





### **Greystanes Uniting Church**

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## **The Old and New Covenants Part Two.**

Followers of Christ today have faith in the fact that death is not the end of life. God's chosen people in the Old Testament however were less certain about the afterlife. In the book of Psalms it is clear that the "hope for future life rests in the continuance of the community, not an individual afterlife" (the NRSV Study Bible). The place of the dead known as Sheol in the Psalms is a dark, mysterious, silent pit where God can no longer be sought after or addressed. With this in mind it makes perfect sense that the blessings of God refer to wealth and health, offspring and a long life so that the next generation can flourish and continue the tribal/national identity of Israel.

When we read the Old Testament it is important to remember that God's ancient people only knew God through God's self-revelation to Abraham, Moses, and through the Law and the Prophets. They did not know God fully and finally revealed in Jesus Christ, nor did they have the benefits of over two thousand years of theological thinking like we have today, literally at our fingertips. Google just about any theological issue or question and it's all right there in front of you (not all good mind you!).

A few weeks ago I heard a great analogy for understanding this shift in revelation and context between our understanding of God and the way the Israel knew God. God's relationship with Ancient Israel is like a parent speaking to a young teenager being left at home all alone for the first time. Without the depths of maturity and sophisticated thinking of an adult we leave the youngster at home with a long list of instructions, "do not open the door to anyone," "do not leave the house to go to a friend's place" "don't light any candles". The 'do nots' continue with another firm command and reminder to "not open the door, never, to anyone".

God reveals as much of Godself to the Ancient Israelites as they can comprehend and then helps them live according to God's loving, just ways through the Law. Next week we will look at how all this changes because of the One who changes everything, Jesus Christ.