

# New Covenant Theology



# Brief Review

- And in the last few weeks, we have been taking a somewhat in-depth look at a couple of passages that give us evidence that the New Covenant (which we have in Christ) is superior to the Old Covenant (given by Moses to nation of Israel).
  - **Exhibit A:** **Hebrews 8:6-13** tells us that the fact that God promised Israel a new covenant in Jer. 31:31-34 shows us that the old covenant had a problem and therefore needed to be replaced with a covenant that was superior to it.
  - **Exhibit B:** **2 Corinthians 3:1-11** which we began looking at last week, was written by the apostle Paul to address some false teachers in the Corinthian church who were apparently questioning Paul's integrity and credentials, and seemed to be holding up their own credentials as true Israelites (see 2 Cor. 11:22ff).

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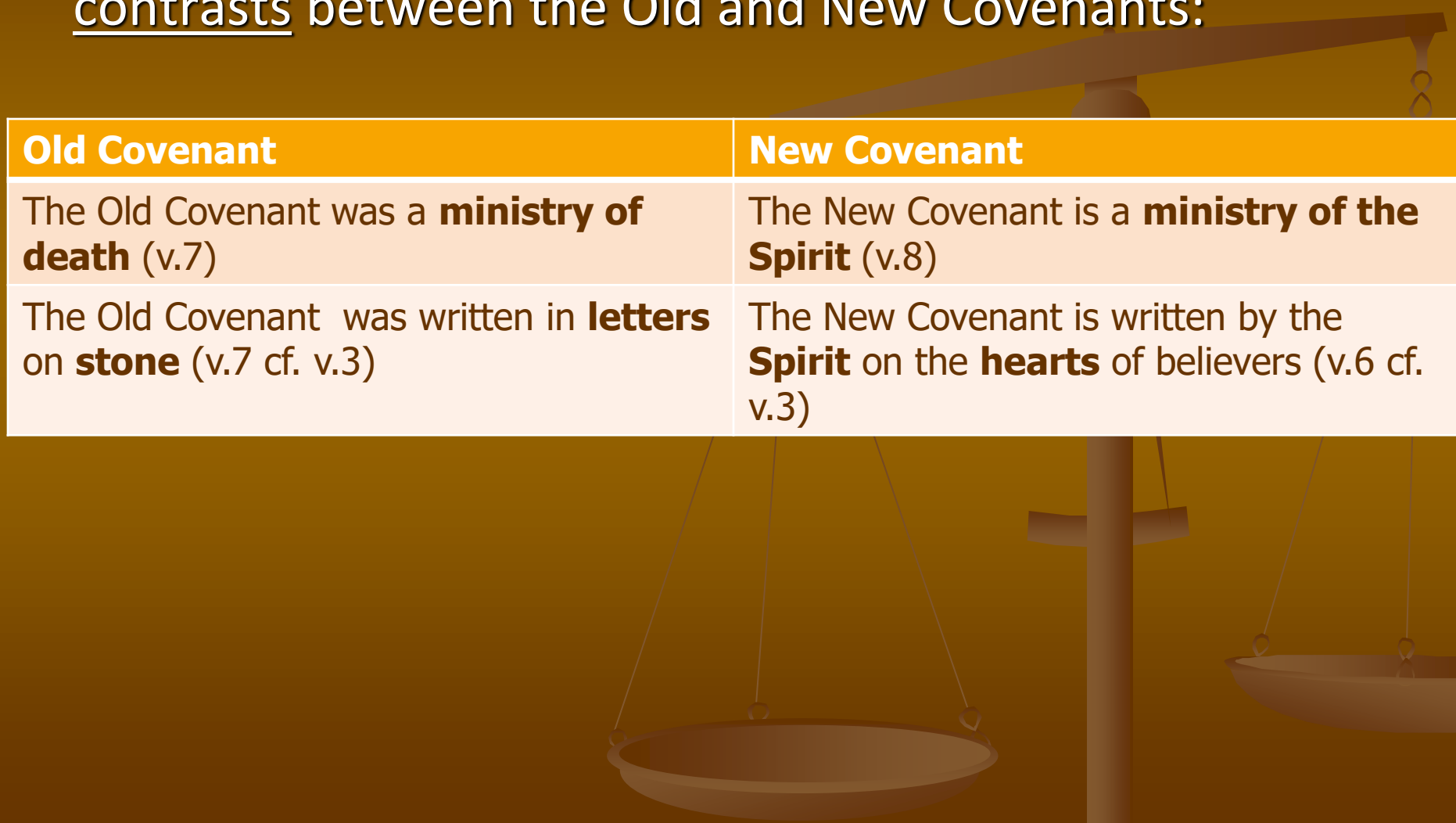
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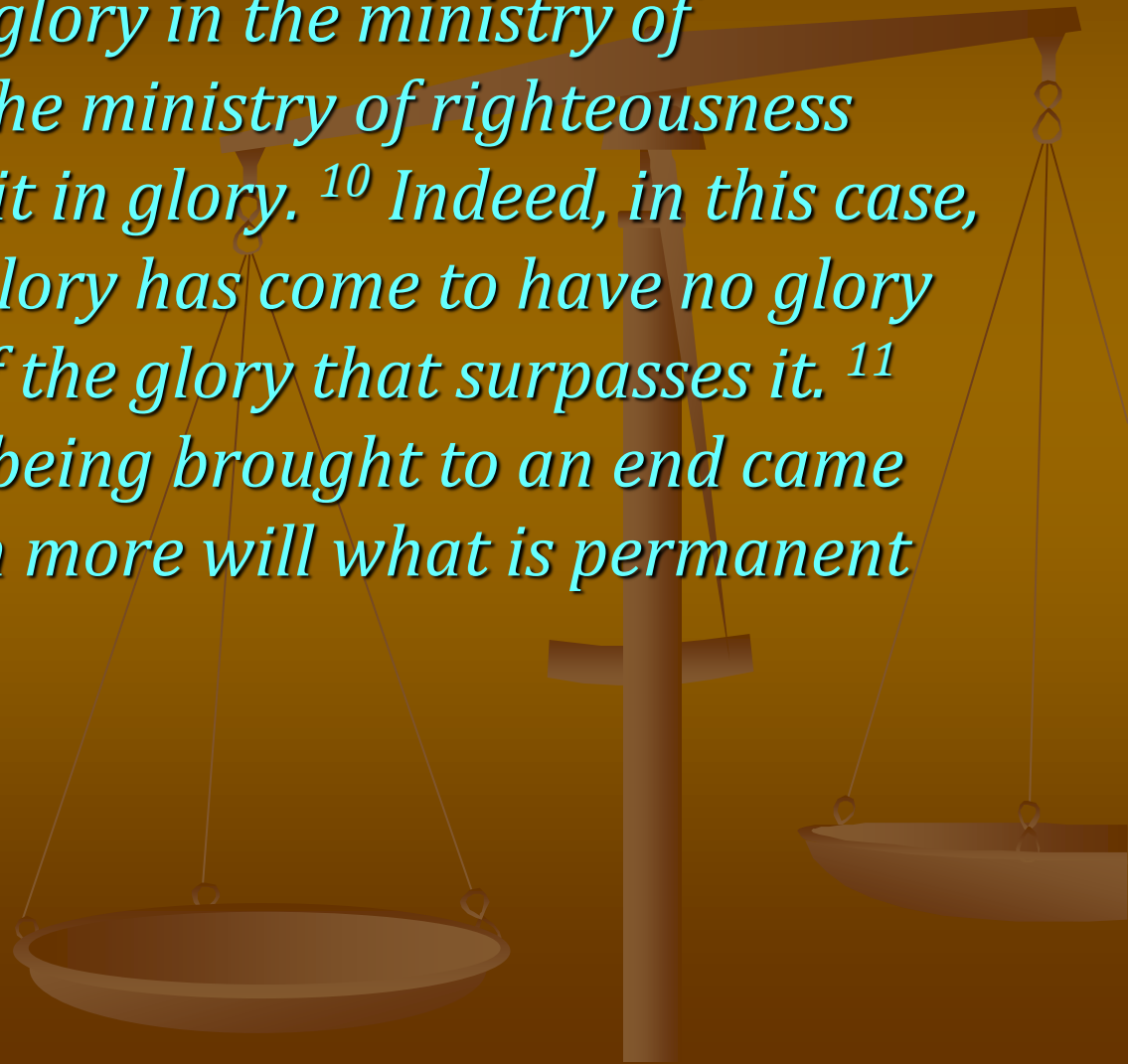
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Under the Old Covenant the <b>letter kills</b> (v.6) – i.e. <b>condemns us</b> as spiritually dead and, in the days of Moses, <b>resulted in the literal death</b> of those Israelites who disobeyed it (Exod. 16:1–15 cf. Num. 11:4–8; Exod. 16:27–30 cf. Num. 15:32–36; Exod. 17:1–7; Num. 20:2–13)	Under the New Covenant the <b>Spirit gives life</b> – i.e. makes <b>every</b> member of the New Covenant spiritually alive through regeneration (v.6 cf. v.3)

# The New Covenant is Superior

## ■ 2 Corinthians 3:9-11

- *For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. <sup>10</sup> Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. <sup>11</sup> For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.*





# The New Covenant is Superior

In verses 9-11 Paul builds on the contrasts given in verses 6-8, and thereby demonstrates the superiority of the new covenant over the old:

- The glory of the “*ministry of righteousness*” (i.e. the New Covenant which brings about true righteousness in its members) “*far exceeds*” the glory of the “*ministry of condemnation*” (i.e. the Old Covenant which brings about the condemnation of those who trust in it for salvation) (v.9)
- The New Covenant “*is permanent*” and therefore “*much more*” glorious than the “*glorious*” Old Covenant which “*was being brought to an end*” – even from the time it was being instituted! (v.11 cf. Hebrews 8:13)



# The New Covenant is Superior to the Old Covenant

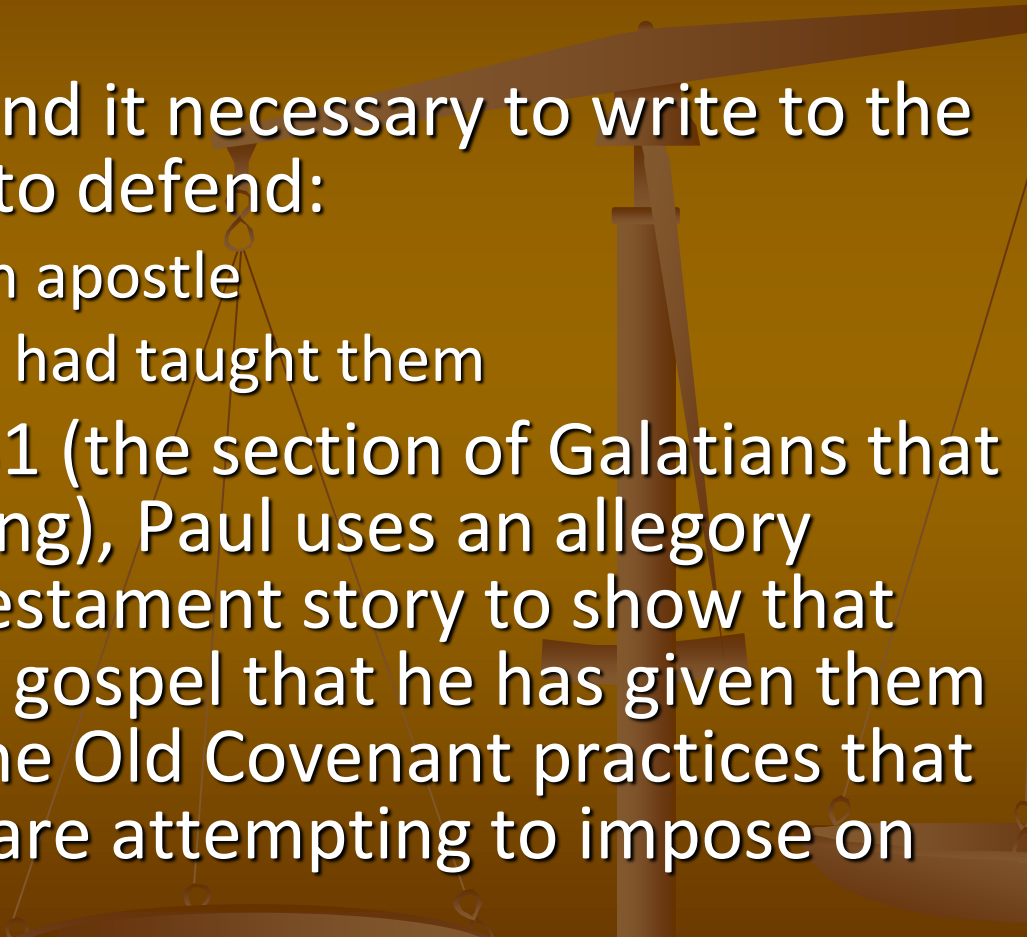
**Exhibit C – Galatians 4:21-31**



# Why Did Paul Write Galatians?

- Paul founded the Galatian churches on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
- Later Paul received news of people (who have come to be known historically as “Judaizers”) who had gone to these churches and were persuading Paul’s converts to accept a different gospel than he had taught them.
- The Judaizers were trying to impose the Law of Moses on the Galatian Christians – insisting, for example, that they needed to be circumcised in order to be saved.
- Luke describes a similar group that went to Antioch:
  - *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” (Act 15:1)*

# Why Did Paul Write Galatians?

- In order to overturn Paul's teaching, the Judaizers had also tried to undermine Paul's credibility as an apostle.
  - Therefore Paul found it necessary to write to the Galatians in order to defend:
    - His credibility as an apostle
    - The gospel that he had taught them
  - In Galatians 4:21-31 (the section of Galatians that we will be examining), Paul uses an allegory based on an Old Testament story to show that the New Covenant gospel that he has given them is far superior to the Old Covenant practices that the false teachers are attempting to impose on them.
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# The New Covenant is Superior

## ■ Galatians 4:21-31

- *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. <sup>23</sup> But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. <sup>24</sup> Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. <sup>25</sup> Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.*

# The New Covenant is Superior

## ■ Galatians 4:21-31 (continued)

- *But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>27</sup> For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." <sup>28</sup> Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup> But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. <sup>30</sup> But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." <sup>31</sup> So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.*



# Genesis 21:5-14



Before examining Galatians 4:21-31, it will be helpful if we are familiarize ourselves with the Old Testament account that Paul references in the book of Genesis:

*Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." <sup>7</sup> And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." <sup>8</sup> And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.*



# Genesis 21:5-14 (continued)



<sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing [ or “mocking” (NAS)].

<sup>10</sup> So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.” <sup>11</sup> And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

<sup>13</sup> And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.” <sup>14</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

# Questions

- I used 2 Corinthians 3:1-11 to demonstrate that the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant. But did you also see in that text an idea that we will seek to establish in a later class, that the New Covenant actually replaces the Old Covenant?
- So far, we have only read Galatians 4:21-31 (and the passage in Genesis that Paul references in that text) with the intent that we will study it in detail next week. Just from our reading of this text, what ideas do you think you see relating to the Old and New Covenants and/or what questions were raised in your mind as we read these texts?