

PART IX.

THE THREE GREAT COVENANTS.

A COVENANT is an agreement. God, who knows the end from the beginning, never made a covenant which he could not and will not fulfill. Covenants may be conditional or unconditional: where a conditional covenant was made, i.e., where each party to it was bound to do certain things, it was customary to appoint a mediator – a person who stands between and whose business it is to see that both parties keep their covenant. God has made several covenants, but three in particular, which we wish now to consider briefly. These are, first, the "covenant with Abraham;" second, the covenant of "the Law;" third, the "New covenant."

The first one reads: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This covenant we understand to cover two classes – Abraham and his seed through Isaac, and he whom Abraham typified – Jehovah and his seed through Jesus. The blessing comes first through the God-seed – Christ and his brethren, the church, reaching, blessing and restoring the fleshly seed first, and through them extending to and blessing all the families of the earth. Thus we see how the blessing will "be sure unto all the seed." – Rom. 4:16. Now, we inquire, are there any conditions to this first covenant? If there are – it is possible that Abraham and his seed might fail to keep their part and so the conditions and covenant being broken, God may never fulfill that covenant. But, we answer, there were no conditions. God did not say, Abraham, if you and your seed after you will obey me, I will do thus and so, but he simply tells Abraham what he intends doing. That covenant then cannot pass away, nor be altered, nor added to, – (Gal. 3:15,17,) – it must be fulfilled just as it reads. The seed must come and the seed shall bless all the families of the earth. How

much this is in harmony with the teaching of a "restitution of all things!" – Acts 3:21. If further evidence that this first covenant was unconditional be desired, it is found in the fact that no mediator was appointed; none was needed since there was only one party [R282 : page 149] (God) who covenanted anything – Gal. 3:20. That covenant was confirmed by an oath. – Heb. 6:13-18. The second covenant we wish to consider is "the Law." It was delivered to Israel at Mount Sinai. Unlike the first, it had conditions – if Israel would obey the Law, they should be "a peculiar treasure above all people:" for, says God, "all the earth is mine, and ye shall be a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." – Exod. 19:5. Then follows the words of their covenant. – Exod. 20 to 23. Moses declares, (in harmony with Gal. 3:17,) "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers [Abraham, etc.] but with us, even us who are all here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, and I stood between the Lord and you at that time." – Deut. 5:2-5.

The whole world were sinners but knew not to what extent; they knew not that they were so depraved that they could not keep God's law perfectly. And it was God's object in making the Law Covenant, to prove to Israel their own imperfection and inability to live in harmony with God. Therefore he said to them, after making the conditions of the covenant and when the people had accepted it, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments which if a man do he shall live." – Lev. 18:5; see also Rom. 10:5, and 7:7,12,13,16.

Therefore, when God made this second covenant, he knew that Israel would never realize the promises therein given, because they would not be able to keep it – all being sinners – for "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified." "That no man is justified by the Law is evident." – Gal. 3:11. But the Law was of some service to them, in that it furnished a check upon idolatry and immortality, and

thus as a schoolmaster, it prepared them for Christ and the new covenant. – Gal. 3:19, and 4:1.

The Law Covenant was ordained in the hands of a mediator – Moses; and that covenant and its mediator were a shadow, or type of the future "New covenant" and its mediator – Christ. Moses typically bought all Israel with the blood of the bullock and goat, which typically represented his own blood – life. He typically bought them and left them the conditions of the Law as a legacy. For a covenant is of force after men (the ratifiers or mediators) are dead...."When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the Law, he took the blood of bulls and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book – (the Law) – and all the people, saying: this is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you." – Heb. 9:16-20. When Jesus came he was born into the **[R282 : page 150]** world – "under the Law," and by perfect obedience to it he became the heir of all the earthly promises contained in that Law covenant – but more, he was begotten of God and was the Seed of Abraham, and as such was heir of the first covenant also. – Gal. 3:16. In the person of Jesus then, the second (Law) covenant passed away, being fulfilled: and the first – (Abrahamic) – covenant began to be fulfilled: for it will not be completely fulfilled until "all families of the earth" are blessed by Christ.

This blessing of mankind is made the basis of a "New Covenant" between God and man. This, like the "Law" covenant, has conditions, some of which bind God and some bind mankind. Mankind will be required to keep God's perfect Law. [He could not give an imperfect one – the Law given to Israel was "holy and just and good." – Rom. 7:12.] Any other Law would be unjust and bad then; consequently, God must give in substance the same Law which Jesus said was briefly comprehended in this: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." So far as man's obligations are concerned then, they will be the same under the "New" that they were under the Law covenant; the difference consisting in this, that under the "New" God will actually take away man's sins instead of typically (as under the Law.) When God actually takes man's sins away and its penalties (mental and physical imperfections and death) then, and not until then, will they as perfect men be able to keep God's perfect Law.

"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 say no more, 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. 31:29. "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. 37:12,14,26. It may easily be seen that these conditions are not yet fulfilled. The sour grape of sin still sets all mankind on edge – the law of sin, the stony heart, still remains in mankind: **[R282 : page 151]** God has not yet taken it away and given them instead a heart of flesh (perfect manhood) with his law – Love – graven thereon. The beasts and fowl are not yet in harmony with man. He was given dominion, glory, and honor, but through sin lost it almost entirely; but soon he will be restored, and all nature will recognize in man her ruler. But it may be asked – Upon what conditions will God take away and blot out man's transgressions? We answer, unconditionally: according to the provisions of the **[R283 :**

page 151] first covenant, a seed was to come, and secondly it was to bless all. The blessing is the removal of man's load of sin, through the death of the seed, who died the just for the unjust. This (third) "New Covenant" like its shadow, the Law, has a mediator, because there are conditions, and two parties to the covenant. As under the Law Covenant 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, viz., restitution. As the mediator, or testator then, Jesus must die to leave mankind the legacy – of forgiveness and restoration promised in the New Covenant. He did thus die and bought all with his own precious blood, and soon is to commence the great work of applying the blood – cleansing from all sin. As typically Moses took the bunch of hyssop and scarlet wool, and therewith sprinkled of the ratifying blood both the book (Law) and all the people, (Heb. 9:19,) so with the New Covenant, it must be ratified with blood, and the mediator gives his blood (life) and then (soon we believe) he will begin the work of sprinkling with this cleansing blood and with the pure water of truth. He will sprinkle both the book (Law) and people, bringing the people into harmony with God's law – "Love." No longer will their teeth be set on edge; no longer will they, when they would do good, find evil present with them; then, all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

But does some one inquire why the new covenant did not at once go into effect as soon as the mediator died? Why were not all the people sprinkled as soon as the blood was shed?

Ah! dear friends, that is the most wonderful part of it all: that is the part which shows "the exceeding riches of God's grace" – "his loving-kindness toward us, in Christ." This is what Paul repeatedly speaks of, as the "mystery" hid during previous ages, viz., "Christ in

you the hope of glory." – Col. 1:27. Jesus died [R283 : page 152] for and is to bless and restore all men; but before entering upon the work of restoring, he publishes among the great mass (all of whom he ransomed) the news of their ransom, and to all who have an ear to hear it he extends the privilege of taking up their cross and following him – of sharing with him in suffering evil for good, and promises these that if they do walk in his footsteps they shall be not only sharers of the sufferings, but also of the "glory that shall follow." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." We shall become heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." – Rom. 8:17.

This is the reason why the Gospel age intervenes between the death of Jesus and the blessing of the world: it is an age of death, an age during which we may if we will – "fill up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ." – Col. 1:24. We are then, joined with Christ in the sacrifice of the human life – "dead with him," and so far as the world is concerned, they are still waiting until the little flock – the members of the body of the mediator or testator (Christ) are "dead with him." We believe the sacrifice to be almost ended, and soon all who have shared death with him as members of his body shall be joined with him in the glory of power and share in the glorious work of applying the blood – cleansing the people. Moses did the sprinkling in the type and 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.

In a sense, the operation of the new covenant begins with the Gospel church, and lifts us from the plane of degradation and sin to a justified or reckoned-perfect condition, from which we can go forward in the "narrow way" becoming heirs of the first covenant. – Gal. 3:29. Let us briefly review these covenants as they are illustrated in a type or allegory. – (Gal. 4:22-31.) Paul **[R283 : page 153]** explained that Abraham's wife, Sarah, was a type of the first 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 first covenant, and under the law covenant a fleshly seed was developed – fleshly Israel. But the first, or Sarah, 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, (illustrating how our heavenly Bridegroom will

receive his Bride at the end of her journey, and bring her into possession of and associate her with himself, in the enjoyment of all things promised in the first (or Sarah) covenant.) Then we read after Isaac's marriage: "Then, again, Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah," thus 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," (Christ Jesus and we his Bride,) 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.
