

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 3:7-11

Session 27: The Greater Glory of the New Testament

We have been talking about what it means to be an able minister of the new testament (NT) in our previous two sessions, and while we have not said everything there is to say, I think enough has been said to understand what Paul is saying.

I want to close with one more point. I don't want you to think that just because many of the things we get in the Mystery are the same kinds of things which Israel will get under the NT, that the Mystery is just a subset of the new testament. It is true that we do not get the physical things which are promised to Israel. Just because God changes the testament, and does away with the old covenant, does not mean that there are no physical blessings for Israel in the kingdom, there are.

Ezekiel 11:17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even **gather you from the people**, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and **I will give you the land of Israel.** ¹⁸ And they shall come thither, and they **shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof** from thence. ¹⁹ And **I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you;** and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: ²⁰ **That they may walk in my statutes,** and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God.**

Ezekiel 36:24 For I will **take you from among the heathen,** and gather you out of all countries, and will **bring you into your own land.** ²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and **ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols,** will I cleanse you. ²⁶ **A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:** and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, **and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.** ²⁸ And ye shall dwell in the land

that I gave to your fathers; and **ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.** ²⁹ I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and **I will call for the corn, and will increase it,** and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ And I will **multiply the fruit of the tree,** and the **increase of the field,** that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. ³¹ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. ³² Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. ³³ Thus saith the Lord GOD; **In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.** ³⁴ And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. ³⁵ And they shall say, This land that was desolate is **become like the garden of Eden;** and the waste and desolate and ruined **cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.** ³⁶ Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined *places,* and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken *it,* and I will do *it.* ³⁷ Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet *for* this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them; **I will increase them** with men like a flock. ³⁸ As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall **the waste cities be filled with flocks of men:** and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Do you see all those physical blessings which take place along with the spiritual work of the new covenant? We don't get any of those physical blessings, but under the Mystery, we get spiritual things which Israel does not get under the new covenant.

For example, that we are made to be a new creature. We are part of the body of Christ, the one new man, and that is nowhere in the NT or the new covenant.

Our destiny is different. Israel is promised a future kingdom on the earth. We are promised a heavenly vocation. We will be seated with Christ in heavenly places.

Israel will eat of the tree of life to live forever. The body of Christ will have a glorified body like unto the resurrection body of Jesus. We have no need to eat of the tree of life.

All of this is to say that who we are under the Mystery is different from Israel under the new testament. We can be “able ministers” to those who do not understand the Mystery, just as Paul did.

In verses 7-11, Paul is going to lay out the greater glory of the ministration of the NT as compared to the OT. Look at the contrast that has already been given to us:

OT	NT
Written in stones	Written on the heart
Written with ink	Written with the Spirit
The letter killeth	The spirit gives life

2 Corinthians 3:7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: ⁸ How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

Paul calls the Law, the ministration of death. Even so, there was a “glory” in connection with it. How can something which ministered “death” be glorious? It was glorious in that it was the standard of God’s righteousness. The Law itself was not bad, it was good. At the same time, the Law also prescribed severe penalties for those who walked contrary to it.

It was glorious in that while Moses was in God’s presence as the Law was graven a second time on tables of stone, the face of Moses began to shine with light (with a glory). When Moses came down from the mount, this frightened the Israelites.

Exodus 34:28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. ²⁹ And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not

that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.³⁰ And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

What is Paul doing in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11? He is showing them that he is an able minister of the NT by explaining how the new testament is superior to the old testament (OT). In verse 7, Paul is talking about the transient glory of the Law, which, along with the glory of Moses' countenance, was to fade away.

2 Corinthians 3:7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:⁸ How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?⁹ For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

Now we see the Law as the ministration of condemnation, and the NT as the ministration of righteousness.

OT	NT
Written in stones	Written on the heart
Written with ink	Written with the Spirit
The letter killeth	The spirit gives life
Ministry of death	Ministry of life
Ministry of condemnation	Ministry of righteousness

The point is that if the ministration of condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious, and much more permanent is the glory of the ministration of righteousness. This is Paul's version of Hebrew's "better" covenant with "better promises."

Here is what is at the heart of this distinction: The Law was great and glorious, and at the same time awful in its punishment of sin, which is a reproach to men and a dishonor to God. Yet grace must greatly exceed the Law by an equal abhorrence of sin by finding a method to forgive it, to take away its guilt, and remove it from the soul.

The Law sought to deal with sin by the blood of bulls and goats, but their blood could never take away sin. But, the NT in Christ's blood produced the performance of a better promise of pardon and the full forgiveness of sin. Paul cannot overestimate the greater glory of the NT over the old, of Christ's blood over that of bulls and goats, of the glory of righteousness over that of condemnation.

2 Corinthians 3:10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. ¹¹ For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

There is such an excelling glory in the new, that the old is swallowed up in it. The righteousness that comes by the Spirit in the new exceedingly outshines the Law. How so? Because the death of Christ signaled the end of the Law as the prevailing testament.

When Christ died, His Spirit went to the Father, His soul to the heart of the earth to Abraham's Bosom, while His body remained in the tomb. The Father authenticated the efficacy of Christ's redemption by raising Him from the dead, so that we can have His righteousness imputed to us.

Paul knows how the new is better than the old, and that is what makes him an able minister of the new testament. But he also knows that the Mystery offers even more. And this is where a shift takes place; where Paul is going to move from talking about the NT to talking about what is ours under the Mystery program.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

2 Corinthians 3:12 **Seeing then that we have such hope**, we use great plainness of speech:

What "hope" do we have? Paul is now bringing this back to the spiritual benefits that are ours under the mystery of Christ. We also have been given something that "excelleth" the old testament in glory.

2 Corinthians 3:13 And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Okay, this needs a little explanation. Back when Moses' face was shining, it freaked the people out. So, when he spoke with the people, Moses put a veil over his face to hide the light. Eventually, that light faded and went completely away (just like the Law was to fade away). But even after the shine was gone from his face, Moses kept wearing the veil, so they would think his face was still shining.

Paul is going to take that deception and make a spiritual analogy. He says in verse 13 that the children of Israel could not tell when the light left Moses' face because he kept it veiled.

2 Corinthians 3:13 And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that **the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:**

In verse 13, Paul says that unlike Moses, he will make no attempt to conceal the glory of what is ours in the Mystery; he will reveal it all. Look, the NT is certainly in Israel's future, but Paul is saying that now, even though the NT is not yet in effect for Israel, we members of the body of Christ also have a hope that exceeds the Law in glory, which is also by the spirit, which is a ministration of righteousness, and which gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ.

Going back to Moses, Paul says that their minds were blinded as to the fading of Moses' face. But then he switches to a spiritualization of that when he says, "for

until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the OT, which veil is done away in Christ.”

Paul is no longer talking about the veil on Moses’ face, but a veil that is in the hearts and minds of the people of Israel, which veil keeps them from seeing that the OT (the Law) was done away in Christ and you don’t have to wait for the NT at the start of the Kingdom it has been done away in Christ for the Mystery too!

Now, if it is true that the Israelite has a veil upon his heart when it comes to not knowing that Christ was the end of the Law, does that mean that a Jew cannot be saved? No!

Then how can a Jew be saved today, how can he believe the gospel of Christ and be saved? By removing the veil. And how does the veil get removed? By being an able minister of the NT, by showing them the fault of the old testament, and then showing them the spiritual benefits of the new testament are available to them now in the Mystery.

2 Corinthians 3:15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

Even to this day, they still think God is dealing with them by the Law. They have a veil on their mind and upon their heart and that veil’s hiding the fact that Christ is the end of the Law.

Even some Gentiles think that keeping the Law will get them into heaven. So what do we do? We remove the veil by telling them the truth of the Mystery.

2 Corinthians 3:16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

The way to lift the veil from an unbelieving heart is to introduce it to the Lord! And when we do, what happens? The veil is taken away! And then what?

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

What kind of liberty is Paul talking about? Liberty from sin and the Law! Being no longer under the Law, God deals with us by His grace.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

That “yoke of bondage” is referring to the Law, to the old testament. Christ has made us free from the Law and sin, so don’t get all tangled up in it; that is Paul’s message.

2 Corinthians 3:18 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.

No, Paul’s message of edification is not unorthodox; it is glorious!

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