HISTORICAL OR EXPERIENTIAL MATTERS

We saw in our last study that when the New Testament discusses the old and new covenants, it often does so by presenting contrasting characteristics that show how starkly different the two covenants are. Paul’s contrasting characteristics of the two covenants in Galatians 4:21–5:1 perfectly describe opposite ways that people have responded to God’s gospel-laden historical covenants. His new-covenant characterizations perfectly describe a saving response to the gospel, resulting in eternal life, and his characterizations of the old covenant perfectly describe the opposite response that leads to death. When Jesus came in history, a new historical covenant resulted; when He comes into someone’s life experientially at conversion, a new covenant experience results no matter when they lived in history.

Learning to distinguish the difference between the historical old and new covenants and the experiential old and new covenants will enable us to understand why the New Testament seems at times to be attacking, or warning against, any association with the old covenant and its law. It will resolve the tension, the apparent conflicts, described in the Introduction to this series between conflicting things that Scripture appears to be teaching about God’s covenants and the law.

In our passage for this lesson, Paul mentions the “new covenant” and “old covenant” by name and once again presents a contrasting list that characterizes how they are opposed to each other and lead to opposite eternal destinies.

Read This Week’s Passage: 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6
Write out 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out 2 Corinthians 3:12–18. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapters.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Which characterizations on this list seem to support a historical interpretation or an experiential interpretation? What are the implications of either?

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2 Corinthians 3:3–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Covenant</th>
<th>New Covenant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Written…with ink” (3:3)</td>
<td>“Written…by the Spirit of…God” (3:3, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On tablets of stone” (3:3, 7)</td>
<td>“On tablets…of the heart” (3:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-“sufficient” (3:5)</td>
<td>“sufficiency…from God” (3:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Condemnation”/“death” (3:7, 9)</td>
<td>“Righteousness” (3:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Moses…glory…passing away” (3:7–10)</td>
<td>“Glory [that] remains is much more glorious” (3:7–10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A veil lies on their heart”/“their minds were blinded” (3:14, 15)</td>
<td>“Turns to the Lord”/“veil taken away in Christ”/“unveiled face”/“transformed… by the Spirit” into His “image” (3:14–18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read more at www.inversebible.org/cov07-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Which interpretation, the historical or experiential, seems more coherent to you in light of the whole of Scripture?

How has the Gospel been unveiled in your experience?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/cov07-4
inSpect

What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Deuteronomy. 6:4–6
Psalm 37:30, 31
Isaiah 51:7
Matthew 13:3–9; 18–23
1 John 1:9
Luke 15:1–32
Colossians 3:4–10

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6?

Meditate on 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6 again and look for where Jesus is.

How does Jesus restore humanity to God's image?

What is He saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?
inSight

Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what are personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are practical ramifications of this week’s lesson to others in society?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/cov07-7
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Explain the difference between historical and experiential old/new covenants. What are the dangerous ramifications of confusing the two?

In what ways have you experienced the old covenant experientially? In what ways have you experienced the new covenant experientially?

How is the understanding of the gospel veiled in society and in the world?

How have you experienced the “glory” of the gospel?

How can you understand 2 Corinthians in your own words with your own illustrations?

When have there been clear instances where you saw the character, glory, transformative power, and/or conversion experience in people’s hearts?