long as David was alive, the covenant was alive. Because of David's request, a young man (one of Jonathan's sons) by the name of Mephibosheth was found. As a result of the covenant, David tells Mephibosheth, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually." David was the King. How would you like to get an invitation like that?

As we studied earlier in this book, one of the binding rules of a blood covenant is that it remains in effect until both covenant heads die. If one covenant head dies, the other head extends the benefits and privileges of the covenant to the **family** of the deceased head. This is an important characteristic of covenant and it will help you understand why the cross of Jesus Christ is such good news.

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that Jesus represented the human family at the cross. He was known as the son of man. The covenant was between Jesus, as the covenant head representing mankind, and God the Father, as the covenant head representing Divinity. When Jesus died on the cross, the covenant head of mankind died. However, the covenant was still in effect because God the Father remained as the survivor-head. As a direct result of Jesus' death, the Father was required to extend all the covenant benefits (which originally belonged to Jesus) to the human family (you and me as believers). We see this reflected in Romans 8:16-17 through the use of the word "heirs."

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and

The Mystery Revealed In The New Covenant Of Jesus Christ

joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

As you know, the story doesn't end with Jesus in the grave. God the Father raised Him from the dead. In a traditional blood covenant this could never happen. However, the covenant cut at the cross was very different. It was the perfect “heavenly sting” operation against Satan. The cross broke the power of sin and death over mankind. The cross ended Satan's rule over your life. If the power of death was truly broken then Jesus had to come out of the grave—and He did. The fact that Jesus was resurrected did not nullify His previous death. Jesus died once for all of us. Jesus' crucifixion is what made His resurrection possible because His death was required first so that the covenant could be energized and extended to the human family of which He belonged as the son of man. The Bible says that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Someone once said that Jesus was raised from the dead so that He could personally intercede for us to the Father so we could experience all the benefits of the New Covenant without fail.

*“...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. (Death no longer has dominion over Him.) For the death that He died, He died to sin **once for all**; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” (Romans 6:9-10)*

Just like Mephibosheth had trouble believing the good news when David extended the covenant to him because of Jonathan, many Christians have trouble receiving New Covenant benefits which our Father extends to us because of Jesus. The stumbling block is their perceived unworthiness to receive such tremendous blessings. Mephibosheth had the same problem. To experience the fullness of the New Covenant, Christians must get over their feeling of unworthiness. None of us deserve the New Covenant. However, we have these benefits not because of who we are, but because of who Jesus is. Our position “in Christ” is what makes us worthy.