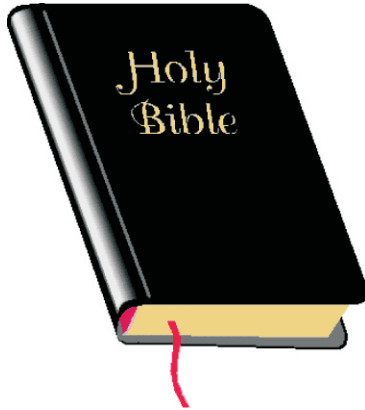


KNOW YOUR BIBLE

BIBLE COVENANTS

Advanced Bible Study



Jerry Bates

Bible Covenants : First Printing, November 2015

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Introduction



Understanding important subjects of the Bible is easy. I am sure this book will make it much easier.

Since I have known the author of this Bible study book for a long time, who is well known for his simple and strong teaching on any Bible subject, I will be honored by introducing and publishing this book by him. Many times I have been astonished by the way the author of this book brother **Jerry Bates** handles his classroom teaching, to make one understand the Bible topics. The same method is used here by the author in writing also, to make us know the subject on “Bible Covenants” from the Bible. The author is very careful to make us understand this subject, based only on the Bible.

We welcome any such questions that arise, during the course of your study. Each lesson is followed by a question section, for you to answer and send it back to your Teacher. **Kindly send the filled in questionnaire sheet alone to the Senders Address (Your Teacher)** and keep the book for your future study. Be sure that, you will be rewarded with a beautiful certificate on completing this study. May God bless you, as you study and prove yourself worthy before God !

In the Service of the Lord,

PHILEMON RAJAH

Director - J.C. School of Evangelism
(Madurai) India





BIBLICAL COVENANTS



This study is a very important, yet often neglected subject. One of the major reasons for the vast array of differing beliefs among the Christian groups is a misunderstanding of the covenants. Most simply assume that since all of the Bible is God's word, we must obey all of it. In actuality, no one even tries to obey all of it. The Old Testament commands various animal sacrifices, yet I know of no one that continues to offer animal sacrifices in worship to God. Therefore, a serious study of biblical covenants is greatly needed.

What is a Covenant?

The first step in this study is to determine exactly what a covenant is. To put it simply, a covenant is an agreement. It is an agreement between two parties, each with various responsibilities in order to fulfill his end of the agreement. In the ancient world, there were two kinds of covenants. One kind was an agreement between two equal parties, such as between individuals. They would negotiate and make compromises until they reached an agreement by which each could abide, similar to treaties made between nations today. The other kind would be by a superior party to an inferior, such as when one nation conquered another. The superior party would make demands and certain promises. The inferior party would be obligated to obey or suffer the consequences. Obviously,

this kind is more like the covenants God makes with man. Man has no right to bargain with God and make demands, since He is our Creator.

These covenants were usually made by the parties with vows and in the presence of witnesses. They were also ratified in some way, such as by the establishing of some monument or exchanging of gifts. This shows the seriousness of these covenants. Once covenants were made they could not be broken without serious consequences. Paul referred to this aspect of covenants in Galatians 3:15. **Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed no one annuls or adds to it.** Paul's point is that if man's covenants were that binding, how much more so is a covenant made with God. It is also important to notice that these covenants were binding only upon those with whom the covenant was made. If I were to make an agreement with person A, then that agreement would be only between him and me. It would not be binding upon person B or anyone else. This same principle would be true in regards to biblical covenants. This will be an especially important point to remember in the following lessons.

Various Covenants God Has Made

As we have said, God has made different covenants with a variety of men at various times. The first covenant was with Adam. God created a garden and placed Adam and Eve in that garden. God gave them everything. It was literally paradise on earth. God promised they would live forever, with only one condition. They could not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, broke the covenant and were forced to leave the garden as a consequence of that sin.

The second covenant that we read about was with Noah. God promised that He would never destroy the world again with a flood. The rainbow is a sign of that covenant between God and man (Genesis 9:9-17). Included in this covenant was a command to Noah to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 8:17).

Another covenant was made with David. In 2 Samuel 7 we find this promise from God to David. **When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your father, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever (7:12,16).** David calls this promise a covenant in 2 Samuel 23:5. This covenant is referred to again in Psalm 132:12. **If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimony which I shall teach them, their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore.** We can see that God promised that a descendant of David would sit upon his throne forever.

God also made a covenant with Abraham. We read about this primarily in Genesis 12:1-3. **Now the Lord had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.** This covenant contains four primary promises made by God on behalf of Abraham. Abraham would become the father of a great nation; this new nation would have a land in which to dwell; God promised to bless him; and through Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This last promise was spiritual in nature, whereas the other 3 were physical. This

spiritual promise was a veiled reference to the coming to Jesus, who would bring spiritual salvation to the entire world, not just to the house of Abraham.

Later, when the descendants of Abraham left the slavery of Egypt, they were led by God to Mount Sinai, and there God made a covenant with Moses and the people of Israel. **And Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."** These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel (Exodus 19:3-6). Included in this covenant are the Ten Commandments. **So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments** (Exodus 34 : 28).

The final covenant is the one made with all of mankind, which was established with the death of Jesus upon the cross. It is these last two covenants in which this study is particularly concerned. It is the confusion of these two covenants that causes much of the religious division we find in the world today. Thus, in the next lessons we will look in more detail at various aspects of these two covenants.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. What is a covenant?
2. Upon whom are covenants binding?
3. Name four individuals with whom God has made covenants.
4. Where was the covenant with Israel made?
5. What is one big cause of the religious division in today's world?

True / False

1. The main promise of God to David was that his kingdom would last forever. True / False
2. The last promise in Abraham's covenant is a reference to Jesus. True / False
3. To be fruitful and multiply is a command in the Bible and is applicable to everyone. True / False
4. The Law of Moses was given for all of mankind. True / False
5. The Ten Commandments is not actually a part of the Law of Moses. True / False





THE LAW OF MOSES



The Law of Moses was given to the people of Israel while encamped at Mount Sinai. **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel** (Exodus 19:5-6). Notice God gave special promises to the people of Israel. He promised that if they would obey His voice, He would make them a special treasure above all others, a treasure to be carefully guarded. This means that they would enjoy God's special blessings and care. All the people eagerly accepted this covenant. **Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do"** (Exodus 19:8). Even though this covenant was gladly accepted by the children of Israel, we see that throughout history Israel repeatedly broke this covenant they made with God.

When Israel received the Law they were a new nation. Every nation needs laws, and God gave them the Law by which they were to live. The law given to Moses included both spiritual and temporal laws. In other words, the law included guidelines by which they were to worship and serve God, as well as laws to govern relationships with each other. These laws included the Ten Commandments, as well as many other laws, such

as instructions for the priesthood, offering sacrifices, etc. These laws were only given to the Jews, not the Gentiles.

We need to keep in mind that God never intended for the Law of Moses to last forever. God, through the writings of Jeremiah, said, **Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah** (Jeremiah 31:31). When a new covenant or agreement is made, it automatically replaces the old. This new covenant is not just added to the old; it is a new covenant designed to replace the old. This new covenant is the law of Christ, instituted by Christ when He died on the cross.

Purposes of the Law of Moses

For a few minutes let us consider the purpose of the Law of Moses. People often wonder why God did not just give us the law He wanted all men to live by, initially. Why give one law and then replace it with another?

One purpose of the law was to make known the seriousness of sin. Man has the tendency to diminish the seriousness of sin. Since it is all around us, it doesn't seem like a big deal to us, especially some of the "lesser" sins, as we sometimes think of them. However, a holy God can have no fellowship or association with any sin. The prophet Habakkuk recognized this when he wrote in Habakkuk 1:13, **You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.** Thus, one purpose of the law was to help man realize what sin is and its seriousness. Paul wrote in

Romans 3:20, **Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin.** He wrote further in Romans 7:7, **I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."**

Another purpose was to bring men to Christ. The Law was designed to prepare a people and nation for the coming of Jesus Christ, who could then bring salvation unto all men. **Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor** (Galatians 3:24-25). A tutor or schoolmaster is one who would transport children to the school where they could be taught by the teacher. His authority over the children was temporary, lasting only from the time they left home to the time they reached the teacher, at which time the children were placed under the authority of the teacher. Thus, the old was designed to bring us to Jesus, the Master Teacher. This idea is further explained in Romans 10:4, where Paul wrote, **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

One final purpose of the law that we will mention is that the law was designed to be a shadow of better things to come. The book of Hebrews especially brings out this idea. **For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect** (Hebrews 10:1). A shadow is like the shade of a tree. It offers a dim outline of the real thing, but is vastly inferior to the real thing. Thus, the law was designed to educate men on the need for a perfect sacrifice, such

as Christ, to offer a blood sacrifice for our sins. The priests of the old covenant served only a copy or shadow of the heavenly realities.

The law was designed to prepare man to receive Christ, to better understand His purpose of coming and why we needed a Savior in the first place. In the next lesson we will look at the covenant God instituted with man with the coming of Jesus Christ.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. What did God promise to the children of Israel?
2. To whom was the Law of Moses given?
3. What is the relationship between God and sin?
4. What is a tutor?
5. What is a shadow?

True / False

1. The children of Israel were reluctant to accept God's covenant.
True/False
2. God intended that the Law of Moses would last forever.
True/False
3. One purpose of the Law of Moses was to impress upon man the seriousness of sin.
True/False
4. One purpose of the Law was to educate men on the need for a perfect sacrifice.
True/False
5. The sacrifices of the old covenant could bring about forgiveness of sins.
True/False





THE LAW OF CHRIST



We have noticed that the law had a purpose, and once that purpose was completed, it was time for it to pass away. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18, **Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.** Many want to twist the meaning of Jesus' words and say that Jesus only came to fulfill the law, not to take it away. However, when something has fulfilled its purpose, then why keep it around? Notice what Jesus said. He came to fulfill the law and said that none of the law would pass away **until** all is fulfilled. That implies that once it is fulfilled, it would pass away. Thus, Jesus is saying that once He completely fulfilled the law, which was done at the cross, the law would then pass away. Just before Jesus died, he uttered the simple words, **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). All the work that Jesus came to do was done: fulfill the law, provide a sin sacrifice for man, and establish a new and better covenant.

However, since we have a new covenant, we must not assume that the old law is useless. It continues to provide some instruction to us. Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, **For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.** The Old Testament can teach us many things about God, sin,

the coming of Christ, the sacrifices, etc., just as it was able to teach the Jews so many years ago. Without the Old Testament we would not be able to understand many parts of the New Testament. Thus, it is still useful to study, but it no longer provides authority for what we do and practice in service to God. We are no longer living under the old law because that was part of the old covenant.

Jesus came to establish a new and better covenant. When Jesus died on the cross, He nailed the old law to the cross (Colossians 2:14). At the same time He instituted a new law. **For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood** (Hebrews 9:16-18). The writer of Hebrews is using an example to show the need of Christ to die. Man often makes a will or testament, decreeing how his earthly possessions should be distributed once he dies. However, that will is of no value until he dies. He is free to make whatever changes he wants, and any later testaments revoke the provisions of previous wills. In like manner, the new covenant of Christ did not take effect until the death of the testator, Jesus. He shed His blood to dedicate His new covenant, even as the Law of Moses was dedicated with the blood of animals. Hence, at the cross, the new covenant was established, replacing the old covenant. Jesus became the surety or guarantee of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:22).

This new covenant was not just added to the old; it replaced it. The very fact that there is a new covenant implies the old has passed away. **In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is**

becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away (Hebrews 8:13). **He takes away the first that He may establish the second** (Hebrews 10:9). We cannot obey two covenants. As was noticed in the last lesson, we are now under faith in Christ, and we are no longer under the tutor, which was the old law (Galatians 2:25), nor should we even want to go back or combine the old with the new. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:4, **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.** We are justified by grace (Ephesians 2:8), yet when we attempt to keep the old law, Paul clearly says we are fallen from grace, and therefore, lose the only way any of us can be saved. As one would expect, this new law is much more glorious and the provisions much better than the old. The law was so glorious that when it was given to Moses, the children of Israel could not even look upon his face because of the glory (2 Corinthians 3:7). **For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.** In this context, that which is passing away was the ministry written on stones, in other words, the Ten Commandments. Paul further declared in Ephesians 2:15, **Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.** Notice that in both passages, we have the clear statement that the old law was passing away or was abolished, and that would include the Ten Commandments.

Why would God give a law that was defective, that is, not provide what was needed, forgiveness of sins? The law was not really defective. It did what it was designed to do, bringing a consciousness of sins and bringing men to Christ who can give life. The problem was not in the

law. The problem was the weakness and sinfulness of man, who was not able to keep the law.

Since the old law has been taken away, we cannot go back to the provisions of the old law for authority for what we practice in religion today. None of the law is in force, including the Ten Commandments. This means that several common religious practices today have no authority, because the only authority is found in the Old Testament. This includes a priesthood, tithing, observance of the Sabbath day and instrumental music. This is why no animal sacrifices are offered today. We cannot just pick and choose which commands we want to bring over into the new covenant. In fact, if we keep one law we are obligated to keep the whole law (Galatians 5:3). We should not even want to keep any of the old law, since the new is far superior. In the next lesson we will discuss some of those superiorities.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. When did Jesus say the law would pass away?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, "It is finished?"
3. When does a person's will take effect?
4. When did Jesus' will take effect?
5. How glorious was the Law of Moses?
6. Name some common religious practices of today that can only be found in the Old Testament.
7. List some things we do differently under the New Covenant than was done under the Old Covenant.

True / False

1. Since we are no longer living under the old law, that law is of little value to us today. True / False
2. At the cross the new covenant replaced the old covenant. True / False
3. The fact that there is a new covenant implies the old has passed away. True / False
4. The Ten Commandments was not part of the law that passed away at the cross. True / False
5. The only thing wrong with the old law was that man was weak and not able to keep the law. True / False





SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT



There are several ways in which the new covenant is superior to the old covenant, and we will not be able to fully discuss them all. The writer of Hebrews gives a good discussion of this matter, so look at some of the differences that he mentions.

Better Priesthood

The old covenant provided for a priesthood that offered sacrifices on behalf of the people. The people were not allowed to approach God directly; rather, they had to bring their sacrifices and offerings to the priest who would then offer them to God. These priests were taken from the tribe of Levi, and the High Priest was ordained from descendants of Aaron. These priests were ordinary men with their failings and weaknesses. That allowed them to fully sympathize with men, since they were men. As we read in Hebrews 5:2-3, **He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sin.** Since the priest was sinful, just like everyone else, he had to first offer a sacrifice for himself, then he could offer a sacrifice for others.

Under the new covenant, however, we have a much superior high priest, Jesus. **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need** (Hebrews 4:14-16). We also have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses, because He became a man and was also tempted just as we are. However, He never succumbed to temptation; He never sinned. **He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens, who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself** (Hebrews 7:26). Thus, His priesthood is much superior to the old.

Better Promises

This new covenant is inward and spiritual. **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts** (Hebrews 8:10). The first covenant was written on tablets of stone, but the new covenant is written on our hearts. This doesn't mean that God directly puts His word into our hearts. Knowledge still comes from study and teaching. **It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me** (John 6:45). Notice we must continue to hear and learn from God's word, but now this Word is written on our hearts. Under the old covenant, one was physically born subject to its provisions, then later he was taught about God. Now, one learns and

submits to God from the heart first, then he becomes a subject of the kingdom of God. Until the contents of God's word becomes heart-inscribed, it is powerless.

We now have a closer relationship with God. **I will be their God, and they shall be My people** (Hebrews 8:10). These words are not new, as they are also found in **Leviticus 26:12**. Nonetheless, it now has a much fuller meaning. The old actually put a great distance between God and His people. This was illustrated by the veil in the temple and the priesthood. Now all can approach God directly. All Christians, men and women, of all nations are equal to the Old Testament priests. **The Lord is at hand** (near) (Philippians 4:5). We can have the **peace of God, which surpasses all understanding** (Philippians 4:7).

None of them shall teach his neighbor and none his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them (Hebrews 8:11). As I have previously stated, under the old covenant one was born of the flesh into the old covenant. Later he would be taught the terms of the covenant. For many, it was more of a family or national custom than a personal commitment. Many never learned and took to heart God's teachings. In the new covenant we come to know God by being born spiritually before we can enter the covenant (John 3:3,5). The new covenant is also available to all men of all nations, whereas the old was made only with the people of Israel.

Better Sacrifice

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless

deeds I will remember no more (Hebrews 8:12). Real forgiveness is one thing the old covenant lacked. **It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins** (Hebrews 10:4). The blood of the old sacrifices pointed to the Lamb of God **who takes away the sin of the world** (John 1:29). The Old Testament sacrifices brought a "remembrance" of sins, not a full remission of sins (Hebrews 10:3). In Christ however, God remembers our sins no more. Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice, Himself. **Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation** (Hebrews 9:28). **By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all** (Hebrews 10:10). Jesus provided the one sacrifice for all men and all ages. It does not have to be repeated over and over as did the animal sacrifices of old.

Conclusion

As we have seen, there are several advantages to this new covenant over the old. There are others that might also be mentioned, but this is sufficient to show that Christ is truly the Mediator of a better covenant. Each of us should make sure we are members of this new covenant and never leave this covenantal relationship for anything else. The entrance terms of this new covenant are simple: faith in Christ and a confession of that faith (Romans 10:9-10), along with repentance of our sins and baptism into Christ for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:36-39).

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. From what tribe did the priests come under the old covenant?
2. Why is Jesus a better High Priest than the priests under the old covenant?
3. God's word is now written in the _____ and _____ of His people.
4. To what did the animal sacrifices of the old covenant point?
5. Through what are we sanctified today?

True / False

1. The priests of the old covenant was superior because they were just like us. True/False
2. Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses, because he lived as we do. True/False
3. This new covenant is mainly inward and spiritual. True/False
4. The only way to be subjects of the old covenant was to be born physically into it. True/False
5. Under the new covenant, we come to know God and are born spiritually before we become subjects of the covenant. True/False



Comparison of the Two Covenants:

Old Testament	New Testament
First, Heb. 10:9	Second, Heb. 10:9
Old, Heb. 8:13	New, Heb. 8:13; 9:15
High Priest on earth, Heb. 5:1; 7:23	High Priest “in the heavens,” Heb. 8:1
Priests from Levi, Heb. 7:11	High Priest from Judah, Heb. 7:13-14
Priests died, Heb. 7:23	High Priest Lives Forever, Heb. 7:24
Lawgiver: Moses, Mal. 4:4	Lawgiver: Jesus Christ, Jam. 4:12
Mediator: Moses, Exod. 20:19	Mediator: Jesus Christ, Heb. 9:15; 12:24
Inferior Covenant, Heb. 8:7	Better Covenant, Heb. 8:6
Inferior Promises, Heb. 8:6	Better Promises, Heb. 8:6
Imperfect, Continual Sacrifices, Heb. 9:9; 10:1-4	One Perfect Sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
Animal Blood, Heb. 10:4	Christ’s Blood, Heb. 9:12
No Forgiveness of Sins, Heb. 10:4, 11	Forgiveness of Sins, Heb. 9:15; Acts 13:38
Dedicated with Animal Blood, Heb. 9:19	Dedicated with Christ’s Blood, Heb. 9:18-28
Conscience of Sins, Heb. 10:1-3	Conscience Cleansed of Sins, Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 3:21
No Boldness before God	Boldness before God, Heb. 10:19
For One Nation, Mal. 4:4	For All Nations, Matt. 28:19-20
Temporary, Gal. 3:19	Last Covenant, Gal. 1:6-9

Old Testament	New Testament
Physical, Heb. 9:10	Spiritual, John 4:23-24
Shadows & Figures, Heb. 9:24; 10:1	Reality, Heb. 8:1-5
Purify Flesh, Heb. 9:13	Purify Soul, 1 Pet. 1:22
Glorious, 1 Cor. 3:9-10	More Glorious, 1 Cor. 3:9-10
Written in Stone, 1 Cor. 3:7	Written in Hearts, Heb. 8:10
Passed Away, 2 Cor. 3:11	Remains, 2 Cor. 3:11
Taken Away, Heb. 10:9	Established, Heb. 10:9
Abolished, Eph. 2:15	Permanent, John 12:48
Delivered from It, Rom. 7:6	Provided Once and for All, Jude 3
Blotted Out, Col. 2:14	Grounded & Settled, Col. 1:23

*** Chart compiled by Louis Rushmore**



TWO WOMEN AND TWO LAWS



In an effort to fully explain the two covenants, Paul used the imagery of two women, Hagar and Sarah, in Galatians 4:21-5:1. In this lesson, I want to look at this allegory so each of us can come to a better understanding of the relationship of the two covenants. First, we need to look at the context. Galatians was written to Jews, who were tempted to go back to the familiar, go back to living under the law. Jews prided themselves on being fleshly descendants of Abraham, and because of this, they considered the promises and blessings of God to be theirs. However, Paul reminds them that Abraham had two sons; one was the son of promise, and one was the son of a slave woman. One received the blessings and one did not. Thus, simply being a fleshly descendant of Abraham was no assurance of God's blessings. In this illustration, Hagar represents Mt. Sinai and the law given thereon, and Ishmael represents the Jewish nation with earthly Jerusalem as its center and worship. Sarah represents the new covenant enacted at Calvary, and Isaac represents everyone who by faith in Christ become members of that new covenant.

Birth

Ishmael was born under perfectly natural conditions. He was the result when Abraham tried to help God fulfill His promises without

relying on the power of God. There was no promise associated with his birth. The nation of Israel is the son of the flesh, and her blessings are largely physical in nature. One was born physically into the old covenant. Membership was hereditary, from flesh and blood.

On the other hand, Isaac was born by supernatural principles. His mother was Abraham's wife, Sarah. His birth was natural, but God intervened in order to make his birth possible. His birth was the result of a promise of God and the offspring of faith. The descendants of Isaac are the spiritual recipients of God's promises, which are largely spiritual in nature. In the book of Romans, Paul often distinguished between fleshly Israel and spiritual Israel. Isaac symbolizes spiritual Israel, who are born spiritually with the new birth, **who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God** (John 1:13). When Nicodemus came to Jesus, He talked to him about the new birth, and that a person must be born again, born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3,5). Thus, this birth was a spiritual birth in contrast to the fleshly birth of the old covenant.

Condition Under Which They Lived

Hagar and Ishmael were slaves. They represent the law given on Mt. Sinai, in other words, the Ten Commandments. This covenant is referred to as a yoke, which their fathers were not able to bear. As long as we remain under the old covenant, we are slaves to sin and this world.

Sarah and Isaac were free. Christ's covenant given at Jerusalem makes us free. **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us**

free (Galatians 5:1). In Christ we are free from the Law of Moses, but not free from any law. We are now free to serve God out of grace and not of law. Now we can be saved by grace and faith and receive forgiveness of sins, which was not possible under the old law. The liberty means freedom from sin, not the freedom to sin.

Spirit of the Two Sons

Ishmael possessed a slavish, persecuting spirit. At the weaning of Isaac, Ishmael mocked and persecuted Isaac. This had a meaning for later spiritual Israel, the church. It was largely the Jewish nation that persecuted Christ and His church.

Isaac was a suffering, humble and spiritual man. No sooner had Christ's church begun than persecution from the Jewish leaders broke out. **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution** (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul wants the Galatians to see that these Judaizing teachers were really their enemies.

Final End

Ishmael was not an heir; he was only entitled to a slave's portion. When Ishmael mocked Isaac, it was observed by Sarah, so she persuaded Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son. Why was Ishmael cast out? Because he would not inherit with Isaac. This meant that the old covenant was taken away. The blessings to the Israelites were limited to earthly Canaan. They could be saved eternally, but that was not a part of the Old Testament law. Salvation did not come by keeping the law.

Isaac as the son of promise was the only one to inherit Abraham's estate. This represents the church, who is a joint-heir with Christ. **And if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together** (Romans 8:17). As Christians, we have been made free from bondage. **So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage** (Galatians 4:31-5:1). As we have seen, part of the blessings of the new covenant is forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. To go back under the law is to go back under bondage.

Conclusion

There are two covenants, the old covenant given at Mt. Sinai through Moses and the new covenant given by Christ and enacted at the cross. We have seen the new replaced the old and to go back under the old covenant is to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4). We cannot keep both. To add anything to Christ and His law, the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), is to diminish Christ and lose the blessings associated with that covenant.

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. Why were Jews so confident that God's promises and blessings were theirs?
2. What do Hagar and Ishmael represent?
3. In this illustration, who are the descendants of Isaac?
4. What does it mean to be free in Christ?
5. What was the meaning of Ishmael being cast out?

True / False

1. Isaac's birth was natural, but brought about supernaturally by the power of God. True / False
2. In the beginning it was largely the Roman Empire that persecuted the church. True / False
3. The blessings of fleshly Israel were limited to the land of Canaan. True / False
4. As spiritual descendants of Isaac, Christians are now joint-heirs with Christ. True / False
5. If we are truly God's servants, we will not have to suffer much persecution. True / False





PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE NEW COVENANT



We have seen that the Old Covenant or the Old Testament has been taken away, and we now live under the authority of the New Covenant or the New Testament. What effect does this have on our lives? Several religious ideas that are commonly taught and accepted are only taught in the Old Testament and have no basis in the New Testament. Let us now briefly look at some of these common practices.

Observance of the Sabbath Day

Some religious groups, such as the Seventh Day Adventist Church, believe that the fourth commandment is still in force. In Exodus 20:8-11 we read, **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.** Since God rested on the seventh day and the Sabbath was instituted as a memorial of creation, the argument is made that we should thus observe the Sabbath day today and keep it holy.

The Sabbath day command was one of the commandments written on stones and Paul clearly wrote that this law was passing away. **But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?... For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious** (2 Corinthians 3:7, 8, 11). Thus, the authority for the Sabbath has passed away. The command to observe the Sabbath day was not given until Mt. Sinai, and no one observed the Sabbath until then. **You came down also on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Your servant** (Nehemiah 9:13-14). Notice that Nehemiah said the Sabbath day law was only made known to the people of Israel by Moses on Mt. Sinai. One cannot obey a law he does not know exists. Additionally, we know from early Christian writings that the church met and worshipped on the first day of the week from the very beginning.

Instrumental Music

Most religious groups use instruments in their worship to God. There is no authority for the use of instruments in worship found in the New Testament; rather, we find only the command to sing. It is true that the use of the instruments is commanded in the Old Testament, however, the Old Testament cannot be used for authority for what we practice today. Instruments, such as a trumpet or the harp, are mentioned in

heaven in Revelation, but they are not mentioned as being used in worship to God. Furthermore, Revelation is a book of symbols and figurative language. Heaven itself is spiritual, not physical, thus why would physical instruments be found in a spiritual place? The New Testament is our authority in religion, and there is no mention of the instruments in those books. In addition, the early church did not use instruments in her worship.

Tithing

Many religious groups command their members to tithe. Tithing, or giving a tenth of one's income, is commanded in the Old Testament. **And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30).** The children of Israel did not tithe as they should have; nevertheless, it was commanded of them. In actuality, if the Israelites gave as they should they gave more than a tenth.

Due to the Old Testament practice, many groups believe that we are also commanded to tithe. We are commanded to give, but nowhere are we commanded to tithe. **On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come (1 Corinthians 16:2).** Here we find a command to give, but Paul says to give as we have prospered; an exact amount is not specified. However, this does not mean that we can give very little. If the Israelites were commanded to tithe under an inferior covenant, then surely we can all agree that we should give at least that much under a much superior

covenant. Thus, even though we do not have a command to tithe, the tithe should be only the beginning of our giving, not the end. Paul commands Christians to give cheerfully and not of necessity (2 Corinthians 9:7). When one commands how much one must give, then that can easily remove the cheerful and willing nature of the gift, without which one cannot receive a blessing.

Praying Directly to God

Under the Old Covenant, men had to go through a priest when they approached God in worship. The people offered animal sacrifices, but it was the priests who actually offered the sacrifices. It was the priests who burned incense in worship. In other words, the priests stood between man and God.

On the other hand, under the New Covenant man can approach God directly. There are now no priests through whom we must go in order to reach God, because we are all priests, a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5). We do not offer animal sacrifices, but we do offer sacrifices; we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service** (Romans 12:1). **Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name** (Hebrews 13:15). Once again, we find that we offer sacrifices, but those sacrifices are ourselves. The Old Testament priests were commanded to offer incense to God (Exodus 30:8). Today, we offer incense, except the incense we offer are our

prayers. **Now when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints** (Revelation 5:8). Notice that what is emphasized is the spiritual aspect of our worship and service to God, in addition to the fact that each Christian is free to approach God directly.

Circumcision

Physical circumcision was a sign of the old covenant. Each Jewish male was circumcised physically as a sign of his covenant relationship with God. Christians also have a circumcision, but it is a spiritual circumcision, a circumcision of the heart. **In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ** (Colossians 2:11). Note that Paul identifies this circumcision as a spiritual circumcision made without hands in contrast to the physical circumcision made with hands under the old covenant. This spiritual circumcision is identified as a putting off of the sins of the flesh. **But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God** (Romans 2:29). Furthermore, Paul wrote in Galatians 5:6, **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.**

Some want to connect baptism as a sign of the covenant; however, Paul did not say that. Paul continued in Colossians 2:12, **Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of**

God, who raised Him from the dead. This spiritual circumcision takes place when we are buried in baptism. Thus, baptism is not the circumcision; rather, it is the time when God spiritually circumcises us by forgiving us of our sins. Baptism is never identified as a sign or seal of the new Covenant. Rather, the Holy Spirit is our seal (Ephesians 4:30).

Conclusion

We have briefly looked at several common religious practices that are practiced today for which we have no authority. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that people do not understand the difference in the covenants. We have also noticed a few things that we do not practice that were practiced under the old covenant, and I am sure you can think of some other differences. We must look for authority for what we practice in our service to God; however, that authority is found in the New Covenant or the New Testament. Hopefully, this study has helped you better understand the difference in the covenants, thus allowing us to rightly divide God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

Name : Enrollment No.:

Questions

1. What commandments were written on stones?
2. Where did Nehemiah say the Sabbath Day command was made known to the children of Israel?
3. What is the incense that we now offer to God?
4. What was the sign of the old covenant?
5. What is the circumcision made without hands?

True / False

1. Tithing means to give one tenth of one's income. True / False
2. There is no authority for using instrumental music in the New Testament. True / False
3. Since we have no command to tithe today, God expects us to give very little. True / False
4. Baptism is the sign or seal of the new covenant. True / False
5. What is emphasized in the New Testament is the spiritual aspect of our worship and service to God. True / False

