

The Covenant of Faith

The Old and New Testaments are not contracts, they are covenants. There are important differences between the two.

A contract is a mutually agreed statement of the nature and limits of a relationship and the actions to be taken under certain circumstances should problems arise. Contracts can be written, spoken or implied but they remain a contract, a mutual agreement. A contract can be renegotiated by either party to make the agreement more practical or more agreeable to the participants. A contract can also be annulled by any of the parties involved.

A covenant is a treaty, a peace treaty, or a last will and testament. Peace treaties are declared by a king, or nation, from a position of power, to impose conditional promises on the parties seeking peace, so that they can live in peace within the rules of the covenant. The promises are fulfilled if the opposing side, with whom the covenant is made, surrender, receiving the promises and the conditions that activate and support those promises and live within them. A covenant can also be a last will and testament which is opened on the occasion of the author's death. The testament sets out the will of the author in dividing up their assets, the inheritance the beneficiaries will share. In Jewish tradition the eldest son, the firstborn, takes a double share, the remainder is divided up equally between the remaining sons of the Father. It is the elder son's responsibility to ensure all the sons are treated fairly and equally. A covenant is sealed until the death of the benefactor, it can only be changed by the Author.

In the case of the **Old Testament**, which is the Law of Moses, the covenant was a peace treaty. It was not intended to be permanent but rather an interim arrangement until the covenant of faith, promised to Abraham (Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 3:11), was implemented through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Covenant did not deal with sin, it made provision for repentance and sacrifice to cover the sin, with the perpetrator providing the sacrifice from his own resources or paying for it. In all cases it was a blood sacrifice, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Everything about the Old Covenant was related to the earth, under the first Adam. It was time limited and depended on the sacrifice of living animals. It was bound within mortality, and atoned through death. All sacrifices had to be living, the life was in the blood and blood had to be shed for the sacrifice to be effective. When Adam confessed their nakedness, God covered them, not with a fig leaf, but with the skins of animals, the first sacrifice for sin. This is why Caan's sacrifice was unacceptable to God, it was not living and it was not of blood.

The germ of sin was still present in the Israelites despite the Law. The Law of Moses served to identify sin to the Israelite so that they could avoid it or redeem it. We can only be set free from sin through faith in the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only He could bring the eternal atonement for Adam's fall into wilful disobedience and the far reaching consequences that it would bring for all of creation.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13).

The Law, the Peace Treaty, also established a lifestyle that would facilitate the twelve tribes living together in harmony with God and with one another. But no matter how stringently they observed

the Law the cycle of sin and death was still in operation and evident. The Law of Moses is referred to by the Apostle Paul as the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 15:56).

The peace treaty between God and His chosen nation, Israel, was reinstated every year on the Day of Atonement, according to the rituals for renewal contained in the covenant. The penalty for disobedience in fulfilling the conditions of renewal was the death of the High Priest, it was his responsibility to ensure strict obedience to the covenant and to the rituals that established their atonement. The treaty was sealed with the blood of animals, it had to be a living sacrifice, the life in the blood surrendered for the death penalty of sin, as set out in the covenant. It was only current for that year. Within the covenant was the provision for repentance and sacrifice for every person who stepped outside of the Law during the year, but wanted to remain under the protection of the Covenant.

Paul told the Galatian Church that the Law was the schoolmaster to bring the Israelites to Christ, it taught them to live holy lives, led by God's commands, but they shunned Him, saw the Law as an imposition. God set them free from Egypt but that freedom was to serve Him, the Israelites wanted to be free to do as they liked, not to be subject to another Master. God separated the Israelites from the rest of the world, ensuring the bloodline was clean, ensuring their spiritual inheritance remained separate. There was to be no opportunity for them to be sidetracked into the worship of false gods and they would live exclusively in obedience to Gods' prescribed lifestyle. Israel is a type of the Church and we too must be separate, we are in the world but not of it. We are not under satan's government of darkness and must not surrender to it.

'if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 John 1:7).

Being of the world is to continue thinking and acting according to the dictates of our earthly mind, our instincts, and making our own decisions, not receiving God's counsel. Indeed, the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ is to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), to be led and counselled by God.

Everything of which the Tabernacle was constructed, everything contained within it, the construction materials, furniture, rituals and observances, and the Levite priesthood that administered it, the clothes they wore, even the layout of the camp around the Tabernacle, ordered by God, which was in the shape of the cross; all are types and shadows of Christ or the Church.

The Law of Moses enabled the Israelites to have an exclusive relationship with God and sets out the terms, conditions and promises attached to the relationship, to maintain their peace with God, their obedience to God, to the peace treaty God made with them. God gave Moses all he needed to enact the treaty with Israel on God's behalf. When we consider the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, detailing all that the Israelites must do to develop their relationship that God had made available to them, we see it is an awesome, miraculous, even meticulous, treaty to bring them into the love of God, His presence. Regrettably they did not endure their testing and purification in the wilderness, they repeatedly, wilfully, broke their commitment to God. They grumbled and complained, as time progressed they changed the peace treaty to make it more acceptable to them, cheapened God's love, and the peace He gave them, by not meeting the terms of their sacrifice for peace, to become one with God; as a wife is

to her husband, a love relationship. The commitment and goal is the same in the New Testament. They honoured Him with their lips but their hearts were far from Him. Therefore, through Jeremiah, God unveiled the new covenant with His people (Jeremiah. 31:31-34), a covenant that would be written on their heart. Isaiah gave us the detail of how it would be accomplished.

The peace treaty was not the end, and was never intended to be, it was an intermediary solution to keep God's chosen people in the grace of God until He brought forth His Son to destroy the works of the devil and the kingdom of darkness Satan had established. It has always been God's plan to demonstrate to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God through the Church (Ephesians 3:10). It was established before time, as God declared through Solomon (Proverbs 8:22-36, wisdom is the manifest Word of God), then through Job (19:25); Moses (Genesis 3:15), Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5,6), and then through Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi and others of His prophets.

We must be careful when reading the Old Testament that we do not appropriate the Law of Moses to ourself, observing its customs and practices. We must not live in obedience to any part the Law. It is a subtle trap, our freedom in Christ is not found, nor enhanced, in the Law of Moses nor the rites, rituals and celebration of feast days associated with it. Jesus fulfilled the Law once for all, we do not need to continue to fulfil it. In fact to do so is to practice Messianic Judaism, which infiltrated the early Church and was a constant thorn in the side of the Apostles. The Judaisers, wanted to 'add' to what Christ has done through His death and resurrection. The Judaisers thought that Christ's sacrifice was insufficient, inadequate without parts of the Law to support it. This is the most grievous offence to God, for if we keep any part of the Law we are debtors to it and must keep all of it, rendering the mercy and grace of Christ's salvation ineffective for us. Jesus paid our debt in full, even keeping the feast days is a problem for these celebrate the Law and served to regulate the life of the Israelites.

The Law is a curse for Christians and Paul clearly talks about this in Galatians 3. The Law is not of faith in the Son of God through the Holy Spirit but of ritual and observances of the flesh. The promise to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ, is that the just shall live by faith through obedience to the counsel and leading of the Holy Spirit: this is the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit ministers in us what He hears spoken to Him from the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the same Spirit that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Father, He proceeds from the Father (John 15:26), and so we see the Father also. The Holy Spirit is not an external agent of God, revealing in us spiritual truth that He observes from the outside as a servant would, He is the Spirit of God, His very nature, what in Greek is known as God's 'character'.

The **New Testament** is sealed with the blood of Jesus, our eternal Redeemer Saviour, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). It is a blood covenant with Jesus, sealed with His blood which makes us blood brothers with Him. That is of special significance, which we will discuss in more detail later. It is the Last Will and Testament of God's promises on the death of His Son. It is marked in the opening of the first seal of the Book of the Seven Seals at the start of Christ's ministry. The second seal is the satanic opposition to Christ and His ministry. Take note and understand: 'He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth' (Luke 11:23).

As said previously, covenants can only be replaced by a higher covenant, sealed by the Author of the Covenant that it replaces. There can be no greater sacrifice than the beloved Son of God, sacrificed for our salvation. He is irreplaceable and stands as the risen Christ, the testimony of our life in Christ, of the righteousness of God that He has given us in Christ, defying and defeating death and the sting of death which is sin. Through the New Testament God through Christ has dealt with sin and abolished death for all who fully trust in Christ. The better covenant, founded on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

[God] *'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'* (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

The New Testament has declared the promise that the Old Testament was not ordained to do, which was to defeat satan and the curse of sin and death once, and for all who call upon the name of Jesus as Saviour. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son cleanses us from all sin if we walk in the light (1 John 1:7). God told me very early on in my walk with Him, that when reading God's promises we must also take careful note of the implications of not fulfilling our part in His promises, all of God's promises are conditional and require our engagement and participation. Our walk with the Lord is far from abstract. The implication in 1 John 1:7 is that if we do not walk in the light as He is in the light then we cannot rely on the cleansing power of Christ's blood. As a consequence of wrong teaching there are many Christians today who are living outside of the covenant, not walking in the light, but think they are safe anyway.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the living and faithful witness of God's great love, tearing from top to bottom the veil separating us from God's presence, giving us open access into the Father's glory, fulfilling every prophecy, every promise made by God to man and creation. The New Covenant is a better covenant, eternal: founded in the Spirit, founded on better promises in as much as the promises are spiritual, not earthly, and sealed with the blood of Jesus, the Holy Lamb of God, not with the blood of animals.

If we seek to amend God's covenant because we think the Word of God is outdated or inadequate, questioning the power of the blood of Jesus, the virgin birth, the miraculous power of God working today or our overcoming of sin through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony, we are breaking His covenant with us, stepping outside of His grace. God did not intend for man to continue to live at the mercy of sin but mercy would overcome sin in man and fully equip man in holiness through God's mercy. He whom the Son sets free is free indeed, in reality, not notionally but we can actually be free from sin when we recognised temptation and the role it plays in our fall into sin. Yes we have an advocate with the Father, but as John tells us we can call on Him IF we sin. John does not accept sin as part of our life and neither should we. We are being conformed to Christ's image and He walked the earth without sin. Is it beyond the power of God to accord us His overcoming power as He has promised?

God will not forsake us, but the important question is will we forsake Him, as the Israelites forsook Him. They hardened their heart rather than come to Him and be quickened, made alive, in their spirit. The arrogance of man in his pride thinks that his ideas are better than God's, that God must be out of touch and not understand the perils of modern living. The real issue is that God's

covenant of spiritual safety for all who enter the Ark of Promise is ineffective without the loving trust, the faith, to wholeheartedly enter into it, for without faith it is impossible to please Him. In the days of Noah the flood overwhelmed those hammering on the door having realised that Noah's word of prophecy, the judgement of God, was happening before their eyes, just as much as those who had continued living recklessly were unaware of the peril about to befall them. God has promised and gave a sign, that He will not judge with water again, but with fire. The redemption and salvation we enter into through the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to avoid the fire of judgement coming upon the earth as the seventh seal is opened and then the judgement of the Great White Throne.

The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus does not rely on a set of rites and regulations, it is actioned by God's commands to which we are bound with love, following the counsel and leading of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to the Church, the very reason Christ prayed and our Father sent Him. Man's answer to God is not to live by faith but to live by a set of rules, the boundaries can be seen, they set recognisable limits in our fleshly world, just like we have social standards and legal rules. The 'christian' extension of this lifestyle is religion, in fact a form of Godliness which denies the power of God: just the sort of christianity satan loves us to have. Without the power of God there is no overcoming, we are weak, in the power of our own strength. Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).

Not by wealth, earthly courage and ability, the strength of an army, nor by physical strength, cunning and ingenuity, but by the Spirit of Almighty God.

All of that which God established through Moses was a type and shadow of God's eternal plan, His last will and testament. The Tabernacle in which God now dwells is not a construction of earthly substance but a temple of the living God made without hands, strictly to God's design and is not a type of Christ but made in Christ's image. The Law of the Spirit of Life is not by rote but by revelation, our spirit being risen from the dead to form us once more in the image that God intended for man, filled with His Spirit, very man. The Church is not a gathering of people in a building but the people themselves, carrying the glory of God with them. It is not a liturgy of rituals but a love relationship received and undertaken by faith, reflecting the nature of Christ. In every way this New Testament is different from the Old, but man reverts back to rules and regulations, persecuting those who do not adhere to the stricture of dogma adopted by each church denomination. It should be noted that most of these christian denominations came out of a move of God, what we now call revival. People that God moved upon to bring about a greater revelation of Himself, starting with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

See, we are not a religious organisation, we are a spirit-filled organism: the Body of Christ. We feel our way, led by the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, not blindly being led but walking in the light of God, where faith is essential. Faith brings light, without faith we walk in darkness. This covenant is the New Testament which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, He is perfect and His covenant is perfect (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:8-13; 9,15; 12,28). The letter to the Hebrews was written to the Jews in Rome who wanted to add rites of the Law into Christ's redeeming sacrifice to make it acceptable to them, but it was not acceptable to God. Christ's sacrifice and resurrection totally fulfilled the will of God, and all that is Christ is the foundation of His covenant. God's word is Truth, any changes made cause it to be unTruth, a lie, just as satan did with Eve to beguile her, to hold her captive.

Hebrews makes the comparison with the Law of Moses and the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. The first of the flesh, therefore limited by time which is of the earth, day and night, only giving a cloak for sin, to cover it until the time of the revelation of Christ the Redeemer was come. The Law truly was a peace treaty until the Last Will and Testament of God our Father could be revealed and the sons of God made partakers of His inheritance. This last is of the Spirit, which is eternal, the eternal Redeemer Saviour, the Christ, declared as Wisdom, the manifest Word of God, in Proverbs 8.

Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 12:24). The blood He shed on Calvary, symbolised in the wine of the Lord's Supper is 'the blood of the New Covenant' (Luke. 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Both Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 and the writer to the Hebrews in Hebrews 8:6-10;18 demonstrate various ways in which this New Covenant is superior to the Old. It has better promises, it is eternal not an annual restatement, its glory will never fade.

Above everything else, this covenant is sealed with the blood of Jesus, it is a blood covenant and makes us blood brothers with Jesus. As sealed between Jonathan and David. It can only be broken by the death of one of those who have sworn the covenant. Jesus cannot suffer and die again, therefore the only way we can break the blood covenant is our death, our spiritual death (Hebrews 6). He who endures to the end will be saved. We cannot just change the covenant to suit our circumstances or walk away from it without it causing our spiritual death through that separation. We must understand that all God's promises are conditional. There are those who steadfastly stand by God's promise to never leave us nor forsake us. It is a definite promise and provides wonderful assurance. That is His promise to us, His side of the covenant. On our side we must be just as steadfast and faithful and if we choose to leave God, forsake Him, then if that separation is not repented of and is permanent we will lose our salvation.

To know God and for Him to know us is to walk in the Spirit. If we are totally immersed in God and remain in Him, as pickled onions in a pickle jar, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, then we become like Him, His Spirit is infused into us and the Fruit of the Spirit is evident in us. This is the fragrance that God seeks, the sweet smelling savour that He recognises instantly. We are opened up to Him, He comes and fills us with Himself, this is the fruit by which He knows us.

God's promises are for our good, for our spiritual health, and to take one we all know well I refer us to Psalm 23, there a number of promises there relating to our close fellowship and leadership in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, but it all hinges on one thing: the Lord is my Shepherd. A shepherd is responsible for His flock but they must be obedient to His will and to His leading. Sheep follow the shepherd, they cling to him and hear his every word. God's promises can also be for correction, to bring us to obedience, and we see this amply demonstrated in the letters to the seven Churches in Asia, dictated to John by Jesus Himself. We see His comments to Ephesus about retaining their first love of him and the consequences if they do not seek Him afresh and restore their first love. Of course, when we start to seek Him, He brings us to Godly sorrow and repentance, restores us in the beloved and our love relationship flourishes in Christ once more. But if they overlook it, considering their desire to be doctrinally correct is more important than the passion we need to share with Him, then He will remove their candle. When John first sees Christ in the vision He is standing among the candlesticks and they represent the seven Churches, each with its one light, so there is not doubt about what His words mean. They will be separated from Him, His light in them will be extinguished. They will no longer walk in His light. There are other

messages to other Churches which are equally direct, but let us go to the Church in Laodicea as this is a very graphic illustration. They are a fleshly church, they have enough of everything they need, it is an archetypal middle class church where it would not matter if the Holy Spirit did not turn up to their services they would manage on their own, in fact they did. Jesus was knocking on the door but no-one would let Him in. He asked them to let Him in: 'if' any man hear His voice and open the door He will come in and eat with him and he with Christ. Inviting to eat together is an act of relationship, an act of trust. We trust those who prepare our food not to poison us but to feed us with nourishing wholesome food and so God does. Now Jesus told them that He would spew them out of His mouth, that is projectile vomiting, so forceful would be the ejection. That sort of reaction in our mortal body would be the result of something toxic in our body needing to be expelled and all the poison with it, to avoid it infecting the whole body and causing a dangerous toxic reaction. But consider this, if He needs to vomit us out then we have been in His Body, we are part of Him. These are brethren that have been in Christ, but have taken in other spirits, taken in sin and the Body of Christ is in danger of being infected. Vomiting is the body's natural defence system.

People tell me these illustrations do not mean what I say. I am not embellishing the scripture, just saying what it says and correctly translating the Greek words. In some cases the words are so dramatic all that is necessary is to confirm the meanings.

It is important to get this right, not to prove I am right but to speak truth, which sets us free indeed. It also stops the idea that we can live as we like. If nothing will stop our salvation, put it at risk, then everything is permissible. I had one person tell me it does not matter if we manifest the works of the flesh, in that case anger. But the fruit that we manifest is what spirit we are of. Bitter waters cannot flow from a loving, tender heart. If the works of the flesh are permissible, our living in the Spirit is compromised, that cannot be.

I will finish with this. One very famous passage is in Ephesians 3 the prayer Paul prays for the Ephesian Church. There are various virtues and blessings that Paul tells us must be accomplished in us to come into the all fulness of God. An important phrase is: *'May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;* (Ephesians 3:18), you will need to read from verse 14 to the end of the chapter to get the full context. However, that word translated 'comprehend' is the Greek word: 'katalambanō', there are meanings for good and bad, clearly, in this instance, we look to good.

Firstly it means to 'lay hold of, seize and possess it as one's own', we must engage with Jesus and our Father through the Holy Spirit and receive the revelation of God, welcome Him and the work He does in our spirit. We must be prepared to live in the revelation we receive. Progress will be limited, if not halted altogether, by consistently confessing where we were, not acknowledging the new ground to which God has taken us. Joshua led Israel into the promised land but they had to take the land, possess it for themselves, clear out of it those who had stolen it, possessed it by trespass. Once having seized the land they had to put it to God's use, to do that they needed to know the will of God for them and for the land God had given them.

Secondly we come to the outcome of God's revelation in us, the work to which the Holy Spirit is bringing every born again believer who will submit to Him. The part of the meaning of 'katalambanō' that brings us to the apex of God's will for us: 'Christ by His holy power and

influence laying hold of the human mind and will, in order to prompt and govern it'. That is what Jesus confessed of His Father leading Him by the Holy Spirit (John 5:30). It is all-out our level of surrender, of separation from the government of this world, of satan. If we do not see the importance of the Holy Spirit's ministry in us to counsel and lead us, do all Jesus told us the Holy Spirit is sent for then our level of surrender will not be enough, we will be worldly and Christ's government will not be effective in us owing to our lack of faith. But God even builds faith in us if we read the scripture and pray in tongues, pray in the Spirit. He builds an edifice of faith in us (Jude 20,21), towering like a mighty oak, like the tallest sky scraper in the heavenlies. Why do I say this? Because as Paul tells us God is able to far more exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. He will do it, abandon yourself to God and prove His promises with me.



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