

# (New Wine in New Wineskins) 6. the New Covenant - a Partnership With Jesus

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the new covenant and partnering with Jesus in all aspects of life, leading to a life of unbroken fellowship with a loving Father in heaven.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:11, Matthew 11:28, John 1:18, John 14:16, John 17:6, John 17:11, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 4:10, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 5:3

**Topics:** "New Covenant", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the revelation of God as a loving Father through Jesus, contrasting the false portrayals of God by the Pharisees and Satan. He emphasizes the importance of knowing God as a Father to experience the fullness of the new covenant, where God provides grace and help through the Holy Spirit. Poonen highlights the difference between the old and new covenants, where under grace, God enables believers to keep His commandments through Jesus as an Example and the Holy Spirit as a Helper. He warns against falling into legalism or false grace, stressing the need for partnership with Jesus in every aspect of life.

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## Transcript

No one has seen God at any time, but Jesus came to reveal Him as a Father (John 1:18). Jesus revealed the Name of God as 'Father' (John 17:6). In that Name (and in all that lay behind it) the disciples were to find their security (John 17:11, 12).

In Old Testament times, God dwelt behind a thick veil (curtain) in the tabernacle. No one knew exactly what type of Person He was. The Pharisees presented a picture of God to the people that made Him look like a merciless and demanding tyrant. Then Jesus came and rent the veil and showed us that it was a loving Father who dwelt inside. But Satan has been active again portraying a false picture of God to believers and unbelievers alike. It is the calling of the church now to do what Jesus did - present the true picture of God as a loving Father. It is only as we know God as a Father that we can enter into all the good of the new covenant. He is called the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10), and since 'grace' means 'help in time of need' (Hebrews 4:16), this means that God will always be our Helper. He is always on our side against the Devil. This is why Jesus called the Holy Spirit the 'Helper' (John 14:16).

The law came by Moses and its purpose was to reveal sin (Romans 7:13) and also to reveal our helplessness against sin (Galatians 3:24). But the law provided no helper to help man to overcome. Therefore the law could not lead man to purity within. God has always desired purity in the inward parts (Psalms 51:6). But no man could attain this under the law. But now Jesus has established a better covenant. It is better in this respect: The law merely gave commandments, but under grace, God has provided us not only with commandments, but also with an Example (Jesus in His earthly life) and a Helper (the Holy Spirit), to enable us to keep the commandments. This is the difference between the old and new covenants. Satan has robbed most of Christendom of the encouragement that Jesus as our Example gives us, by hiding from them that Jesus came in the flesh. Secondly, Satan has also robbed them of the power of that Helper, the Holy Spirit, by either counterfeiting or denying the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Multitudes today have received a counterfeit 'baptism in the Spirit', that has given them neither power to fight the lusts in their flesh nor boldness to resist Satan. What a fantastic work of deception Satan has done!

Under law, man tries to please God and fails. Under grace, God works within us and enables us to please Him (Philippians 2:12, 13). Those who are trying to please God and failing to do so, while sincere perhaps, are still under the law. Most of them are weary and heavy laden with their struggle to keep the commandments. Such weary and heavy laden people are the ones whom Jesus invites to come to Him and to exchange their heavy yoke for His light one (Matthew 11:28-30). The yoke is a symbol of partnership - whether in a marriage or in business. Jesus invites us to enter into a partnership with Him where He supplies the capital and we get the profits!

John calls the miracles of Jesus 'signs' (John 2:11). In other words, each miracle was a parable with a message in it. Essentially, the one message that comes across in the miracles recorded in John's gospel, is this, that Jesus wants to enter into a partnership with us.

At the marriage at Cana, Jesus could have filled the water pots with wine - from nothing. But then there would have been no partnership. It would have been a one-man show. The servants therefore were invited to share in the miracle by doing their part - the easy part - of filling the pots with water. Then Jesus did the difficult part - of turning it into wine (John 2:1-11).

Likewise, in the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus could have produced food from nothing. But He did not do that. He invited a little boy to give Him his lunch packet; and in partnership with that little boy He fed the five thousand (John 6:1-13). The little boy did what he could; and Jesus did what He could!

The man born blind too was first asked to do what he could (John 9:1-7). He had to wash in the pool of Siloam. Then Jesus did the difficult part of opening his eyes.

We see the same principle in the raising of Lazarus. His friends did the easy part - removing the stone that covered the grave. Jesus then did the difficult part - of raising Lazarus from the dead. His friends were then once again given the opportunity to do what they could - to unbind Lazarus and release him (John 11:38-44).

After the resurrection, we see the disciples going fishing one night. "And that night they caught nothing" (John 21:3). That is a picture of man striving under the law! Then Jesus came. He could have filled their boats with fish without their casting their nets into the sea. A God who commanded the fish to come near Peter's boat on that lake, could just have easily commanded those very fish to jump into his boat. But then there would have been no partnership. So man had to do his part. They had to cast their nets into the sea.

Thus in partnership with Jesus the miracle was done. Man does the easy part and Jesus does the difficult part. But they did have to cast their nets. That is the obedience of faith - that Paul speaks of in Romans 1:5.

This is the gospel of the new covenant that the apostles proclaimed. Where this gospel is not understood, man tends to swing either to one extreme of legalism (striving all night forever and forever, with empty boats and no victory) or to the other extreme of a false grace (where there is no striving at all and no victory either!).

Many sincere souls are weary and heavy laden because they are groaning under the burdens of self-made commandments. Like Pharaoh's taskmasters whipped the Israelites to produce more bricks, the devil (disguised as a "preacher of righteousness" - 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15) whips many sincere believers saying, "You are not reading the Bible enough. You are not fasting and praying enough. You are not witnessing enough, etc.". Many a preacher too has unconsciously taken sides with Satan in bringing God's people under condemnation through such preaching. All such condemnation is the result of ignorance of the new covenant gospel.

Jesus is a Shepherd who leads His flock by going ahead of them. He does not use a whip and chase them from behind, like a hireling. All preachers who whip their flock are hirelings. True shepherds are those who lead, by being an example themselves. Many have come into bondage because they have listened to hirelings.

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17). Those who minister condemnation to others are therefore not sent by God. God's servants always lead people to salvation.

In all our life, Jesus wants to be a partner with us. When Peter came to Jesus to collect the temple tax, Jesus told Peter to throw a hook into the sea and catch the first fish that came up. In its mouth, Jesus said, would be a shekel, which would be sufficient to pay the tax for both Jesus as well as Peter. "For you and Me", were the words that Jesus told Peter (Matthew 17:27). Think of that phrase "For you and Me". This is partnership. Jesus is interested even in helping us to pay our taxes. From the mundane things that affect our everyday life here on the earth, on to the things that will abide forever, Jesus calls us to live by the principle of "You and Me".

Jesus said that when we took this yoke of partnership with Him we could find rest in our souls (Matthew 11:28-30). This is the rest that we are exhorted to enter into, by ceasing from our own works (Hebrews 4:10, 11).

It is not easy to cease from our own works, for our self-life is so strong. That is why God has to arrange our circumstances so that we are broken. He allows our plans to be frustrated and our hopes to be shattered. Our scheming and planning come to ruin and we fall again and again into sin. Thus He teaches us to cease from our own works, so that we might do His.

The Old Testament sabbath was a picture of this rest for God's people in the new covenant (Hebrews 4:9, 10). It is rest in God that has to come first before we can do anything of eternal value.

When God made Adam on the sixth day, He sanctified the very next day as a day of rest. Though it was chronologically the seventh day, yet for Adam, it was his very first day. The law, which came 2500 years

later, stated "Six days shalt thou work and the seventh day thou shalt rest". But for Adam God instituted first a day of rest and fellowship and then six days of work. That is grace. Under grace, the "day of rest" comes first. We have to enter into rest before we can serve the Lord. Then every day of our earthly life can be a sabbath. And that is God's intention for us.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus why Moses permitted divorce under the law, He replied that it was a temporary provision made for man as long as his heart was hard (Matthew 19:8). But, Jesus said that it was not God's perfect will from the beginning. Many things in the law were part of God's permissive will - not His perfect will. But now that the new covenant has been established, God desires that we live in His perfect will - as He intended man to live "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8). And so for us, as for Adam, it is this rest that must come first. Life must be a perpetual sabbath of rest in God.

Only when we enter into rest can we joyfully testify that God's commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). Where God's commandments are considered to be a burden, and the message of denying oneself and obedience to all the commandments is considered to be bondage, it is evident that such a person has not yet come under the yoke of Jesus. He is still labouring under his own yoke, under the law.

In the Outer Court of the tabernacle and even in the Holy Place, there is plenty of activity. But in the Most Holy Place, inside the veil, there is no activity - only fellowship. Even service for God flows out of that fellowship. That is the difference between Old Testament service and New Testament ministry. This is clearly illustrated by Martha and Mary, in the incident described in Luke 10:38-42. Mary was (symbolically speaking), in the Most Holy Place - at rest, fellowshiping with the Lord. Martha was in unrestful service ("for the Lord") in the Outer Court. Jesus said that what Mary had chosen was the one thing everyone needed.

The veil has now been rent by Jesus and we can boldly enter and dwell in the Most Holy Place - of fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, all our days. If only we could see this: That what God desires from man first of all, is not service, not Bible-reading, not fasting and prayer, etc., but fellowship.

Adam was created by God in His image - not because God wanted a gardener for Eden, but because He wanted someone with whom He could have fellowship. God did not save us out of the pit of sin in order that we might serve Him, but rather in order that we might have fellowship with Him. It is due to a lack of understanding of this, that multitudes of believers are weary and heavy laden today, just like Martha.

At the age of 95, having walked with God for over 65 years, the apostle John decided to write a letter - inspired by the Holy Spirit. The theme of his letter was 'fellowship' (1 John 1:3). Having seen churches and leaders who had left their first love (Revelation 2:4) and who now had a name that they were alive (with all their varied Christian activities) but who were in fact dead in God's sight (Revelation 3:1), John certainly saw that the great need was to lead Christians into the joy of fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, inside the rent veil.

There may be joy found in several fields of activity. Some find it in sport, some in music, some in their profession, and some even in Christian work. But the purest joy in the universe is to be found only in fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:4). The psalmist says, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11). This was the "joy set before Him" that made Jesus willing to endure the cross daily (Hebrews 12:2). The fellowship with the Father was Jesus' most prized possession. He did not value anything else in the universe in comparison with that. This fellowship was what Jesus knew would be broken on Calvary, when for three hours He would have to endure the agonies of an eternal hell for lost humanity (Matthew

27:45). Then the Father would have to forsake Him and the fellowship that He enjoyed with the Father from all eternity would be broken for three hours. He dreaded that break of fellowship so greatly that He sweated great drops of blood in Gethsemane. The cup that He prayed to be removed from Him was just this: A break of fellowship with His Father.

If only we could see this and be gripped by it! How lightly we speak and sing about following Jesus! To follow Jesus means to value fellowship with the Father like He did. Sin would then become exceedingly sinful to us, for it breaks our fellowship with the Father. An unloving attitude towards another human being would not even be tolerated, for it would break our fellowship with the Father, etc.

May the Lord give us revelation so that we see clearly that true Christianity is nothing less than a life of unbroken fellowship with a loving Father in heaven.

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