

THE "SCRIPTURES" AND THE "COVENANTS"

I just Googled this question: "How many Christian denominations are there in the world?" Google answered: "*There are more than 45,000 denominations globally. Followers of Jesus span the globe. But the global body of more than 2 billion Christians is separated into thousands of denominations.*"

Something is obviously wrong!

- Jesus prayed that all believers would be "one" just as He and the Father are "one" (John 17:21).
- Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."** (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Paul wrote to the Ephesians: **"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."** (Ephesians 4:3-6)
- While there is only "One Body" it is composed of many parts, but **"There should be no division in the body, but that it's members should have equal concern for each other."** (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- The church is supposed to grow and the church in Jerusalem grew rapidly. It began with 120 disciples in the upper room (Acts 1:15)
 - Then 3,000 converts were added on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41).
 - Soon the number of men grew to about 5,000 (Acts 4:4).
 - Then multitudes were added both men and women (Acts 5:14).
 - Then the number of disciples continued to increase (Acts 6:1).
 - Then **"the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith"** (Acts 6:7).
 - Growth is natural in the Body of Christ, but division in the Body is a sin!
 - Even though the Jerusalem church numbered thousands it still remained only one church!
- Division is wrong and those who cause divisions in the Body of Christ are to be "marked" and "avoided" (Romans 16:17)

CANCER

God also designed our human body to grow! Even after becoming an adult our hair and fingernails continue to grow, broken bones heal, infections are cured, and the cells in our body continue to reproduce. This is possible because God designed the cells in our body reproduce. Scientists tell us that the human body is composed of 37 trillions cells and every one of these cells reproduces itself in 7 – 10 years. It is normal and healthy for our body to grow and cells to reproduce.

Cancer, however is cell division out of control! World wide an estimated 10 million people die of cancer every year. The cure for cancer, however, is yet to be discovered. Worldwide Cancer Research states: *"The genetic mutations that cancer cells acquire over time mean that the cells change the way they behave. This can be an incredibly difficult problem during treatment because the*

mutations can lead to cancer cells developing resistance to a treatment over time, making it ineffective."

While the challenge of curing cancer is great, it is still a worthy goal. Medical experts are certainly justified in making every effort to find the cause and cure for cancer.

CANCER IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

The fact that there are 45,000 different Christian denominations raises the possibility that there is cancer in the Body of Christ. This is not a small problem. It is not difficult to notice! It is like an elephant in the room. It is a problem too big to be ignored! Something is obviously wrong! Division in the Body of Christ is both a sin and a serious problem that demands our immediate attention. Solving this problem will not be easy but we must still **"make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."** (Ephesians 4:3)

This brief study of "The Scriptures and the Covenants" is written with the prayer that it will provide insight into the cause and cure of divisions in the Body of Christ. The psalmist reminds us that it is good and pleasant for brothers to live together in unity (Psalms 133:1). Hopefully this brief study will encourage us to teach the Scriptures in such a way that brothers will be reconciled and divisions will be healed. Jesus taught, as you know, **"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."** (John 13:35) At present the world does not see this love! The Apostle John reminds us that **"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well."** (1 John 5:1) If you do not love your brethren who are children of God, something is wrong!

The unity of believers is an essential step toward world evangelism. Based upon the prayer of Jesus, the world will not be "won" until believers are "one" (John 17:21).

THE SCRIPTURES ARE SEPARATE FROM THE COVENANTS

- This distinction may seem trivial and insignificant but it can be important!
- Since most denominations claim to believe in the "authority of the Scriptures" let us be careful not to use the Scriptures in a way that will divide the Body of Christ.
- James warns: **"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."** (James 3:1)
- Obviously, some teachers are responsible for creating division.
- Jude warned that the **"men who divide you follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit."** (Jude 19)
- Not having the Spirit is significant for: **"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."** (Romans 8:9)
- It is the devil who causes division and plants weeds in the Garden of God (Matthew 13:37-53).
- On Judgment Day all people will be divided into two groups (Matthew 25:31-46). The saved will be in one group and the lost will be in the other.
- When people receive Jesus Christ as Savior they are automatically divided from those who are reject Jesus and are lost (Luke 12:51-53).
- This is the only kind of division caused by Jesus!

- Those who receive Jesus are by One Spirit baptized into One Body (1 Corinthians 12:13). There is to be no division in this “One Body.”
- Since our research into division in Body of Christ must start somewhere, let us begin by noting the difference between the “covenants” that determine our relationship with God, and the “Scriptures” which teach us how to live.
- Hopefully, recognizing this difference will be a positive step in helping us use the inspired Scriptures in a way that will not be divisive.
- As you know, Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. **“So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 31:9)**
- **“After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord: “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.” (Deuteronomy 31:24-26)**
- Note the difference location between the “Scriptures” and the “Covenant”!
- The ark of the covenant could not be looked into or touched, but the Scriptures could be!
- As you know, the men of Beth Shemesh died when they looked into the ark of the covenant (1 Samuel 6:19).
- Nobody dies when they look at the Scriptures.
- **Uzzah died when he touched the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6:6-7).**
- Nobody dies when they touch the Scriptures.
- When the ark of the covenant was taken from the Holy of Holies it had to be shielded with three different coverings (**Numbers 4:5-6**).
- The Scriptures do not have to be shielded to keep men from seeing them. The Scriptures were available to everyone.
- When Israel crossed over the Jordan all the words of the Law were to be written on stones coated with plaster so that everyone could read them (Deuteronomy 27:1-8).
- Every family was also encouraged to teach the Scriptures on a daily basis (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).
- Note also that the Scriptures were to be read publicly at the end of every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10-13).
- Everyone needs to know the Scriptures for **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
- The Scriptures are essential to our spiritual growth for Jesus said: **“It is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)** This quotation is found in Deuteronomy 8:3 and was written by Moses.
- New Christians are in special need of the Scriptures. Peter wrote: **“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:1-3)**
- We repeat! The inspired Scriptures are essential to our spiritual life and growth.
- Again we repeat! The covenant that determined our relationship with God was “inside” the ark was not accessible to anyone! Only God had jurisdiction over this covenant!

- As we have also said, the inspired Scriptures were kept separate from the Covenant. The Scriptures “beside” the ark and not “inside” of it.
- IT IS GOD WHO DETERMINES WHO IS SAVED AND LOST, NOT MAN!
- It is obvious that the “new covenant” that determines our present relationship with God can not be touched or tampered with by man. It is also completely controlled by God.
- The Old Covenant was written by God and not man (Exodus 31:18; 34:37-38; Deuteronomy 5:22).
- The New Covenant was not written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3, Hebrews 8:10).
- In both instances the covenants were written by God and were out of man’s reach!
- Sadly, Israel was not always a good steward of the Scriptures. At one point in time, for example, men were so careless with the Book of the Law that it was lost. Fortunately, Hilkiah, the high priest, found it (2 Kings 22:8).
- It is also possible for us to be so careless with the Scriptures that we lose contact with them!
- We cannot emphasize too strongly that while God expects us to be good stewards of the Scriptures, He has reserved for Himself the care of his covenants which determine our relationship with Him.
- It is dangerous for sinners like you and me to dogmatically curse someone and condemn them to hell! **“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand for the Lord is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:4)**
- When Michael the archangel was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, he did not make slanderous accusations against him but rather said: “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9).
- Even Jesus did not retaliate or make threats when He suffered, but entrusted himself to Him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23).
- Yes! The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of Judgment (2 Peter 2:9).

THE OLD COVENANT

- The old covenant determined man’s relationship with God and the identity of this covenant is crystal clear. Moses wrote: **“He declared unto you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.” (Deuteronomy 4:13)**
- Moses repeated: **“The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.” (Deuteronomy 5:2)**
- The old covenant was only the Ten Commandments: **“These are the commandments the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.” (Deuteronomy 5:22)**
- Remember! There was nothing in the ark of the Covenant but the Ten Commandments: **“There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.” (1 Kings 8:9)**

- **This same truth is repeated in 2 Chronicles 5:10: “There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.”**
- Before proceeding let us consider an apparent contradiction between this record in the Kings and Chronicles and Hebrews 9:4 Note: **“This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.” (Hebrews 9:4)**
- Hebrews 9:4 “seems” to say that there were three items inside the ark, while the Kings and Chronicles state that it only contained the “two stone tablets.” This “apparent contradiction” is easily resolved. While some translations say that the ark “contained” all three items, it did not. The Greek word translated as “contained” is “en” which can also be translated as “with” or “beside”. Just as the Scriptures were “beside” the ark, Aaron’s rod and the golden pot of manna were also “beside” the ark of the covenant, and not “inside” of it. Careful study makes this obvious!
- Please consider, for example, that Aaron’s rod could not have been was “inside” the ark of the covenant. Aaron’s rod was a shepherd’s staff and the ark of the covenant was less than 4 feet long. A shepherd’s staff was too long to fit inside the ark! Second, this staff could not have been inside the ark of the covenant for it was always available. Remember that Aaron’s staff and eleven others were placed “in front of the testimony” where they could all be retrieved (Numbers 17:4). Apparently these staffs were on the floor in the Holy of Holies in front of the ark of the covenant and thus could be retrieved by reaching under the curtain. In fact it was **“in front of the testimony”** that Aaron’s rod **“budded. Blossomed., and produced almonds”** in a single night. After Aaron was identified by God as His appointed leader, **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Put back Aaron’s staff in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious.’ (Numbers 17:10)** It is obvious that Aaron’s staff was not “inside” the ark of the covenant! Finally, remember that later when the Israelites needed water, God commanded Moses to take the staff “from the Lord’s presence” (Numbers 20:8-9). If this staff was “inside” the ark it would have been impossible for Moses to do this.
- Obviously, the golden jar of manna was not in the ark either. In Exodus 16:34 we are told that it was to be kept “in front of the testimony.” This is the same terminology used for Aaron’s staff (Numbers 17:4). So the golden jar was also “in front” of the ark with Aaron’s staff and the book of the Law.
- We know that Moses put the “two stone tablets” in the ark of the covenant. We also know that years later, when Solomon built the temple, nothing was in the ark but those two stone tablets. The Scriptures never tell us that anything was put “inside” the ark of the covenant but the two stone tablets that Moses placed there in Mt. Horeb.
- Remember also that while God trusted us with the Scriptures, He didn’t trust us with the covenants! It is the covenants that determine who is saved and who is lost, and God, Who knows all things, has reserved for Himself to determine our destiny.

THE PEOPLE DID’NT KEEP THE OLD COVENANT

- Remember! The “law”, that is the “old covenant,” was designed to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).
- The Lord said: **“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me**

a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:5-6)

- **"The people all responded together. 'We will do everything the Lord has said'" (Exodus 19:8)**
- God, however, knew the people, were lying! God knew they wouldn't keep His covenant!
- In fact, while Moses was on the mountain receiving the covenant, they were committing fornication before a golden calf (Exodus 32:15-29).
- As a result of breaking this covenant 3,000 people died (Exodus 32:28)
- We repeat! God knows everything! God knew from the very beginning that the people would not keep His covenant!

THE PURPOSE OF THE OLD COVENANT

- WRITING THE OLD COVENANT WAS NOT A MISTAKE! GOD DOESN'T MAKE MISTAKES! GOD HAD A SPECIFIC PURPOSE FOR WRITING THE OLD COVENANT!
- Yes! God knew exactly what He was doing when He wrote the old covenant! We repeat! He gave this covenant to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).
- God knew the old covenant would not produce life. The old covenant was written in stone, and there is no life in a stone!
- The Scriptures are clear that the old covenant brought death (2 Corinthians 3:7).
- As we have already pointed out, 3,000 died when the old covenant was given (Exodus 32:28).
- The old covenant was not designed to keep us from sinning, but rather to make us recognize our sins so that every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God (Romans 3:19).
- In fact, **"The law was added so that the trespass might increase."** (Romans 5:20)
- The law actually aroused our sinful passions (Romans 7:5).
- It was the law that caused Paul to covet (Romans 7:7).
- The law actually empowered sin: **"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law."** (1 Corinthians 15:56)
- As we have said, God designed the old covenant, so that nobody but Jesus could keep it. This covenant was designed to make us so desperate that we would turn to Christ and be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).
- All have sinned and the old covenant was designed to make us aware of our guilt. James warned: **"Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all."** (James 2:10) Nobody was ever saved by keeping the old covenant!
- The old covenant was like Hagar and Ishmael for it produced slavery and not freedom (Galatians 4:21-31).
- We repeat! The law, written in stone, was cold, rigid, inflexible, and did not produce life!
- As we have also said, God did not write the law by accident, nor did He make a mistake in writing it. The law did precisely what God designed it to do: "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good." (Romans 7:12)

THE SCRIPTURES ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE COVENANT

- Remember! No one could touch the covenant, but everyone was free to touch the Scriptures. We need to be constantly reminded that only God decides who will be saved and who will be lost.
- As you know the people of God were to have constant contact with the Word of God for it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalms 119:105).
- As we have said, the Scriptures were to be read publicly every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10-12).
- Even children were to be taught the Scriptures: **“Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” (Deuteronomy 31:13)**
- The Scriptures were to be constantly available to the public: **“When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the Lord your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 27:2-3)**
- The devout Jew recites the following prayer twice a day. It is called the “Shema” because the first word of the prayer is the Hebrew word “Shema” which means “hear.” **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)**

THE NEED FOR A NEW COVENANT

We repeat! The old covenant, engraved in letters on stone, brought death (2 Corinthians 3:7). God, however, not only wants us to have life, He wants us to have life abundantly (John 10:10). That’s why God gave us a new covenant! **“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” (Hebrews 8:7-13)**

Please note:

- God found something wrong with the first covenant and wrote a new one.
- God promised that the new covenant would not be like the old one (Jeremiah 31:32, Hebrews 8:9).

- The old covenant was written in stone and was placed in a box that could not be touched.
- The new covenant could not be touched either for it was written in the minds and hearts of believers (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10, 2 Corinthians 3:3).
- It is obvious that God does not want us to tamper with His covenants. Only God can determine who has a right relationship with Him!
- Like Ishmael, the old covenant was a constant source of controversy (Genesis 16:12).
- Men could not argue about the new covenant, however, for it was written where no one but God could read it. The new covenant was written in “minds” and “hearts” of believers.
- Since the new covenant is within us, our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- This means that true worship is no longer limited to specific locations like the tabernacle or temple, but true worship is in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).
- The old covenant was “given” and then “taught”!
- The new covenant was “taught” and then “given”!
- The new covenant only becomes a reality in the minds and hearts of people who have already been taught. From the least to the greatest they already know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:11).
- The old covenant was ministered by a high priest without pity, but Jesus is the priest of the new covenant and He is a “merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17).
- The old covenant priests made many offerings, but by only one sacrifice Jesus makes perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14).
- Old covenant priests died and had to be replaced, but Jesus is a high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).
- The high priest, under the old covenant, ministered in a man made tabernacle.
- Our new covenant high priest ministers in the “true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man” (Hebrews 8:2).
- The new covenant priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, and is therefore superior to the priesthood of Levi (Heb. 8:6).
- The old covenant is like Hagar and Ishmael and represents slavery. The new covenant is like Sarah and Isaac and represents freedom (Galatians 4:21-31).

THE NEW BIRTH AND THE NEW CREATION

- It is not an option! No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are “born again” (John 3:3).
- Being “born again” results in a “new creation.” **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)**
- Being “born again” and becoming a “new creation” are both a result of the “new covenant”.
- The first mention of created life in the Scriptures involved seeds. When God created life, He also created seeds to perpetuate that life.
- So, on the third day God created seed bearing plants and trees (Gen. 1:11).
- Every seed reproduces after its own kind (Gen. 1:12).
- Jesus knew this and reminded Nicodemus that: **“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:6)** “Spiritual” life can only come from a “spiritual” seed!
- Our physical father planted a physical seed in the physical womb of our earthly mother. This is how we received physical life. From this physical seed we received the physical “image” or “likeness” of our earthly father. Every cell in our physical body contains the “likeness” or “DNA” of our earthly father. This physical “code” provides positive identification of what family we come from. Paternity cases can be determined by the DNA of the child!
- The things we see, of course, like our earthly bodies, are only temporary (2 Corinthians 4:18). In Adam all die (1 Corinthians 15:22). **“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God). (1 Corinthians 15:50).**
- Consequently, we need an “eternal body” to inherit an “eternal kingdom”. This “eternal life” comes from a Spiritual Seed and lasts forever - **“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23)**
- When we are “born again” God writes His laws in our minds and hearts, and this new code, or covenant, produces a new “image” or “likeness”.
- Jesus is therefore called the “last Adam” because His seed produces a totally different genus, or family (1 Corinthians 15:45) As long as His seed remains in us we are new covenant people and our lives are different (1 John 3:9).
- The implications of the new covenant with regard to Christian unity are far reaching and profound. Brotherhood is based upon fatherhood. Fraternity is based upon paternity. We are not brothers because we agree on commandments written in stone, or Scriptures written with pen and ink, but because we have a common father. This is the reason Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. Remember! **“Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” (Heb 2:11)** We are inferior to Jesus in every way, but if God is our Father He is not ashamed to call us his brothers.

- The fact that the covenants are beyond our control is a constant reminder that only God can determine who is saved and who is lost!

ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

Because Ishmael and Isaac had the same earthly father, it is quite possible that they were similar in their physical appearance. They were, however, very different. In fact, they were “radically” different. The word “radical” comes from the Latin “radix”, which means “root”. These brothers may have looked alike on the surface, but at the very root of their existence they were totally different. Ishmael was born after the flesh and Isaac was born after the Spirit (Gal. 4:29).

Their basic nature, of course, was reflected by their conduct. Ishmael and Isaac behaved differently. The name “Ishmael” means “God hears”. He was given this name because the Lord heard the cries of his anguished mother (Gen. 16:11). There is also another reason why his name is appropriate. It is because he was constantly crying out and complaining about his brother Isaac. This is why the Scriptures say of Ishmael “He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers.” (Genesis 16:12) The hostile Ishmael would be constantly involved in controversy. Until Isaac was born he expected to inherit all the possessions of his father. When Isaac was born, however, Abraham left everything to him. The Scriptures are explicit! **“Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac” (Genesis 25:5).** Thus he that was born in the ordinary way persecuted the one born by the power of the Spirit (Gal. 4:29).

The name “Isaac” means “laughter”. While Ishmael was hostile, Isaac was laughing. Isaac was not like a “wild donkey” with every man’s hand against him. The smiling and happy Isaac was not born in an ordinary way. His mother was “past age” and had a “dead womb”. If it had not been for a miracle from God he would never have been born. Remember that these two men and their mothers represent the old and the new covenants.

When we become new covenant people, our conduct is so radically different that we are like living letters proclaiming the good news of God. Paul put it like this: **“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Corinthians 3:2-6)**

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

- We need to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).
- A healthy child continues to grow!

- If we have truly been born again we should constantly see a positive “change” in our lives!
- The word translated as “change” in our text is “metamorphosis”. This describes the change of a caterpillar into a butterfly.
- The glory of the old covenant was fading. This is stated at least 3 different times in this passage (2 Corinthians 3:7, 11, 13).
- The glory of the new covenant, however, doesn’t fade: **“And if that which was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts.” (2 Corinthians 3:11)**
- While the glory of the old covenant fades and gets darker and darker, the glory of the new covenant gets brighter and brighter.
- THIS IS WHAT WE SHOULD SEE WHEN WE LOOK IN THE MIRROR!
- WHEN WE LOOK INTO THE MIRROR WE SHOULD SEE THE GLORY OF THE LORD!
- THE GLORY OF THE LORD TRANSFORMS US SO THAT EVERY DAY WE BECOME A LITTLE MORE LIKE JESUS!
- EVEN THE MAN WHO COMMITTED FORNICATION WITH HIS FATHER’S WIFE HAD REPENTED AND WAS BEING TRANSFORMED (2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11).
- EVERY DAY WE ALSO ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE LIKENESS OF JESUS FROM ONE DEGREE OF GLORY TO ANOTHER DEGREE OF GLORY!
- THIS GLORY COMES FROM THE LORD WHO IS THE SPIRIT!
- THE NEW COVENANT INVOLVES GOD PUTTING HIS LAWS INTO OUR MINDS AND HEARTS AND PROVIDING US WITH A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.
- THIS RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS IS THE ONLY FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY!

**“FOR NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE ALREADY LAID,
WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST” (1 CORINTHIANS 3:11)**

**“BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES,
IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER” (JOHN 13:35)**

**“ANYONE, THEN, WHO KNOWS THE GOOD HE OUGHT TO DO
AND DOESN’T DO IT, SINS” (JAMES 4:17)**

