

HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE!

Joe Slater

Isn't it great to be a Christian! If we realized how fortunate we are to live under the New Testament, we would never even consider any other path.

Does that sound like I'm disparaging the Old Testament? I certainly don't mean it that way, for as Paul said, "*the Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good*" (Romans 7:12). God gave the Old Testament to serve His own purposes until Christ came with the gospel. Then, as Hebrews 10:9 says, "*He takes away the first that He may establish the second.*"

The New Testament is superior to the Old like a complete house is superior to the foundation (Hebrews 6:1, 2), and like a substance is superior to its shadow (Hebrews 10:1). Consider a few comparisons and contrasts that illustrate the surpassing greatness of the New Testament. (Scripture references are from Hebrews unless otherwise noted.)

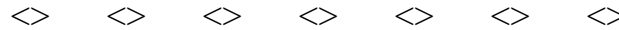
Under the Law, God ordained an earthly sanctuary (9:1). First it was the Tabernacle; later, Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem. Today, however, we seek God, not in a man-made structure, but in Heaven itself (9:24), which is called "*the Holiest*" (10:19).

Each year, on the Day of Atonement, the Old Testament high priest entered the Most Holy Place with animal blood (9:7). Jesus, our High Priest, entered into God's presence in heaven to offer His own blood once for all (9:12)

While God ordained the Old Testament sacrifices, they could not make the worshiper whole (10:1). Sins remained on his conscience, "*for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin*" (10:4). The once-for-all offering of Christ's blood, however, was

sufficient to take away our sins completely. Knowing that the penalty for our sins has been paid in full, and that God's justice is entirely satisfied, our conscience can be clear (10:22). This cleansing of the conscience coincides with having "*our bodies washed with pure water*" (10:22), so we are not surprised when Peter writes that baptism is "*an appeal to God for a good conscience*" (1 Peter 3:21, NASB).

Numerous elements of the Old Testament foreshadowed the superior components of the New Testament. This article has touched only the hem of the garment. Let us thank God that we live under "*a better covenant, which is established on better promises*" (Hebrews 8:6). Let us strive to "*hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering*" (10:22), for to turn from this "*new and living way*" (10:20) in favor of some other religious scheme would be the height of folly!



How To Think About Money

One day I was down and out. I was working and going to school. My pale lime Chevy Chevette had broken down.

After a tow to the mechanic, I got my first repair bill. It cost me an entire paycheck. But I'll never forget what my father told me. "Never worry about anything that can be fixed with money." On that day, he taught me how to think about money. It's just a tool. The things that really count can't be fixed with money.

--Jared Jackson (Jackson, TN) via *Fortify Your Faith*

Holy Ground

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' and he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground (Exodus 3:4-5).

Moses was told that the ground was holy because of the presence of God. The Tabernacle and later the Temple had within them the Holy of holies, again signifying the presence of God. Many people today view the "church" building as holy because God is there. After all, that is where two or more gather, and where two or more gather is where God is present. Thinking like that causes us to limit God's presence to a specific location. Paul reminds us that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24).

So where is God? David gives us God's location. "*Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me*" (Psalm 139:7-10). There is nowhere that God isn't. There is no fraction of a second of a day that God isn't present.

Where is holy ground? Jesus said that He will always be with us (Matthew 28:20). We have been given God's Spirit within us (Galatians 4:6). Because we are God's people, where we are is holy ground. That is just as true for one as for many. Therefore, let us live knowing that we are in God's presence. Let us strive to show that we are holy and not disgrace our Father by our behavior.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)