

THE NEW COVENANT

(On Mar. 25, 1978 at the convention in Fort Worth, Texas, there was a three-part symposium. Dr. Lyle Cook had the Abrahamic Covenant part; Henry Strickland was given the Law Covenant part; and T. A. Smith had the New Covenant part.)

Please read Jer. 31:31 to 37. How clearly and positively it is stated that the Lord intends to make a New Covenant with Israel. In connection with this Covenant it is the Lord's intention to put his law "in their inward parts and write it in their hearts;" and he shall be their God and they his people. And all will know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and he will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

We find similar sentiments expressed in the 11th chapter of Romans, verses 25 to 27. (Please read.) Here it is plainly stated again that the Lord will take away the sins of his natural people. They will be saved from their partial blindness and this will take place when the full number from the Gentiles is selected and completed beyond the veil. This is interestingly stated on Reprint page 3855:2-2: "This is in full accord with the prophecy, which shows that a Jewish State cannot be restored until the gathering of Spiritual Israel beyond the veil— 'until the fullness from among the Gentiles be brought in.'—Rom. 11:25."

In the book of Hebrews we find the same sentiments expressed with very similar language and with more details of future blessings. We turn to the 8th chapter. (Please read verses 6 to 13 inclusive.) Here we find the New Covenant called a "better" covenant, nothing typical about it as it was sealed, not with animal blood, but with the precious blood of Jesus. And in the 10th chapter, Verses 16 and 17 we read again: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

And Heb. 12:24 reads: "And to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The mediator of the New Covenant is here named Jesus, and his blood that will seal the New Covenant will have a different message to convey—Abel's blood cried for vengeance, but the blood of Jesus, the Mediator, will be used to satisfy the claims of justice and make possible the dispensing of mercy to Israel.

How wonderful all this is to think about. In reality the New Covenant is a covenant of mercy. Israel thought the old Law Covenant would give them life, but being imperfect they could not gain life and at the end of each year they had to have a new Atonement Day—typical sacrifices were offered for the year ahead—the blood of bulls and goats which could never take away sins. **BUT THE PERFECT HUMAN SACRIFICE OF**

Jesus provided real blood that would satisfy the demands of Justice against Adam and his family.

It will be an awesome time for natural Israel, when the Ancient Worthies will be resurrected and appear on the scene, just at the right moment in the very end of Jacob's trouble. It will be awesome, we say, when natural Israel are informed and convinced that the One whom they crucified was indeed their Messiah, who died that they might live and be established as the pilot nation of earth to lead the way into restitution blessings and eternal life, under the New Covenant. We would like to turn to Zechariah 12:9 and 10. (Please read.) Very likely all of us have had an experience that revealed to us some important mistake that we had made in our past life, and when we had revealed to us what we had done, we were almost stunned with surprise and chagrin. This will be the experience of Israel when the Ancient Worthies reveal to them what they had done to our Lord—the chief son of their nation they had failed to recognize as their Messiah, and had brought about his death at the hands of Gentiles who nailed him to the cross and he died as a despised criminal. No wonder it is prophesied that as they look with understanding upon the one they pierced, they will mourn for him, as “one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” But as pictured by the way Joseph treated his brothers, in granting them recognition and mercy, so the one who was pierced will pour upon them “the spirit of grace and supplication.” They will have mixed emotions no doubt—sad at what they had done, sad that they were partially blind for 2,000 years, but mingled with this the spirit of joy and reverence and thankfulness and acceptance of their true Messiah, who will bless them and be their Mediator under a New Covenant. What a hallowed occasion that will be—a time of intense excitement and love toward God and Christ.

Next we would like to discuss 2 Cor. 3:6 which reads: “Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” The particular part we want to discuss is the statement that we are “made able ministers of the New Testament.” We must understand that testament means covenant, so the statement is that we are made “able ministers of the new covenant.” It is an interesting fact that some translations of the New Testament are called the New Covenant. So the New Testament is really the New Covenant or pertains to the New Covenant—it is concerned with the New Covenant.

Would it not be a natural conclusion to suppose that we are under the New Covenant? If Jesus came to give his life a ransom sacrifice, and if his blood is spoken of as the blood for the sealing of the New Covenant, and if he offered us his cup to drink, and if we are able ministers of the New Covenant—we say, in view of all these facts, would it not be a natural conclusion that we, as followers of Christ, are under the New Covenant? Yes, this would be a perfectly natural conclusion. In fact this is the general thought held by all professed Christian people. And it is an interesting fact that for many years this thought

was held by ourselves. I will give you an illustration from Reprint page 3048, par. 1, written July 15, 1902. Here is the quote: “It is nearly 19 centuries since the New Covenant was sealed with the precious blood of our Mediator, and he left his people and ascended up on high—going up into the mountain, into the presence of God.” Here it is stated that the New Covenant was sealed with the precious blood of our Mediator.

Later however all this was cleared up, for the Pastor was treading the “path of the just” and the light shined more and more, and we have in our possession those grand explanations which enabled us to better understand the philosophy of the Atonement and how it was related to the sealing of the New Covenant and how we are “servants of the New Covenant.” I can remember many years ago, perhaps 45 years ago, when I made a careful study of the Covenant Book, and when I was through I was thrilled beyond words and thanked the Lord from the bottom of my heart for an understanding of the covenants and the part we have to play in being servants of the New Covenant.

Jesus is the chief servant of the New Covenant. He came to earth in the first advent to give his life a ransom for the redemption of Adam and his race. And this blood from the ransom sacrifice is provided for the very purpose of sealing the New Covenant—sealing it eventually, in God’s due time. And Jesus was being perfected as a High Priest by the experiences he went through, for the very purpose of serving the New Covenant when it is in operation with Israel and extended to the world.

And we, similarly are servants of the New Covenant as we drink of the same cup of experiences as our Head—for the same purpose of being prepared as sympathetic under priests in behalf of Israel and the world when the New Covenant is in operation. It is a thrilling thought that can inspire us to effort and cooperation—to think of our experiences teaching us necessary lessons of character for use in the next age when mankind are brought back from the tomb and we have to deal with them in their imperfect state which will require self-control and justice and love on our part.

Incidentally, what does the last part of V. 6 mean when it says “we are made able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit?” If the New Covenant is not yet sealed with the precious blood of Jesus, then it is not yet in operation; so it is not possible to minister the New Covenant in the letter. But we can minister it in the spirit, by telling about it as a future thing—that it is something that is going to be made with Israel and that it will be a covenant of mercy, when there will be a mediator to administer the New Covenant and deal with Israel in a merciful manner. And do we not delight in telling about this future blessing for Israel, and eventually for all mankind?

In the Apostolic days, there was a persistent attempt on the part of some to force converts to the Christian religion to come under the old Law Covenant. The book of Hebrews was written to counteract this influence. Hebrews is a fascinating book, like the book of

Revelation. It has deep thoughts in it—strong meat indeed. Paul was used to show that God’s dealings with Israel were of a typical nature and what was taking place in connection with the Christian religion was antitypical. The Law was a shadow of “better things to come;” and a shadow is not the real thing, but only a rough outline of the real thing.

The first seven verses of Hebrews, 8th chapter are very significant as pointing out that something better had come—better than the tabernacle and services belonging to natural Israel. Let us read these words for they are thrilling if we think on them carefully: (Please read these verses.) The “true tabernacle” was not pitched by man (i.e. natural Israel), but pitched by the Lord. The tabernacle pitched by Israel was typical only.

Jesus was not of the Aaronic order which was typical only, but was of the order of Melchisedec. This is clearly enunciated in Heb. 6:20: “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Well, what about a priest after the order of Melchisedec? The next verse tells us (Heb. 7:1) that “Melchizedek was king of Salem, priest of the most high God.” So we learn that this order is a king and priest combined. Heb. 7:21 expresses the matter this way: “(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)”

It may be asked, Will works be required from those under the administration of the New Covenant? Yes, works will surely be required and will be the basis of final judgment as to who will win eternal life here on the earth. Faith also will be required—faith in God and in Christ, faith to believe that the Ancient Worthies are the earthly representatives of the heavenly kingdom and faith to believe that perfect works eventually will mean everlasting life.

We have a parable that proves that works will be required under the New Covenant. It is the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Let us turn to this parable. (Please read Matt. 25:31 to 46.) During the Millennial Age there will be great need for loving and kind service to mankind. All must be interested in their fellow man—the living and those not yet awakened from death. Those who have the spirit of love and service to their fellow man will be active in doing things for others; and also wanting those still asleep in the dust of the earth, to be awakened and share in the blessings of the New Covenant. Thus they will develop character along right lines, rising above a selfish attitude. On the contrary those with the goat attitude will be interested only in gaining blessings for self and such will eventually lose out entirely.

In understanding this parable, as to the meaning of Jesus’ words, “as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren,” we need to catch the true spirit of Jesus as taught in Matt.

12:46-50. “Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

And so it will be under the New Covenant. All who come into heart harmony with the law of justice and love will be regarded by Jesus as his brethren. Those who serve the brethren during the Millennial Age will win the approval of Jesus—they serve their fellow-man; but those who are selfish will not be serving their fellow-man and will be disapproved and go down into the Second Death.

It is interesting too, to understand that 100 years of trial will be granted and if there is no progress away from selfishness, then such will be regarded as incorrigible and unfit for life in any form. This thought is found in Isa. 75:20: “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

The rest of this 65th chapter is so wonderful that I am going to quote it as the conclusion of my talk. (Please read verses 21 to 25 inclusive.)