



Covenant



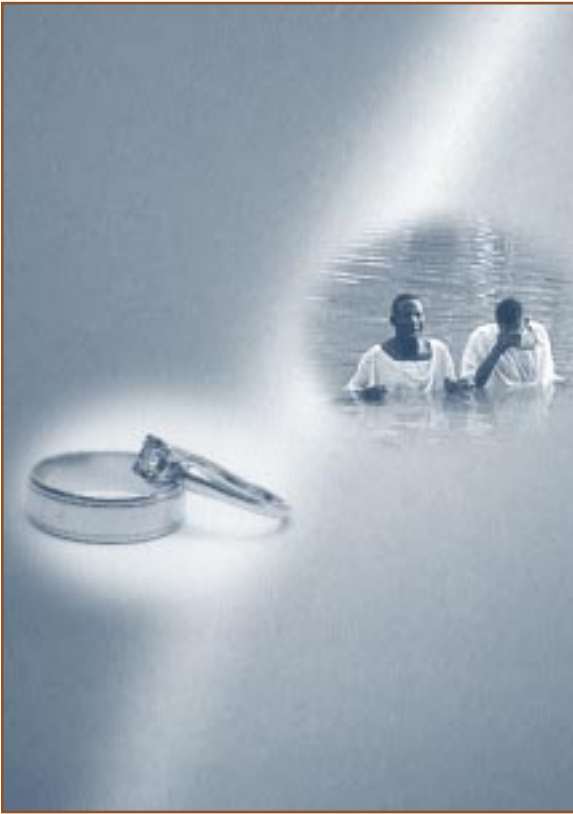
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Covenant for Life

God of the Covenants

Bible Question Box

Covenant for Life



On the cover: Three covenant signs: water immersion — the sign of the personal covenant of consecration or dedication; wedding rings — the sign of the marriage covenant, a Godly union; and, the rainbow — sign of the covenant made with Noah, in which Jehovah guaranteed to mankind that there would never again be a universal flood.

(Photographs courtesy of size-isnt-everything.co.uk)

THE THEME OF COVENANT is very strong in both the Old and New Testaments. In order to understand the Bible and God's dealings with His people and the world, it is necessary to understand the covenant principle. In fact, both the Old Testament and the New Testament are covenant documents; the word "testament" is another word for covenant. Ancient Israel was in covenant relationship with Jehovah, and the Christian church during the Gospel Age was also in covenant relationship with Him. The Jewish and Christian covenants were quite different from each other, and each was inaugurated for different dispensational purposes.

God's covenants in general are of two types: (1) *unilateral* — unconditional and binding only the originating party; and, (2) *bilateral* — conditional and binding at least two parties to the terms of the agreement. (The article following this one, "God of the Covenants," deals with five specific Biblical covenants covering the period from the creation of Adam to the end of the Millennium.)

All of God's covenants are designed to give life — that is, they secure and enhance the relationship between Himself and His people. All who approach God must do so *in the context of a covenant*.

The making of covenants dates back to ancient times. It is probably safe to say that most nations throughout history have adopted legal covenants or contracts as a means of administering matters of trade, finance, and social interaction. In Hebrew culture the making of a covenant was variously attended by the heaping of stones to form an altar, a blood sacrifice, and a meal, with witnesses to the transaction (Gen. 31: 44-46, 54; Ex. 24: 4-11). The Scriptures are replete with examples of covenants between individuals and groups. (See 1 Sam. 23: 16-18 — between David and Jonathan; and 2 Kings 11: 4 — between King Jehoiadah and representatives of the people.)

"Lift up a standard for the people" — Isa. 62: 10

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The God of the Covenants

Of necessity, God is always the superior in any covenant-contract. But unlike many covenant-contracts drawn up today, which are replete with legalese and often designed to protect the interests of one party unequally, God's covenant-contracts are designed for the long-term benefit of others. God's humility (if we may use that term) is manifest in His willingness to subject Himself to His own rules. That is to say, God deigns to provide His subjects (all other beings), with a *guarantee of His dependability*. A classic example of this is found in Gen. 22: 15-18. Having given the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be the source of blessing for the world, God further secured the promise *by His oath*. As the Apostle Paul states in Heb. 6: 13, 14, as God could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself; thus God anchored the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant promise in His own integrity, which is absolute.

Israel the Covenant Nation

The Jewish people were very conscious of their covenant with Jehovah. The Scriptures make frequent reference to God as the God of their "fathers," that is, the relationship was rooted in ancestry, renewed through the generations — an enduring treaty of friendship.

The Mosaic, or Law Covenant was a legal arrangement, a legality reiterated year by year at the Atonement Day services, and daily in the very structure of their society. The connection between the Maker God and the nation Israel is couched in terms of a marriage (Jer. 3: 14; 31: 31, 32). In fact, the Covenant at Sinai was ratified in words similar to that of a modern marriage vow, "All these things will we do" (Ex. 19: 7, 8; 24: 7). And as the Law condemned sexual contact outside of the marriage contract, *so God will have no fellowship with any of His subjects outside of a covenant*.

Justification By Faith:

A Legal State — Not a State of Mind

Faith justification is the result of a legal transaction, and is sustained by a covenant relationship. We realize that many of our Christian brethren wince at the word "legal." But, note, we do not say "legalism," the practice of attempting to earn salvation through one's works. Virtue is not won by our own efforts, for our own righteousness is like filthy rags.

However, we venture to say that without a legal covenant between God on the one hand, and His people on the other, there could be no salvation. The basis of Christ's Ransom-sacrifice is a *legal* one; the boldness with which the Lord's people approach their God springs from the security (and peace of mind) of knowing that God's word is *immutable* (Heb. 6: 17, 18).

Justification by faith is not merely an emotional experience; it is a *legal* transaction arising from the redemption of the sinner by the price paid by Christ on the cross. These terms, "redemption," "bought with a price," which

For those who fear that their sins may exhaust God's mercy, they can take heart that they cannot exhaust His justice. Because of their covenant relationship with God, they are accepted in the Beloved, who can save to the utmost degree.

sit so comfortably on the lips of the Christian are legal terms. It is this *legal* nature of justification that makes the Christian faith unique among all faiths. The Christian's fellowship with God is based on God's *justice*, the basis of absolute law. God is not a whimsical Law-giver — Justice is the foundation of His throne (Psa. 89: 14). He does not tire of His people, nor abandon us in impatience. Hence our *feelings of worth* are no indicator of our standing before God. This understanding is the greatest antidote for guilt experienced by many of the Lord's people. God has pledged Himself, by the offering of His Son, to forgive the sins of those who come to Him in faith, and He has pledged Himself to do His utmost for our salvation.

Those who fear that their sins may exhaust God's *mercy*, can take heart that they cannot exhaust His *justice*. Because of their covenant relationship with God, they are accepted in the Beloved, who can save to the utmost degree (Heb. 7: 22-25).

The security of the covenant relationship emboldened Abraham to dispute with the Angel of the Lord (some would say impertinently) as to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and gave Jacob the courage to hold on to the wrestling angel until he secured a blessing (Gen. 18: 22-33; 32: 24-26).

The Conditional Covenant

The conditional covenant invariably contained sanctions — provisions for blessings (Gen. 1: 28, 29; 2: 16 — Adam and Eve; Ex. 23: 20-33 — the nation of Israel) and cursings (Gen. 2: 17; 3: 16-19; Lev. 26: 14-17). Frequently there was a "sign," or continual reminder of the covenant, such as circumcision (Gen. 17: 9-14). Usually, there were witnesses to the making of covenants (Judges 11: 9, 10). In some instances the witnesses were inanimate, as when God called heaven and earth to testify against Israel (Deut. 4: 24-28). The perpetual nature of the moon was called to witness the Divine covenant made with David (Psa. 89: 34-37).

Unlike a promise-based covenant — which originates with one party and is therefore unilateral — a conditional, or bi-lateral, covenant provides for sanctions. For compliance to the terms of the covenant, there will be certain

For those who recognize that they are out of harmony with God and who are oppressed with a heavy consciousness of sin, the door opened by Christ's sacrifice is a welcome deliverance.

rewards; in the event of default by either party, penalties will be imposed. It goes without saying that God cannot default on His part in a covenant; but since, by necessity, all beings with whom He enters into covenant relationship are inferior and, in the case of mankind, imperfect, default is likely.

God's treatment of the defaulter is first and foremost corrective, though the treatment may be harsh. But God does not desire that any perish, and He is longsuffering. His covenant people, Israel, were many times in default of their covenant obligations and were punished accordingly. Notwithstanding their rebellious ways, Jehovah promised that they would never be cast off (Jer. 31: 37). The sacrifice of Christ, to which the Law Covenant ordinances and arrangements pointed is, in the final analysis, the refuge for the defaulting sinner. Only at the cross do God's Justice and Mercy meet, both perfectly fulfilled. The sinner is required only to look by faith and, by looking, to live.

The quality of faith is the medium through which God's covenant of grace is made with us (Rom 10: 4, 8-11). Having made a consecration to do the will of God, we oblige ourselves to live faithfully. But we are no longer judged according to our flesh, but according to the righteousness of Christ, superimposed on us according to our faith. This covenant of consecration is a covenant to life.

Covenant Signs

As noted, many Biblical covenants have certain elements in common, such as a text or a verbal statement of the undertaking; an offering (or sacrifice); witnesses to the ratification of the covenant; and a covenant meal. All of these elements were present at the ratification of the Law Covenant at Sinai. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. These details are recorded in Gen. 17: 9, 10 and Ex. 24: 1-11.

A contemporary example of the conditional covenant is the marriage contract. The marriage ceremony features many of these elements: the vow, the pledging before witnesses, a sign (the ring), and a covenant meal (the reception). The marriage contract is a good example of a bilateral covenant. For the Christian man and woman, marriage is viewed as a lifetime commitment, the pledge of faithfulness giving to each partner confidence and security, based on trust. The faithful husband is epitomized in the

book of Job as one who has made a covenant with his eyes to his beloved, and therefore will not look on another woman (Job 31: 1).

The Unilateral Covenant

The legal and constitutional nature of the covenant principle has exerted a deep influence on the development of jurisprudence throughout the world, and forms the basis of many laws which we take for granted today.

The conditional form of covenant is in frequent use in our modern world. Because of the large population and complexity of national and international relations, and the many levels of social order and interaction, there are probably more covenants in force today than at any time in man's history.

Examples of legal and moral contracts abound: a contract of sale, an agreement to repay a loan, the acceptance of license terms on installation of a software program — all of these are covenants, most of which bind at least two parties to the agreement.

However, the *unconditional* covenant is of a *promissory* nature, whereby one party pledges to another to perform some deed or other to the benefit of the other, *without any return obligation*. Of this sort are the Rainbow covenant promise made to Noah and the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 8: 20-22; 9: 9-17; 12: 1-3). We give details on these two covenants in the following article.

A pledge of loyalty to another, an avowal to be true and faithful — these are all elements of a promissory covenant. The United States Constitution (1787) is an example of a national unilateral covenant, fashioned and signed by its creators on behalf of "the people of the United States" to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

But perhaps a mother's love for her child is the highest earthly example of an unconditional promise — a mother's love does not cease. Indeed, God employs this figure to describe His love for Israel, in Isa. 49: 13-16. As with all covenants, the vow or pledge (oral or written) both binds the maker of it and gives assurance to the other party of the maker's intentions and sincerity.

It is this non-reciprocal aspect of the unilateral covenant that most illustrates God's merciful and loving disposition. He meets us on our ground and speaks to us in our language — as a mother speaks comfortingly to her child. God's love for us is unconditional, and His love shadows us even when we backslide. All of the comfort and assurance of mother-love permeates the words of the Heavenly Father to His children. And He never changes. To all eternity He will be the same God, the same Father, the same Friend to His people as at the beginning. This relationship is built upon the rock-solid foundation of Christ, by whom we take our refuge. And Jesus has said that none can pluck us from our Father's hand (John 10: 28, 29; compare Rom. 8: 31-39).

The Consecration Covenant

Nothing is more satisfying than being friends with God. Under normal conditions this is an impossibility because the entire human family, from the fall of Adam on, has been alienated from fellowship with God, and under the curse of death (Rom. 5: 12-14).

Abraham was a friend of God because of his faith. The “faith of Abraham” is used in the Scriptures to describe the faith which justifies, or sets right the sinner in God’s sight (Rom. 4: 16).

For those who recognize that they are out of harmony with God and who are oppressed with a heavy consciousness of sin, the door opened by Christ’s sacrifice is a welcome deliverance. Jesus is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” — there is no other access to saving grace (John 10: 9; 14: 6, 15; Acts 4: 12).

The response of the appreciative heart is a surrender of self-will and a whole-hearted embracing of God’s will — not an easy thing for the natural mind to do. But Jesus assures us that He does not put a heavy yoke around our necks. Rather, His service, though often onerous, is a joy and a delight to the sanctified heart. This covenant of consecration — a contract between the sinner and his God, through Christ — is a covenant to life. The present joys of the Christian life are exceeded only by the joys to come, though we serve not for reward.

Like other covenants, this very personal one is accompanied by the covenant elements, in a Christian tradition that dates back to New Testament times: the confession of faith; the sign of water immersion; and all in the presence of witnesses.

The Social Contract

Another type of covenant — increasingly broken — is the agreement made implicitly by every citizen with society at large, that one will behave honorably as a good citizen — the social contract. Our fellow-citizens have every right to expect that we will treat them respectfully and courteously, and be of assistance as needed.

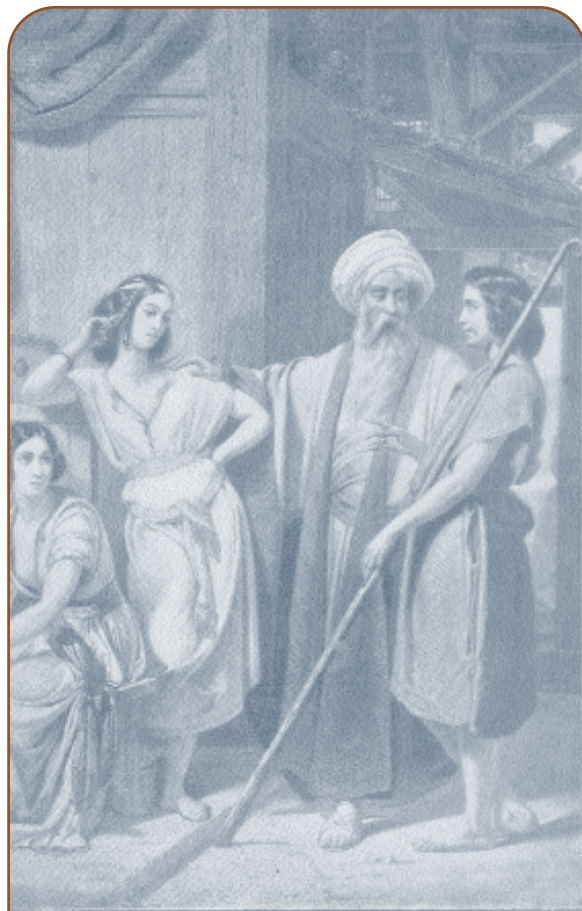
Unfortunately, this contract is frequently violated as the culture of self becomes more entrenched in the general population. The success of the social contract has always rested on the belief of each member of the social group that he or she is part of a more important whole. We are witnessing the erosion of this principle at almost every level of our social structure, in western and non-western countries alike.

It is good to see, however, that the impulse of compassionate charity is still with us to a marked degree. This was especially evident in the United States after the attack on the country last September, when there was an outpouring of sympathy and aid from home and abroad. And charitable work and concern for the fellow man is carried on day in and day out by aid agencies around the world. This is an evidence of the disposition of God in mankind (whether recognized as

Covenant of Salt

This is an Old Testament expression for a covenant, or agreement, that was supposed to be honored forever (Num. 18: 19).

Salt apparently was used as a figure of speech for binding agreements because it was a basic part of the Israelite diet and it was also used as a food preservative in the ancient world —
Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary (1995)



LABAN AND JACOB

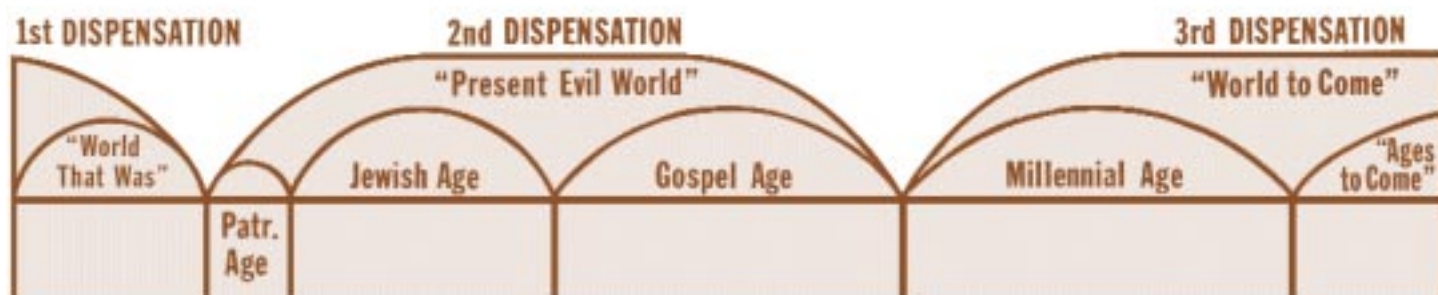
Their covenant of salt ended a bitter dispute and provided us with one of the most beautiful benedictions ever to grace the language — the Mizpah, recorded in Gen. 31: 48, 49.

such or not), and is mute testimony to the power of the original covenant fellowship which God had with Adam and Eve in Eden. This image of God in man will never be entirely obliterated.

As Christians, our contract with mankind in general, and with other Christians in particular, must always be viewed through the lens of our consecration to the will of God. Only in this way can we reflect the justice, nobility, grace, and mercy of our covenant God. Bound to Him by our personal covenant of consecration, we gain the freedom to live a life of confidence — not confidence in ourselves, but in His promise to us that He will never leave nor forsake us. As servants of our covenant God, let us endeavor to exercise the same constancy of devotion and loyalty to those around us, doing whatever we do to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10: 31).

* * *

God of the Covenants



Part 7 in our series on Habakkuk 2: 2: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."
This article covers the period from the creation of Adam to the end of the Millennial Age and shows in broad outline how God worked out His plan of the Ages through the medium of the covenant principle.

IT HAS BEEN GOD'S good pleasure to deal with His people by means of covenants. As noted in the first article of this issue, covenants generally are of two sorts: *conditional* and *unconditional*. The conditional covenant is usually *bi-lateral* in nature, meaning that there are at least two parties who agree to perform certain things to maintain the covenant relationship; the unconditional covenant is generally *unilateral*, that is, one party pledges himself to bestow a benefit on another without pre-conditions. A unilateral covenant may often be referred to in Scripture as a *promise*.

The Scriptures tell us of many covenants. In this article we will deal with salient points of the main Biblical covenants, especially those which illuminate the workings of the Divine Plan. These covenants are the:

- *Adamic Covenant* — the contract between Adam and his Maker, the breaking of which brought death to Adam and his race;
- *Rainbow Covenant* — variously referred to as the Noahic or Noachian Covenant, this is the promise made by God to Noah, his family, and all creatures of the earth, that He would never again inundate the earth with a flood;
- *Abrahamic Covenant* — the promise made to Abraham that, particularly through Sarah, his offspring would bless the whole world;
- *Law (or Mosaic) Covenant* — the agreement between Jehovah and His chosen people, Israel, that in exchange for perfect obedience to His laws He would give them everlasting life; and the
- *New Covenant* — the coming Millennial-Age counterpart to the Law Covenant, under which the resurrected world of mankind (the non-elect) will be brought to everlasting life, on condition of faithful adherence to the laws of the Kingdom of God, then in operation.

Of these five covenants, all but the Adamic Covenant depend for their fulfillment on the Abrahamic Covenant, which we may define as the over-arching or over-shadowing covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant provides for the development of the Seed of Abraham — Christ and His Elect — without which there would be no one to administer the covenant blessings. Included under the Abrahamic Covenant is the Covenant of Sacrifice, whereby the Church class, the Bride of Christ, through consecration, are brought through trials and sufferings to the Divine glory and joint-heirship with Christ. This covenant we call the Sarah, or Grace Covenant (Gen. 22: 17, 18). We will not deal with this covenant in this article.

BI-LATERAL AND UNILATERAL COVENANTS

The Adamic, Law, and New covenants are bi-lateral; the Rainbow Covenant is unilateral — an unconditional promise made by God to His creation; the Abrahamic Covenant is essentially unilateral or unconditional, except for the initial request made of Abraham by God that he quit his native land and move to another country (Gen. 12: 1-4). As already noted, the Abrahamic Covenant, which was sealed by God's oath, underpins all the others (Gen. 22: 16-18).

The Law Covenant was designed to exemplify the benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant and demonstrate the power of faith; it was, as the Apostle Paul says, a "schoolmaster" to bring "Israelites indeed" to Christ (Gal. 3: 24).

The New Covenant could not operate were the ministers for that covenant not developed under the Abrahamic Covenant. There would be no Savior, no Church, no justification by faith.

Retrospectively, the Rainbow Covenant would have been meaningless without the possibility of eternal life secured by Abraham's Seed — Christ. There would have

been no release from the sentence of death imposed upon the first covenant-breaker, Adam.

The time during which these covenants operate covers all the ages shown in the chart at the top of the page. Indeed, the New Covenant will reach into the eternal ages of joy, after first preparing mankind for sonship during the Millennial Age (Rom. 8: 19-21).

The Adamic Covenant

A perfect creation, Adam was told by God that he could eat of the fruit of the trees of life and continue his happy existence forever. Conversely, he was warned that if he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge he would die (Gen. 2: 16, 17).

There was no written covenant between God and Adam — rather it was implied. Adam was made in the image and likeness of God as a perfect being. Father Adam, created in the image of God, on the human plane, had all the rights that pertained to perfect humanity. God gave him as the right to life the privilege of perfect existence as long as he would remain in harmony with justice. He also gave him as his life-rights the privilege of having a perfect body with perfect life, the privilege of generating a race with perfect life, the privilege of perfect conditions in climate, health, food, home, air, and so forth. As long as Adam maintained his part of this covenant, God would continue him in all the rights given him as a present at his creation.

The right to life and its life-rights are, therefore, all embraced in those things that Adam as a perfect human being was given in his creation as *conditional* privileges. He would have them so long as he remained in harmony with the condition upon which they were bestowed. The breaking of this covenant by Adam is referred to in Hosea 6: 7 (*American Standard Version*): “But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.” It certainly was an act of treason to God for Adam, whose whole inclinations were bent Godward by nature, to violate them by falling into sin. For his transgression he suffered the sentence of death, being cast off from God and from covenant relationship with Him — alienated from God by the sentence of death passed upon him and mother Eve, who was found guilty with him in the transgression.

The Rainbow Covenant

The Rainbow Covenant is unconditional. (We say “is,” because it is still in effect.) It is delineated in Gen. 9: 12-17 and Is. 54: 9.

After the inundation of water from above and the uprising of water from below, and the consequent destruction of the social order and much of the topography of the

planet, Noah and his family emerged from the Ark to begin a new order. To assuage their fears and to give confidence for their future, Jehovah set a rainbow in the sky — probably the first one ever seen. And God said, “This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth” (Gen. 9: 12-17).*

The Abrahamic Covenant

The next covenant to command our attention is the Abrahamic Covenant. The passage we consider for it is Gen. 12: 1-4: “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him: and Lot went with him.”

While Abraham was yet in Ur of the Chaldees God offered to make the Covenant with him (Acts 7: 2, 3). God set conditions that had to be fulfilled by Abraham before He would make the Covenant with him. These conditions were that he leave (1) his own country, (2) his kindred, (3) his father’s house, and (4) go to the land to be shown him, which proved to be Canaan (Gen. 12: 1).

It was only after Abraham fulfilled these conditions that the Covenant became his. He had to prove by submitting to the four above-indicated tests that he was worthy of the Covenant, before God would confirm it to him. The conditions being fulfilled, God “confirmed” the Covenant to him, and St. Paul said it was 430 years after it was confirmed that the Law (Covenant) was given (Gal. 3: 17).

There was to be both a *heavenly* and *earthly* component of the Seed of Abraham. The spiritual seed, the Little Flock, the Bride of Christ, would be selected and developed during the Gospel Age; the non-elect world of mankind will be

* The frequent flooding around the world, which has commanded so much attention in the news during the recent past, does not nullify the Rainbow promise. Most floods, however severe, are local, and though destructive, do not amount to a global catastrophe as was the deluge of Noah’s day. Nor need we view today’s contemporary flooding as an indication of God’s judgment on society.

brought into covenant relationship with God by means of the New Covenant, the outworking of which is intimately connected with the Abrahamic Covenant. But before we deal with that last covenant, we look at

The Law Covenant

The Law Covenant was made by God with Fleshly Israel (Ex. 19: 1-9; 24: 3-8). It includes everything in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The covenant relationship which Adam originally enjoyed with his Maker, and its resultant harmony with Him, was contingent upon obedience to the expressed will of God, and, as we have seen, was forfeited by disobedience. This covenant relationship with God was renewed *typically* at Mount Sinai, with Israel. The inauguration of that Law Covenant was effected by their mediator, Moses, within six months after Israel left Egypt, through the sacrifices of bulls and of goats, the children of Israel solemnly agreeing to their part of the covenant.

In Heb. 8: 9, with reference to Israel, we read God's words: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." This is an allusion to the Law Covenant. Though Israel were frequently rejected by God for their rebellion, He nonetheless remained their Covenant God. He always reinstated them into His favor and gave them further trial. They remained His covenant people until the end of the Jewish Age.

In giving the Law Covenant, God made the following conditional promise: that He would give Israel everlasting life if they would obey His law. The summary of that law is given in the Ten Commandments and by our Lord Jesus Christ when He says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength . . . And . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12: 30, 31).

This required Israel to do what only the strength of a perfect man could do; and Israel collectively made the promise, not realizing the depth of its meaning. Being of fallen Adamic stock, they could not keep this covenant, but were continually violating it.

For those Jews who then and since have accepted Christ as Savior and King, the Law Covenant has ceased (Rom. 10: 4; Eph. 2: 15, 16). (The Law Covenant never extended over the Gentiles; therefore it cannot be spoken of as having either a beginning or an ending so far as they are concerned.)

The New Covenant

The New Covenant is the Scriptural name for the new arrangement between God and man which will be instituted at the beginning of the Millennial Age, at the Second Advent.

The mediation of the old Law Covenant brought Israel into a *typical* covenant relationship with God. The mediation of the New Covenant will bring not only Israel, but all mankind, who will have come into line with the Kingdom arrangements, into *actual* covenant relationship with Him. God will introduce this New Covenant through the Mediator, Christ Jesus (the antitype of Moses), in whom the entire arrangement centers, and through whom it will be carried out.

Christ will be assisted in this work by His Church. For a period of a thousand years this Mediator will do a work of mediation for mankind, including work as Priest, Prophet, King and Judge. As Priest, He will uplift and bless humanity and receive their offerings. As King, He will rule mankind in righteousness. As Prophet He will teach them. As Judge, He will test them, decide and pass sentence, favorable or unfavorable. It will require the full period to bring the people out of their condition of death and degradation, to restore whosoever will of all mankind to the image and likeness of God, lost by Adam in Eden.

The basis of mediation on the part of the better Mediator will be the "better sacrifices" of the Gospel Age: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these" (Heb. 9: 23). St. Paul is here contrasting the types of the Jewish Age with the antitypes of the Gospel and Millennial Ages. In the antitypical arrangement the sacrifices will never be repeated. They are offered once for all. By means of these "better sacrifices" the antitypical Mediator will have the power to start the world with a clean slate. Then the work of uplift, of restitution, will begin. As the Lord declares through the Prophet, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36: 26; 11: 19).

The Blessings of the New Covenant

The blessings of the New Covenant are many:

- First, all mankind will be released from the Adamic penalty, which implies that the dead will be awakened (Rom. 5: 18, 19).
- Second, they will be furnished a complete knowledge of the Truth (John 1: 9; 1 Tim. 2: 4).
- Third, they will be put under conditions conducive to righteousness, in contrast with the conditions of the present, which are conducive to sin (Luke 2: 8-10; Isa. 35).
- Fourth, their minds and hearts will be so worked upon as to be favorably disposed toward Christ (John 12: 32, 33).
- Fifth, they will be so affected by the good work then being done that they will willingly acknowledge Jesus as Ruler and bow down to His authority (Phil. 2: 9-11).
- Sixth, all will be offered the privilege of going up on the "highway of holiness" (Isa. 35: 8-10), but they will be

required, as a condition of their enjoying its privileges, to consecrate, dedicate, themselves to the Lord.

- Finally, the holy spirit will be poured out for all (Joel 2: 28).

So ultimately, the conditions of obedience and faithfulness must be met in order for the world of mankind to be counted in as the seed of Abraham and saved to everlasting life.

The ultimate victory of the Abrahamic Seed in the context of the New Covenant is illustrated in 1 Cor. 15: 25, 26, when under Christ, the devil and all evildoers, even death itself, shall be extirpated: "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." At that point, the Scripture will then apply, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15: 55, 56).

THE CURSE ELIMINATED

Adam's sin and condemnation, which afflicts all of mankind through heredity, will no more be an encumbrance. While the lessons learned by the world through their experiences with sin and death will never be forgotten, nor their benefits lost, nevertheless these experiences will cease to distress them. The joys which will then be theirs will swallow up the sorrows and tears of the past; and the minds of mankind will be filled with the wonderful truths and wonderful blessings, the glorious new projects and prospects continually opening before their widening vision. To all eternity the perfected earth will be filled with a race of happy, perfect beings in the human likeness of their Lord. The work of taking away the stony heart, and the giving of a heart of flesh will be gradual, however (Ezek. 36: 25-30).

Though many will awake to shame, in proportion to their wilfulness in past sins, the disciplinary processes of the Kingdom will gradually relieve all who are amenable to the influences of righteousness and to the work of reformation which will then proceed. By degrees their hard-heartedness will disappear, and they will become more and more tender-hearted and affectionate. No longer will any member of the human race be held accountable for Adam's sin.

The Apostle Paul points out that under the Law Covenant sin was never fully removed; for although atonement was made afresh for Israel year by year, nevertheless the inferior sacrifices could not take away sin (Heb. 10: 1-4; Jer. 31: 31-34). But Christ's ransom sacrifice will suffice to wash away sin and the condemnation of sin from all who accept Him. Then will have come the "desire of all nations" (Hag. 2-7). For this may all God's people hope and pray.

* * *

As examples of covenants which as promises are conditional on the fulfillments of certain obligations assumed by the parties to the covenants (bi-lateral covenants) we cite the Law, or Mosaic and the New Covenant.

In the Law Covenant, God and Israel entered into a contract with each other, God promising as His part of the covenant or contract to give Israel life, the right to life and its life-rights, if Israel would keep the Divinely given teachings, institutions, arrangements, *etc.* (Gal. 3: 10-12). Israel as its part of the covenant promised to keep these, if God would reward such obedience with everlasting life (Ex. 24: 3; Gal. 3: 12; Deut. 30: 15-20). These conditional promises constituted the Law Covenant in its narrow sense.

That the New Covenant consists of the promises that God and man will Millennially and post-Millennially make to one another on certain conditions is evident from Ezek. 18: 1-24; and these conditional promises will constitute the New Covenant in its narrow sense. God's two conditional covenants are contracts whose terms bind God and Israel (in the case of the New Covenant, the world of mankind is included as well) to one another.

As an example of the word covenant used in a second, or wider sense of the word, we cite the Law Covenant as consisting not only of the above-mentioned conditional promises, but also of the teachings, arrangements, and institutions that were made the basis of the covenant in its narrow sense, and that as such were obligations of the parties to the covenant (Ex. 24: 3, 7). In this sense the covenant was 40 years in its making, its first parts being:

- Certain features of the Passover, given before they left Egypt;
- The Sabbath, given before they came to Sinai;
- The features given at Sinai, where the contract, the covenant in the narrow sense, was made; and
- Those features given after they left Sinai until they were ready to enter Canaan (and numerous others in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).



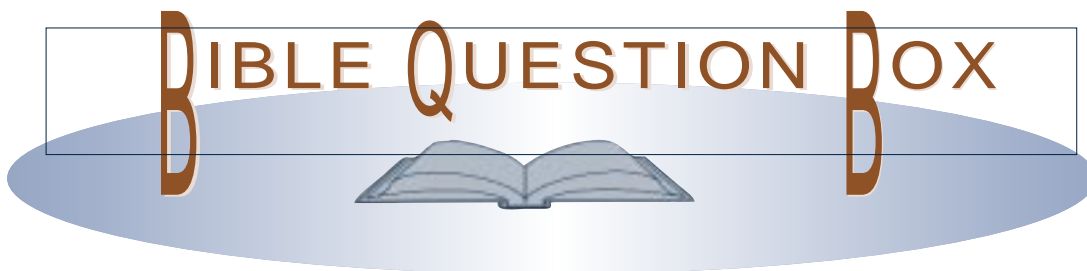
For additional information on God's covenants, order Christ-Spirit-Covenants, Vol. 15 in our Epiphany Studies series.

* * *

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* * *

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Q What does 1 Tim. 2: 1, 2 mean, with its exhortation to pray for the civil authorities? Does this not imply political support for policies we find sinful and immoral? The text reads: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

A As Christians, in this world, but not of it, we are subject to the "powers that be" (1 Cor. 7: 31; Rom. 13: 1). We are obliged to live honestly, as good citizens, and to appreciate whatever

blessings of liberty and prosperity are our birthright as citizens.

The Lord's Prayer

In the model prayer of Matt. 6: 9-13, Jesus omits supplication for the authorities of His day. In fact, in none of Jesus' recorded prayers did He pray for Caesar, Pilate, or Herod. Jesus' particular mission was to seek out His sheep, the meek of the earth — generally, these were of the lowly or peasant class, a pursuit for which He was condemned by the elite. Isaiah's prophecy says of Him (Isa. 61: 1; Luke 4: 18): "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek."

God has been at work in the world throughout history, calling out and developing His elect in an activity parallel to the secular affairs going on around them. It is this parallel, and largely invisible, salvation work which is reflected in the Lord's Prayer. *His people* — not the world — occupied His attention. Setting earth's affairs right would come at a later date when, with His glorified saints, Christ would reign as earth's King (Matt. 25: 31, 32).

As we have shown in our series on the Divine Plan of the Ages, God has various times and seasons in His plan. For most of earth's history, God has permitted secular rulers to govern affairs, occasionally subjugating His own people — natural and spiritual Israel, to their jurisdiction. God's kingdom is not of this world, but is yet to come (John 18: 36). The gigantic task of world conversion is reserved for the Millennial Age, when God, through Christ, sets up His Kingdom for the blessing of all, rulers and the ruled.

The Christian to be Subject

Though the Lord's people are at heart subject to Christ as their Master, as denizens of this world they are to put themselves in subjection to the "powers that be" (Rom. 13: 1), and to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mark 12: 17). However, this does not imply that we pray for the unregenerate to be continued in power. The simple prayer, "Thy kingdom come," expresses the Christian hope. With no malice or rebellious thought toward the governing authorities, the Christian nonetheless looks for "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3: 13).

The present order of affairs is in the Scriptures referred to as "this present evil world" (Gal. 1: 4). As such, it is an outgrowth of the rule of Satan, the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4: 3, 4). This is not to say that all heads of state, presidents, or monarchs are Satan's tools. But this world does not and cannot operate according to God's rules. No matter how benign, secular governments are not in the business of promoting Heaven's agenda.

Having said this, if we are blessed to live in an open and free society, we should be thankful for our government. Law and order under a favorable government is better than none. In the United States and other democracies, good and fair governance is more the rule than the exception, notwithstanding citizen complaints about their competence. The institutions and organizations which add benefit and stability to our daily lives — the fire and ambulance services, charitable entities, and many others — are integral parts of a society which reflect its underlying good will to its citizens.

A Quiet and Peaceable Life

The Christian's lot has, for much of history, been a difficult one. As Paul wrote to Timothy, all attempting to

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), one of the architects of the Reformation in England, held that it was the duty of every Christian to obey the monarch and that the church itself was subject to the king. As long as the monarch was ordering things for the general good, he believed the king was sent by God's providence to guide the people in the path of true religion, and that disobedience to the king was disobedience to God.

live a godly life in an ungodly world would be persecuted (2 Tim. 3: 12). Therefore it was in the interests of Church fellowship and growth that they be left unmolested. To the extent that the powers of the day could provide stability and, as wielders of the "sword" — the civil law — maintain law and order, to that extent they were to be congratulated and supported by prayer (Rom. 13: 1-7). Paul encourages God's guidance and direction over rulers to the extent that they are susceptible to godly influence and righteousness, that the welfare of His people may be promoted.

Christ died for all, high and low, those in power, and those who are not (John 3: 16). It is our obligation as Christians — and citizens of a heavenly kingdom — to preach this message. We should pray that, God willing, we will be blessed with the right conditions in which to preach the word and practice our Christian faith. In proportion as we are in harmony with the Lord, we must be in harmony with all the features of His gracious Plan, and this means a love for mankind in general, and a desire to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6: 10).

As followers of Christ, we cannot be warmongers or revolutionaries. World salvation does not lie in politics or civil disobedience. However, we are to be a witness for righteousness and try to exert a helpful influence on those around us. Those in government are individuals with normal human worries and concerns as everyone else, and and at some point in their lives may be amenable to the message that we carry.

God will move aside this present world when He is ready. We have our job to do until then. As the hymn says, "We know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future." It is true now, as it has always been, that the "most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4: 24, 25).

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announcements

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2002

At-a-glance (in alphabetical order)

France: July 26-28 (*revised dates*); November 2, 3

Nigeria: *Ikot Opubo*, August 30-September 1; *Osusu Amukwa*,
September 29; *Abia State*, Aba, November 22-24;
Akwa Ibom State, Nduetong Oku, November 22-24

Poland: *Lublin*, July 12-14; *Rzeszow*, July 15-17; *Wroclaw* July
19-21; *Bydgoszcz*, July 22-24; *Katowice*, August 16-18

United Kingdom: *Hyde*, August 2-4

United States: Pennsylvania, July 4-7; Ohio, August 23-25;
Illinois, October 4-6; Oklahoma, November 8-10

Details

United States

Philadelphia Area (Lionville), July 4-7 (Thu.-Sun): *Site: Best Western*, Route 100 (South of route 113), Lionville, PA 19353; telephone: (610) 363-1100 *Rates and Reservations:* For 1-4 people, \$71.00 plus \$5.68 tax. *Please make your reservations for all four nights through our office; and make your check payable to "LHMM."* Our address is 1156 Saint Matthew's Road, Chester Springs, PA 1942-2700; telephone: (610) 827-7665.

Athens, Ohio, August 23-25 *Site:* Ohio University Inn, 331 Richland Ave, Athens, Ohio 45701; telephone (740) 593-6661. *Rate and Reservations:* \$75.00 per room plus 12.25% tax.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

Bernard W. Hedman, General Editor

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

John Davis, Associate General Editor

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7; Hyde, England,
Convention, August 2, 3, 4; Hyde (ecclesia), August 5;
Sheffield, August 7

Carl W. Seebald

Minneapolis, September 21, 22

Ralph Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7; Springfield,
Mass., August 4; Auburn, Mass., September 8

Richard Blaine

Largo, Florida, July 21; Fort Lauderdale, Florida,
September 15

John Treble

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Robert Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7; New Haven,
Connecticut August 18

Jan Wojnar

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7; Boston, Mass.,
August 25

Leon Snyder

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7; Minneapolis,
August 3, 4

Baron Duncan

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7; Springfield,
Mass., September 1

Evangelists' Services

Tom Cimbura, Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 20;
Muskegon, Michigan, July 21; Chicago, September 14,
15

Jon Hanning, Louisville, Kentucky, July 20; Cincinnati,
Ohio, July 21; Derry, Penn., September 21, 22

Don Lewis, Muskegon, Michigan, September 7; Grand
Rapids, Michigan, September 8

Walter Markiewicz, Osoyoos, B.C., Canada, July 13, 14;
Broomfield, Colorado, August 17, 18

Harold Solomon, Pittsfield, Mass., August 11

Robert Steenrod, North Canton, Ohio, August 18

Jack Zilch, Minneapolis, July 13

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