

## **The Three Great Covenants.**

A covenant is a ratified, unalterable agreement. God has made many covenants with man. (Gen. 6:18; Jer. 33:20, &c.) Three, however, stand out very prominently, as in them have been bound up all the best interests of mankind.

FIRST: The Covenant of God to Abraham. This covenant seems to comprehend and include a blessing on the natural fleshly descendants, as well as upon the higher, spiritual, seed, "which seed is Christ; and if ye be Christ's (body), then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to (this) promise." If this thought be borne in mind, it will assist us in grasping the full meaning of this covenant. The spiritual seed is called the "blessing seed" and "stars of heaven." It is prophesied that "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever." (Dan. 12:3). And Jesus calls himself "the bright and morning star." This thought seems to have had more weight and meaning with the ancients, who looked up the stars with superstitious reverence, believing that they controlled the destinies both of nations and of men. So probably this portion of the covenant represented by stars signifies heavenly rulers – Christ and His Bride. The natural descendants are probably meant when mention is made of "a great nation" possessing "this land" – Canaan – said to be as the "sand of the sea." This represents an earthly people as plainly as the stars do the heavenly. Let us read the covenant and see that it contains these two elements, and recognizes both natural and spiritual Israel. (Gen. 12:2,3; 13:14-16; 15:18, and 22:16-18). Paul assures us that "the seed" referred to in this covenant is Christ. (Gal. 3:16.) Fleshly Israel lost this, the cream or choicest part of the covenant – the spiritual. As Paul says (Rom. 11:7): "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it." But the losing of this better part does not cut them off entirely

from having a part in that covenant. "For brethren, that you may not be conceited with yourselves" (thinking that all of God's favor and covenant are taken from them and given to you), "I wish you not to be ignorant of this secret: that hardness in some measure has happened to Israel till the fullness of the Gentiles may come in (i.e.,) until the bride selected from the Gentiles has been completed). "And then all Israel will be saved, as it has been written, "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," and "This is THE COVENANT WITH THEM FROM ME, when I shall take away their sins." (Rom. 11:25 – "Diaglott").

Though for 1800 years they have been counted as enemies, and blinded to the gospel, yet they are still beloved for the father's sake; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (vs. 29); i.e., these earthly blessings are just as sure to them as our spiritual ones are to us, because God so promised or covenanted, and never changes. Thus, we see the breadth and grandeur of God's plan and arrangement – how the natural seed was cast aside for the time that the spiritual might be developed, who, in their turn, are to be made the instruments for blessing the natural; when "they shall obtain mercy through your mercy;" when "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion (spiritual Israel – the church) and turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (fleshly Israel). When we see this, we see the fullness of this covenant to Abraham. It shows us what God meant when he promised that Abraham's seed should be mighty, possessing the gates of their enemies (the place of power and control), and be so far above others as to be able to "bless all the families of the earth." "O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways; for who hath known the mind of the Lord?"

## **THE COVENANT OF THE LAW,**

is the second covenant we wish to consider. It was unlike the Abrahamic, in that it was conditional and two-sided, i.e., it was made between God and Israel and by its arrangements, God was bound to do certain things, if Israel did certain other things. The one with Abraham was unconditional. God said: "I will, &c." It was not so, with the Abrahamic covenant, Abraham was in no way obligated. (Circumcision was instituted after the covenant. Rom. 4:10.) It was not Abraham's covenant, but God's entirely; and for this reason it had no mediator. (A mediator is one who stands between the parties to an agreement or contract, whose duty it is to see that both parties fulfill their parts of the covenant.) Instead, God swore by himself that he would keep His covenant [See form of oath Gen. 15:8-18 and Jer. 34:18-20.] "The Law," is called a covenant. [Compare Gal. 3:17 and 4:24.] It was ordained in the hands of a mediator (Moses. Deut. 5:5) which proves that it contained conditions for its fulfillment; for "a mediator is not of one," (Gal. 3:20.) or, not necessary where there was only one party contracting as in the case of the Abrahamic Covenant.

This (the Law) was not a part of the first covenant, neither was it made with the people of the world, but only with fleshly Israel – "And Moses called all Israel and said unto them: Hear O Israel....The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, BUT WITH US, even us who are all of us here alive this day." Deut. 5:1-5.

That the Ten commandments, particularly, and the ceremonial law, incidentally, constituted this covenant, is clear from the reading of the remainder of this chapter. A difference between moral and ceremonial law is now recognized, but it is of men. God called them one – "The Law." This Law Covenant was seemingly designed as a blessing to Israel, yet really by coming under it, they condemned themselves; for it is written "cursed [condemned] is every one that

continueth not in all the words of the Law to do them." God never intended therefore, that they should be benefited by this covenant since, "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." What then was the object of this covenant? It had two objects: first, it demonstrated that the natural man as a fallen creature, could not live in harmony with God – could not do right or be righteous. And finally it was proved and illustrated that a perfect man could keep God's perfect law, when Jesus did keep it and thereby became heir legally as well as by grace, to all the provisions of both covenants.

Secondly: The law "was appointed on account of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise related." (Gal. 3:19). God knew the best time, and "in due time sent forth His Son." The law was introduced because the proper time had not come for the development of "the seed" referred to in the covenant to Abraham, and was intended to prevent Israel's becoming degraded like other nations, and to act as a restraint on their fleshly nature, and an educator of self-control, &c. It thus was a "schoolmaster," which, by showing them their own weakness, prepared them to receive Jesus Christ as their justifier from the things which the law condemned. (Gal. 3:24) And it did this very work. By the time the seed was due, it had prepared some to receive Jesus.

Thirdly: It was used as a type, not of the Abrahamic, but of the new covenant, to illustrate the operations and conditions of that covenant, as we shall soon see.

## **"THE NEW COVENANT"**

Is repeatedly mentioned in scripture. It should not be misconstrued as being God's covenant with us – "the seed;" no, that was part of the Abrahamic covenant, and although in harmony with each other, they are not the same, nor is the "new covenant" made

with the church at all. It does not come into operation until the spiritual seed as well as the fleshly children, have come into possession of what was promised them under the Abrahamic covenant.

It, like the law which was its shadow or type, is between God and fleshly men – the world. If, therefore, this covenant is between two parties (God and the world), there must be conditions binding upon both; hence there must be a mediator (as in the type) to stand responsible for the fulfillment of the conditions of both. Who, then, is to act as mediator of the new covenant? Let Paul answer: "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." [Heb. 12:24]. Yes, Jesus, our Head, is the one, and the only one, who can stand uncondemned before God's righteous law. In Him God recognizes His holy Son, separate from sinners, and in Him humanity may, and soon will, recognize their Lord, now highly exalted, but once "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;" and "who is a faithful High Priest," able to sympathize. Only through Him can the world ever be made at-one with God – His great work is at-one-ment. He will associate with Him in this work His tried and faithful bride. Now, what are the conditions of this new covenant? They are, as in its type, the law, do and live. God can never be a party to any covenant recognizing sin. Perfect righteousness ["Be ye perfect"] has always been the condition on which God recognizes or communes with any of His children. Christians in the present age, although not individually perfect are reckoned so, being hid in Christ, and as members of His body are covered by His robes of righteousness. But in the coming time, the imputed righteousness of another will not avail, but "every man shall die for his own sin" [not the sin of Adam], **[R85 : page 8]** or vice versa, live by his own righteousness [perfect obedience].

It may be asked, then: In what way will the new age under the new covenant differ from the Jewish age under the law covenant? If the conditions of life are obedience to God's perfect law, will it not result, as the law covenant did, in condemning all under it to death? We answer no, the difficulty then was, not with the law, but with man. Man, in his fallen, imperfect condition, could not keep "the law ordained to life." But the conditions of this new covenant on God's part are, that man shall be brought to a condition in which he can obey the perfect law, and always keep it in his heart, as it is written, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah....This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." "In those days they shall no more say, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge, but every one shall die for his own iniquity." [Jer. 31:31.]

"And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowl of heaven and with the creeping things of the ground and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle, out of the earth." (Hos. 2:18. See also Jer. 32:37-41, Ezek. 37:26.) We see clearly that the new covenant is yet future and also that a great change will be effected in the condition of Israel, who, under the Law previously, were unable to keep it. The trouble then was, "the fathers [Adam and his successors] had eaten the sour grape of sin, and the children's teeth were set on edge so that they could not keep the Law of God; so the "Day of Atonement" is brought in [the Gospel Age] and during it, they, and all men, are redeemed from sin and the curse, through Jesus Christ, who, by the grace of God tasted death for every man, The man Christ Jesus, holy, harmless, separate from sinners, made a curse for us, made sin [i.e. dealt with

as the sinner] for us, [he] who knew no sin." And it is consequently after the gospel age when they are pardoned freely for Christ's sake, and restored to the condition of sinless perfect manhood, that the new covenant comes into force. And to this thought agree the words of Paul [Rom. 11:27.] "This is my [new] covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins."

The nations are to be blessed also under this new covenant, by becoming "daughters" to Israel. "I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy (old) covenant." Ezek. 16:61.

We have seen that to every covenant to which there are obligations of two parties, there is a mediator, or one who stands between guaranteeing the fulfillment of its conditions. As under the covenant of the Law, Moses was the mediator, so is

### **"JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT,"**

and to him God looks for the fulfillment of the Law, and to him Israel and the world look for ability to comply with its conditions. Remember that we, the gospel church do not come to Christ under the new covenant neither under the "old" or Law covenant, but under a covenant older than either of these [Gal. 3:17.] the Abrahamic covenant; as part of "The Seed." "If ye be Christ's [body] then are ye Abraham's Seed and heirs according to (that) promise." Gal. 3:29.

As the typical or Law covenant [or "testament" – same Greek word;] was ratified or sealed by Moses its Mediator, with the blood of a bull and a goat annually, so the "new covenant" is sealed with the blood of better sacrifices" [plural] which these represented, viz: Christ – Head and body.

Moses took a bunch of hyssop and scarlet wool and therewith sprinkled of the ratifying blood mixed with water, both the book (type of the Law) and all the people. (See Heb. 9:19.) So with the

New Covenant, it must also be ratified with blood; and the mediator of the "New," gives his own blood (life,) both head and body, during this gospel day of sacrifice. And soon when the better sacrifices are complete, the people will be sprinkled with this cleansing blood and with the pure water of truth. It will sprinkle both book (law) and people, bringing the people into harmony with God and therefore, into harmony with his Law. Their teeth will no longer be set on edge; no longer will they, when they would do good find evil present with them; for "All shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest," and "The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth."

Who will do the sprinkling after the sacrifices are complete? It was Moses in the type; it will be the Great Prophet and Mediator in the antitype – "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts 3:22. This prophecy belongs to the "Times of restitution of all things," and is quoted by Peter as applicable there.

That prophet or teacher – "The Christ" – Head and body is now being "raised up" (to power) and soon the work of sprinkling and cleansing humanity begins; and the soul (person) who will not then obey and be cleansed shall be destroyed. In that age, the sinner a hundred years old will be cut off, though at that age he would be but "a child." Isa. 65:20.

Let us briefly review these covenants as they are illustrated in a type or allegory. (Gal. 4:22-31). Paul explained that Abraham's wife, Sarah, was a type of the covenant made with Abraham, referring to "The Seed." As years rolled by, and no child came, they began to look for a fulfillment in some other way, and Hagar takes the place of a wife and bears a son, who apparently is to be the heir.



So the original promise of God meant Christ, but He was not born until "due time," and in the meantime "The Law" was given from Sinai, apparently taking the place of the covenant, and under the law covenant a fleshly seed was developed – fleshly Israel. But the Abrahamic covenant had not failed, and after the Hagar covenant had borne fleshly Israel (typified by Ishmael), the true seed of Abraham and heir is born, under the first (or Sarah) covenant; i.e., Christ Jesus and the members of His body – spiritual Israel.

This is as far as Paul carries the type, because speaking only of the two seeds, natural and spiritual, and the two covenants under which they come into existence. But as we find that God is to make "a new covenant," "after those days," we naturally inquire: Why was not this new covenant typified by a wife as well as the other two? And upon examination we find it was so illustrated. Turning to Gen. 24:67, we read how Isaac receives Rebecca into Sarah's tent, and she becomes his married wife, &c., illustrating how our heavenly bridegroom will receive His bride at the end of her journey, and bring her into, and associate her with, Himself, in the enjoyment of all things promised in the first (or Sarah) covenant. Then we read: "Then, again, Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah," illustrating, as plainly as a type can, the new covenant.

Each of the first two covenants, bore but one offspring. The first, the "heir of all things," (Isaac – the spiritual Israel) and the second, fleshly Israel, beloved for the Father's sake. But the New Covenant (Keturah) bears six sons, which, taken with the one of Hagar would be seven – a complete number – representing that all the fleshly children would be developed under the Hagar and Keturah or "Law" and "New" Covenants. The name Sarah means Princess, Hagar means flight or cast out, Keturah means incense or sweet; all of which are significant.

Oh, how our covenant – the Royal – looms up above all the others. Let us not forget that we must die with Jesus, if we would LIVE and share in the glorious work of sprinkling and cleansing the world in the next age. "That by means of death ...they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Heb. 9:15.

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