



Entering the New

We have just entered the New Year (2016). For many people, the New Year represents a new start and the hope for new and better things. But the best things are found in Jesus Christ! In our last lesson, we talked about the “Coming of Christ.” The “coming of the new” came with Christ.

Coming of the New

- ❑ When Jesus Christ came, he fulfilled the promise of “the new covenant” (*Hebrews 8:7-13; 9:15; Luke 22:20*).¹ By his death and resurrection, Jesus provided the way for forgiveness of our sins, everlasting spiritual life, and a personal relationship with God. If we are to receive these blessings, we must “enter the new.”



Entering the New

- ❑ To “enter the new” we must be united with Christ through faith in him. Through faith in Christ, we are given a “new life” (*Romans 6:4*) and a “new identity” (*John 1:12-13*).
 - 📖 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,² that person is a new creation: The old has gone, the new is here!” (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)
1. In what ways is a believer in Christ “a new creation?”³ (e.g., *John 3:3-6; 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:5; Romans 6:4-7*)
 2. What has gone? In what ways is “the old” still not completely gone?⁴

The Process of Renewal

- ❑ Believers are “new creations!” But we are not yet completely new. Renewal is a process.
- ❑ Believers “are being transformed into [the Lord’s] image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (*2 Corinthians 3:18*). “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (*4:16*).

¹ Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, Jeremiah talked about the ‘new covenant’ (*Jeremiah 31:31-34*). The new covenant promised forgiveness of sins, a close personal relationship with God, and deep inner change. Ezekiel talked about God giving his people ‘a new heart’ and putting a ‘new spirit’ in them (*Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26*).

² To be ‘in Christ’ is to be united with him through faith. To be ‘in Christ’ is to belong to him who gives us life.

³ The believer in Christ is ‘reborn’ in a spiritual sense (*John 1:11-13; 3:3-6*). We are ‘made alive’ by God’s grace and given a ‘new life’ (*Ephesians 2:1-5*). We have a new identity – no longer ‘in Adam’ but ‘in Christ’ (*Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22*). Thus we have a new relationship with God – no longer enemies (under his judgment) but beloved children (*John 1:12-13*). We have a ‘new heart’ and a ‘new spirit’ in us because of the indwelling life-giving Spirit (*Romans 8:1-14*). Thus we have a new paradigm, purpose, propensity and power. We are part of a new order – the kingdom of heaven that Christ inaugurated (began, started) with his first coming. Thus we have a new citizenship (in heaven) and a new final destination - complete moral conformity to Christ in the new heaven and new earth (*Romans 8:29-30; 2 Peter 3:13*).

⁴ See footnote 3. ‘What has gone’ is the opposite of ‘the new that has come.’ For the believer, the old identity has gone (*Romans 6:6*) and the old tyranny (ruling power) of sin has gone (*6:14*). But we still live in these old bodies, which are infected by sin. We still live in this sinful old world. The complete realization of Christ’s victory over evil is future.

Living as New Creations

- ❑ The process of renewal is God’s work, but human activity is required! Thus the Bible tells believers how to live the new life. For example, read Ephesians 4:17-5:2.
- ❑ As believers, we have been taught 1) to put off our old self (4:22); 2) to be made new in the attitude of our minds (4:23); and 3) to put on the new self (4:24).⁵

3. To be “made new in the attitude of our minds” is an ongoing process. How does this take place? What does the believer need to do?⁶



4. In verse 25, the instructions become more specific. List the types of sins we are to put off, along with the positive actions/attitudes we are to put on. Think about specific examples.

Verses	Put Off	Put On
4:25		
4:26-27 ⁷		<i>implied: make peace</i>
4:28		
4:29-30		
4:31-5:2 ⁸		

- ❑ These ethics are accepted by various moral people. However, the motivations given are distinctively Christian (4:26, 30, 32; 5:2). Furthermore, the renewal we desperately need comes only from God. Only “in Christ” can we live the new life that God demands.

Reflection/Application

- Do you want a new and better life? Do you need renewal? The way of renewal is Jesus Christ. Have you trusted in him as Lord and Savior?
- As a Christian, is your life obviously “new?” What do you need to put off? What do you need to put on? Commit to change, realizing that God will empower you by the Holy Spirit.

⁵ The ‘old self’ is our identity ‘in Adam’ under the dominion of sin and death. The ‘old self’ lived according to the sinful desires of the flesh. Through faith in Christ, we are united with him and receive a new identity – ‘in Christ.’ We are part of the new creation. The ‘new self’ was created to become Christ-like in true righteousness and holiness.

⁶ Renewal of the mind results in new ways of thinking in accordance with the new life. The Spirit renews our minds as we live the Christian life in submission to God (see *Romans 12:1-2*). This involves vital union with Christ (*John 17:1-17*); reading, study, intake and practice of God’s word (the Bible); prayer; fellowship; and service.

⁷ In verse 26, Paul quotes from Psalm 4:4. Anger is not necessarily a sin, but we must handle it properly. See ‘Anger’ on the ICF website.

⁸ ‘malice’ – desire or intent to cause harm or distress to another.