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ANCIENT WORTHIES UNDER FAITH COVENANT

THE question may arise, Under what Covenant are the Ancient Worthies acceptable with God? Since they died before Christ and the opportunities of spiritual begetting, they were not favored with the high calling to membership in the Body of Christ, the elect Church. This the Apostle emphasized in Heb. 11:39,40. He informs us that they "pleased God," but that apart from us, The Christ, they shall not be made perfect. In the Divine order the Church is to be the first-fruits of God's creatures. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (Jas. 1:18.) Notice further that the Apostle's list of these includes Abel and Enoch, before the flood, and before even the Abrahamic Covenant was made. It also includes some who lived during the period of the Law Covenant, and who were therefore under it. How, then, should we classify these, as respects the three great Covenants, represented by Sarah, Hagar and Keturah?

The matter becomes very simple when we recognize the prime distinction between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Law Covenant that was added to it. The first was of faith, not without works. The second was of works, not without [R4330 : page 46] faith. As the Apostle says, the conditions of the Law Covenant were, "He that *doeth* these things shall live by them." (Rom. 10:5.) We are also reminded that the Sarah Covenant is of faith and not of works, but that where the faith is right, the works will "attest" the faith, even though they be not perfect; and that if judged by our works we would be condemned. The entire Jewish nation failed in the Covenant of "works of the Law;" yet a few individuals of that nation, rising by their faith superior to that Covenant, trusted not to it, but to the original Covenant of Mercy, Grace – the Sarah Covenant. These are the Ancient Worthies

mentioned by the Apostle. He specifies that it was by faith they did and endured. According to their works they were condemned by the Law Covenant, but according to their faith they were acceptable to God, along the lines of the Sarah Covenant, even though they could not receive their blessing under it, until first the promised Seed should come and the blood of that Covenant be shed. Similarly Enoch and Abel, because of their *faith*, were acceptable to God and listed with the *faithful* of the Law Covenant, as in Divine favor, and subject to the blessing of the Sarah Covenant, because, although they lived before Abraham, they had the *Abrahamic faith* in the sense that, like Abraham, they trusted God for the grace which he is willing to bestow upon those who love him and seek his favor.

The New Covenant will really be a *New* Law Covenant, or a New Covenant of works of the Law. The old or first Law Covenant was faulty and insufficient for Israel, not because [R4331 : page 46] the Divine Law upon which it was based was faulty, nor because it was an unreasonable demand, but because men were imperfect, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and already under a death sentence, because of Adam's transgression. The Law Covenant had in Moses a faithful mediator, loyal both to God and to the Israelites, but he was incapable because his own life also was forfeited. God has made provision, therefore, that a New Law Covenant take the place of the Old, and has provided a new Mediator, who has already given his life as a redemption price – Jesus, the Head, and the Church, the Body. The finish of the sacrifice is in sight. The Head and many of his members have already, as New Creatures, passed beyond the vail. Soon the last member of the Body will have been thus "changed" and then the blood of the New Covenant will be sprinkled on behalf of "the sins of all the people" – the people of the Covenant, Israel, with an open door for all peoples to become sharers of their New Covenant blessings, even as we (Gentiles) are now privileged to share the Sarah Covenant blessings which

belonged "to the Jew first." That sprinkling will be acceptable to God and efficacious for the blotting out of the sins of the whole world. This is abundantly attested in the Scriptures and in the types of these "better sacrifices." – Heb. 9:23.

Forthwith the Great Prophet, Head and members; the Great Priest, Head and members; the Great Judge, Head and members; the Great King, Head and members, will begin dealing with Israel and through Israel with the world. They will rule, bless, instruct and uplift so many as are willing, "And it shall come to pass that every soul that will not hearken to that Prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23.) The New Law Covenant will operate exactly as the Old Law Covenant did, except that the "better sacrifices" sealing it will be fully efficacious, and not need to be repeated from year to year; and the power and glory of its Mediator will be superior, and the results of his work correspondingly great and lasting.

This is testified to additionally by the statement of Revelation, which pictures the Millennial epoch, with its great white throne of justice and mercy, before which all the dead, small and great, will stand – for trial; not to see whether they were sinners or not, for that is conceded. All were sinners. Nor will it be to see whether or not God is willing to forgive them, for that is conceded – the sacrifice of Christ will then have been accepted as a full "satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Their judgment or trial, like ours, will be to determine whether or not they will come into fullest harmony with God, and have his blessing of joy and eternal life, or, otherwise, be "destroyed from amongst the people." They will not be judged according to their faith, because they will be under the New Covenant of Law and works. As it is written, "They were judged every man according to their works." – Rev. 20:13.

They will be assisted step by step out of imperfection of mind and body up to perfection, including perfect works, which will be their standard or test. On the contrary the Gospel Church and the Ancient Worthies have not been judged according to their works, but according to their faith – works having been demanded to the extent of ability, as attesting faith. We are not helped out of the blemishes of the fallen nature, but instantly reckoned as lifted out of them, or as having them covered with a mantle of grace.

Bearing in mind the facts and conclusions above will assist us greatly in understanding our subject, the relationship of the Covenants to each other and to mankind. The original Covenant promised a blessing that should reach all mankind – a redemption from the Divine sentence, and an opportunity for the return to harmony with God, through faith and heart obedience. This promise has in some respects already had its fulfilment, as we have seen. God has already accepted, yea, been willing to lead or to draw, all who exercised faith in him and a hearty desire to live in harmony with his will. Already, in this sense of the word, the original Covenant operated before the flood, and since the flood, and toward Abraham, and toward all of Israel, who had the spirit of obedience and faith, and during this Gospel Age has operated amongst mankind in all nations and tongues. But a comparatively small portion of the race has received the blessing, because so small a proportion were in a condition to exercise "the faith of Abraham."

While at first it might appear that the adding of the Law Covenant was a disadvantage and similarly that the adding of the New Covenant might, in some respects, be a disadvantage or a curtailment or abridgment of the original, all-comprehensive Grace or Sarah Covenant, yet this is really not so. While the Law Covenant did condemn the nation, because they did not have the faith, it did bring a blessing to many of that nation – many more than were developed in other nations, which had no such Law

Covenant, with its limitations, threatenings, chastisements, etc. The New Covenant will be still more successful. It will follow the reign of Grace under the Sarah Covenant and be a reign of Law. As it is written, "Righteousness shall he lay to the line and justice to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of misrepresentations." – Isa. 28:17.

The Redeemer and his followers will no longer be a flock of sheep for the slaughter, reviled amongst men, but to the contrary, they shall be the kings and priests, clothed with glory, honor and immortality, before whom "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God." (Rom. 14:11.) The King shall rule in righteousness and princes **[R4331 : page 47]** shall execute judgments in the earth.

Faith, giving place to sight, the test will be works, according to the ability; and everything less than the ability will receive stripes and corrections in righteousness. That reign of Law and good works will thus be rightly tempered to the condition of each individual, and the result, we believe, will be marvelous – the bringing of thousands of millions to perfection, in harmony with God. So far from the New (Law) Covenant being an abridgment of the Abrahamic (Sarah) Covenant it will be an *extension of it* which will make its blessings much farther reaching. The original Covenant now gathers those who can and will exercise faith and obedience. Its usefulness would thus be at an end, were it not for the added New (Law) Covenant, which, ignoring the lack of faith and obedience, will take hold of the world and, by chastisement and instructions, force obedience and knowledge and then gradually develop the heart-obedience of Abraham in so many of them as possible and destroy the others. Thus Abraham, "the father of the faithful," will become under the New (Law) Covenant the "father of many nations" – a multitude, as the sand of the sea – as well as the father of the faithful under the original Sarah Covenant of faith and grace.

Thus we see that the influence of the original Covenant, after electing a Faith Seed, both natural and spiritual, will, through these by the New (Law) Covenant, bless a far greater number than by any other method conceivable. Thus again the Lord shows us how much greater are his arrangements than any which the human mind could have planned. Surely no flesh can glory in his sight. The more we see of his plans, his purposes, his methods, the more must we glorify him and realize our own nothingness, insignificance!

