

THE
TWO
COVENANTS

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The Two Covenants

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.—In that he saith, a new Covenant, he hath made the first old.” Jer. 31. 31—Heb. 8. 8 and 13.

A COVENANT, strictly speaking, is a contract or bargain between two or more parties, including the idea of condition on the part of both. A distinction therefore, is carefully to be made between it and law. The ten commandments are called a Covenant, only in regard to Israel’s promise to keep them. For a law is a rule of action imposed with authority, absolute and without choice on the part of the receiver. Such was the first injunction delivered to man. Made in the image of God, a creature perfectly subject to his control, he received in substance the moral law, namely: “Of the trees, &c. thou *mayest freely eat*; but of the tree, &c. thou shalt *not eat*.” Not so in the Covenant made with Israel. They were admitted to hear the Covenant read, and to answer whether they would keep it or not. For the righteousness of keeping this Covenant they were, promised and rewarded with temporal blessings; and for breach thereof, were threatened and punished with temporal curses. Their government was a Theocracy, both in their religion and their civil polity. Obedience constituted them righteous, and disobedience was

considered sin, transgression, iniquity. That their righteousness and justification, their guilt and punishment; considered of the old Covenant, did not look beyond the present life. We must recollect that by transgression of the law they had already incurred guilt and condemnation of soul and body; and that this was their condition at the time of receiving the Covenant alluded to. Proof: “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Gen. 2. 17. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John, 3. 4. “By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin” — “By one man’s offence death reigned by one” — “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” — “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to Condemnation.” Rom. 5. 12, 17, 19, 13. “The wages of sin is death.” Rom. 6. 23. “Ye shall die in your sins — whither I go, ye cannot come.” John. 8. 21. “The scripture hath concluded all under sin.” Gal. 3. 22. Again: that the righteousness and unrighteousness of the old Covenant were only external, and the rewards and punishments thereof only temporal. Proof: “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all those commandments; I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.” Lev. 26. 3, 4. 14, 16. “See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and

his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. Therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live. These are the words of the Covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab.” Deut. 30. 15, 16, 17, 18. — 39. 1. “Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.” Mal. 3. 7. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Isa. 4. 6, 7. “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” Ezek. 18. 30, 32. “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Ezek. 33. 11. “Preserve my soul, for I am holy.” Psa. 86. 2. “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isa. 1. 19, 20. “The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.” Ezek. 18. 20, 21. By examining the foregoing passages we find that, the life and death, righteousness and unrighteousness, rewards and punishments, are all temporal. And such is the whole tenor of the old Covenant. The righteousness of it, which was of works, being insufficient for justification and happiness beyond the grave, even the keepers of that Covenant had to be saved by faith, as the 11th chapter of Hebrews doth most plainly show. It is in this sense that the apostle calls it faulty. “For if that first Covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.” Heb. 8. 7. But it was meet that this should be abolished, and a better established. “He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.” Heb. 10. 9. The misfortune is, that many misunderstand and blend the two, so as to offer new Covenant promises as the reward of obedience to the old; and old Covenant threats as the punishment for disobedience to the Gospel or new Covenant. Great care should be used to distinguish properly; “And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded; for unto this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament: which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.” 2 Cor. 3. 13, 14, 15.

A vast difference appears between the old Covenant and the new, of which the following are the chief points:

1. The old was made in time; the new before time. According to his own purposes and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. 3. 9.

2. To the first, man was a party; the second was concluded between the sacred Trinity: And not as Witsius supposes, who says that “man was a party concerned in both.” God’s people were *concerned* in the second,—their happiness being the object of the covenant; but not as a party. He (man) could not be a party without being a contractor. Christ was the purchaser, and God’s people the thing purchased. In the first, the thing purchased was temporal happiness; the price or condition man’s own righteousness: This price he agreed to pay. To the second he could not be a party, without stipulating to pay, either his own, or Christ’s righteousness, for eternal repose; and this is forever impossible; since He offered himself, and not that they offered Him. Man could not be both, a bargainer, and the thing bargained for. Gal. 3. 17.—1 Cor. 12. 11.—Eph. 1. 13.

3. The old was to be removed: the new is to continue. Psa. 89. 28.—Heb. 13. 20.

4. The one is called old, because it went before: The other new, because it followed in order of time.

5. The old had human righteousness as a condition of living and happiness: Rom. 10. 5. the new has the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith for life and salvation. Acts 13. 39. — Philip. 3. 8, 9.

6. The blessings of the old were of debt, by works: the blessings of the new, are by grace, through faith, Rom. 4. 4, 5.

7. The seal of the old was human blood: [circumcision:] The

seal of the new was the blood of Christ. Heb. 12. 24.

8. The subjects of the old are under the law, and in bondage: Those of the new are free, and heirs of eternal life. Gal. 3. 10.—John 14. 17.

9. The old was written on tables of stone: The new is written on the heart. Heb. 8. 10.

10. The High Priest was mediator of the old: Jesus Christ is mediator of the new, Heb. 8. 6.

In this number we shall show what characters may be ranked under the old covenant,* and what under the new. In order to do this we shall begin with the Pharisees. These were a religious sect of the Jews. The Jews were the only people whom the old covenant ever concerned. The Pharisees are among that portion of them who denied the divinity of the Lord of glory. Counting their traditions to be of higher authority than the words, or even the works of Christ, they trusted in righteousness of their own; and claimed under works chiefly of the old covenant, a title to heaven.

The Ebionites, a sect that rose in the first age of the church, maintained that Christ was born after the manner of other men: In doing this they denied not only Christ's divinity, but also the atonement by him. For if he were a mere man, he was bound to obey God for himself while his obedience could avail nothing for others; and his death would have been due to his own crimes without the least satisfaction for other sinners. Yet they professed religion, and doubtless hoped for heaven. The

*We mean not its form, but its principles.

meritorious cause of their going to heaven was their own righteousness; and these also may be ranged under the old covenant, falsely gospelized.

The Arians, which sect sprung up in the beginning of the fourth century, held the same tenets in substance; that is, they denied the godhead of Christ, declaring he was created by the Father, and inferior to the Father in nature and dignity: and that the Holy Ghost was created by the Son. This leaves the system of salvation dependent on human works, (as do all doctrines which deny the divinity of Christ.) and places the Arians upon the principle of the old covenant.

The Socinians, who took their rise about the close of the sixteenth century, insisted that Christ had no existence prior to his birth; and that he is called God only as a deputed title. The Unitarians and Deists are only Socinians, known by another name. If any of these look for righteousness it must be in human merit; for according to their creed the obedience and atonement of Christ are worthless things, and cannot possibly benefit any human being. To be short, all who hold the doctrine of self-sufficiency, [by which we mean, the doctrine that unregenerate men are capable of changing or controlling their will, choosing good in preference to evil, and of becoming righteous themselves,] are of the works of the law, under the old covenant, and vainly trusting human strength and human righteousness. All such, in effect, deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. For if he is God, grace reigns by him as much in the sinner's new birth, regeneration, or being made alive, as it reigned in his redemption.

All the elect of God are included in the new covenant, bearing date before time. But, our object at present, is to speak of the professors of religion now living, and to give the signs which in any age denotes a person to be under the new. One sign is repentance towards God. This necessarily includes being made alive. Being born of God the Holy Spirit, gives divine life. Divine life is attended with, and gives the sinner a godly principle. A godly principle produces godly sorrow. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.” The truly penitent soul feels from the heart deeply guilty before God; and covered with shame and swallowed up in sorrow, it seeks and makes its communications with Him in secret. This repentance is accompanied with hatred to sin. The relish for it is destroyed forever. Another token of new covenant embrace is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That faith which gives hope,—“the substance of things hoped for;” that faith which bears witness of our gracious state,—“the evidence of things not seen;” that faith which gives peace with God,—“being justified by faith we have peace with God;” that faith which purifies the heart,—filling it with a pure and holy disposition while it removes all guilt, and becomes an earnest of everlasting remission of sins; that faith which works by love,—not of feigned love, but of involuntary, sincere, true and never-failing love, to God and to saints. This love is tested by keeping Christ’s commandments. Another sign of the new covenant state, is a faithful and affectionate adherence to the word of God. They who are reconciled to God, are reconciled to his word. He who denies any part thereof, takes away from the prophecy of God’s book; and he who takes away from its

prophecy, has no part in its blessings. The sanctified person receives it as truth,—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” That which sanctifies him, gives him a seal through the word that God is true. The whole volume is sacred to him; and it grieves him to hear it wrested or handled deceitfully. He takes it as a sufficient rule of faith and practice; he extends not the Christian’s duty beyond its precepts, but mourns under the thought of falling short of them. In a word, such as believe that Christ is God,—that the Holy Ghost is God,—that our salvation is wholly of God, by grace through faith,—that nothing but Christ’s righteousness can justify the sinner, — that his obedience is our righteousness, and his death our redemption and our atonement,—that men cannot save themselves nor others, nor enlarge nor diminish the church of God, who nevertheless willingly attend to the ordinance and commandments of the Lord: Such are under the new, the glorious covenant of grace,—are in the hand of the Father, — in the hand of the Son, led by the Spirit; the Father is dwelling in them and walking in them, Christ is in them the hope of glory, the Holy Ghost has made them his temple. With the godhead thus reigning in their souls, and steadily leading them on to glory, sin and trouble shall end in a day; and soon from tribulation, frailty, fear and much trembling, shall they be borne away to the shore of deliverance. The shining raiment of angels and the countenance of the Son of God shall light their way home, and welcome their tired spirits to their rest.— *Ed.*

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