

## THE COVENANTS

*The framework of our relationship with God*

### INTRODUCTION

*Understanding our covenant relationship with God today, resolves a hundred different questions with one answer. It explains what part of our relationship with God is our responsibility, and what part He does for us. It explains how grace works, where the 10 commandments fit in, why the Old and New Testaments seem so very different from each other and what the core of Christianity is all about.*

*Sadly this teaching is almost entirely missing from Christianity today, and many a false or skewed doctrine are the result of this gap in our understanding of God's work with mankind. The covenants are the framework within which God responds to us. He acts according to the nature of the covenant which He has established, and so understanding the covenants goes a long way to knowing how to approach God.*

### THE STRUCTURE OF OUR DISCUSSION

In this piece we will first define what covenant is. Then we will map out the key characteristics of each of the 3 major Biblical covenants. With all three in view, we can then discuss God's purpose for each, which also explains their differences and how to use them when interpreting different parts of the Bible. Here are the phases of our discussion:

- *Section One:* What are the Covenants?
- *Section Two:* The Abrahamic Covenant
- *Section Three:* The Mosaic Covenant
- *Section Four:* The New Covenant
- *Section Five:* The Purpose of the Covenants & How they fit together

*Section One:*

### WHAT ARE THE COVENANTS?

God initiated His covenants in order to establish a relationship with men. But a covenant is not just a relationship, it is more powerful than that, it is meant to be an unbreakable bond. These are life-long agreements sealed with blood as a symbol of their gravity and permanence, because "the life is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11).

*"Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood." – Hebrews 9:18*

So when God establishes a covenant, He invariably calls it "an everlasting covenant," to express His full and enduring commitment towards the bond.

A covenant doesn't only tie two parties together in unity, but it also establishes the foundational "rules" of the relationship. Just like vows are said when a marriage covenant is sealed, these rules guarantee the strength and health of the bond. So when God establishes a covenant with us, He is limiting Himself to the restrictions of the covenant. For example, when God made a covenant with Noah, He promised never to destroy the world with water ever again (Genesis 9:13-16). God has now limited Himself to the confines of that promise. The same goes for us, the covenant confines men to stay within its rules.

Covenants are meant to bring security, a deep sense of belonging and safety, a sense of permanence. They are never meant to be broken. But if one party violates the "rules" of the agreed covenant, with great loss and pain, the bond can be torn apart.

So what are we looking for when we try to define the three major Biblical covenants?

### Characteristics of Covenant

Each covenant has a defining character. We will be looking to find these so that we can compare the covenants to each other. What we want to know is the following:

- Who God is covenanting with.
- What special promises God makes to this person/people.
- What rules the covenant is founded on.
- What blood is shed to establish it.
- And what unique sign or seal is given as the mark of those included in the covenant.

We will go through the three major Biblical Covenants this way, namely:

- The Abrahamic Covenant
- The Mosaic Covenant (sometimes called the Old Covenant)
- The New Covenant

#### Section Two:

### THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Abrahamic covenant would have taken place in roughly 1900BC. The story can be found right in the beginning of the Bible in the book of Genesis, directly after the account of the flood, the tower of Babel and the dispersion of the peoples. After all man's rebellion that has gone before, God decides to call a people out for Himself, to have a special bond with them. So in chapter 12, God speaks to Abram and makes a promise to him. We will make a shortened paraphrase (or short-phrase) of a few passages here, but you can read the full account in your Bible.

*“The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country and your people and go to the land I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great. I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you: and in you all families of the earth will be blessed.” – Short-phrase of Genesis 12:1-3*

This is a promise, it hasn't reached the level of covenant yet. So Abram obeys God's word and takes his wife, nephew and all his goods, and goes to the land the Lord shows him. We pick the story up again in chapter 13 (verses 14-16), when Abram is standing in the land of Canaan and God says:

*“All the land which you can see in front of you I will give you and your seed forever. I will make your seed more than a man can number”*

After these promises a very peculiar event takes place. Abram learns that his nephew, Lot, has been captured by an invading army. Abram assembles 380 of his men and they pursue the army and recover Lot, along with all the loot the army had taken from the neighbouring kingdom where Lot lived. And returning from this victory he meets Melchizedek, who arrives on the scene apparently out of nowhere. Melchizedek, the Bible tells us, is “King of Salem” (Genesis 14:18) which means “King of Peace.” This king gives Abram bread to eat and wine to drink, and reveals an even more surprising fact, Melchizedek is also “a priest of the Most High God”. Note that at this point in history the earth has never had a godly priesthood before. Nor is there a temple, or even a people of God yet – so who is this mysterious Melchizedek then? Melchizedek blesses Abram, and blesses God for giving Abram victory over the invading army. Abram, in turn, shows his allegiance to Melchizedek by offering him a tenth of everything he has recovered.

This unusual visitation of Melchizedek is critical to understanding the Abrahamic Covenant in God's greater plan. For now we only want to plant that seed, but we will touch on it again later.

Directly after this encounter, Abram receives a vision from the Lord, and God says:

*“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” - Genesis 15:1b*

And while Abram surely appreciates God's goodness, he wants to know what use that is if he has no descendants to leave it all to, so he asks God:

*"Lord what will You give me since I don't have an heir?" The Lord said, 'Look to the heavens, count the stars if you can, that is how many descendants you will have.' And Abram believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." – Short-phrase of Genesis 15:2-6*

Three times now the Lord has promised to give Abram a vast number of descendants. Abram was 75 years old the first time, now he is in his nineties. But despite his age, **he chooses to believe God, and for that reason God reckons him righteous.** A few more years go by before we get to chapter 17, now Abram is ninety-nine. God has tested his faith thoroughly and finally it is time to establish the "Abrahamic Covenant":

*"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God... **This is My covenant** which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: **Every male child among you shall be circumcised, and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.**" – Genesis 17:1-8, 11*

So here we have it – the first time God binds Himself to a people of His own. We now know its characteristics are that:

- God established the covenant with Abraham and his seed.
- God promised him a land and a great multitude of descendants. He also promised to be a God to him, and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him.
- God told Abraham to "be blameless."
- Circumcision serves as the blood shed for the covenant.
- Circumcision was also the sign of God's bond with Abraham and his seed.

*Section Three:*

## THE MOSAIC COVENANT

Come time for the Mosaic Covenant and more than 400 years have passed. Abraham has had the promised son Isaac, who had Jacob (also called Israel), who had 12 sons, who became fathers of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. They have been in slavery in Egypt for four generations now. Finally the day has come for God to lead His people to the land He promised their father Abraham. Enter the story of Moses and the grand Exodus out of Egypt. We are now in the second book of the Bible, and all 37 remaining Old Testament books (with the exception of Job), depict God's walk with His children Israel under the "Mosaic Covenant".

**Take note, as you read, how different this covenant relationship is to the one which has gone before.** The people are very different to Abraham, and therefore the eventual covenant is also very different.

We will skip through all the spectacular signs God does to deliver His people from the Egyptians (Exodus 4-14). We pick up again where they have miraculously passed through the Red Sea. They are finally free men, and would you believe it – it takes them exactly 3 days to begin complaining.

*"And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. **There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you."** – Exodus 15:24-26*

So God gave them sweet water to quench their thirst, but also warned them that they would need to walk in obedience to Him (as Abraham had). Two and a half months pass before the people are complaining again. This time they are hungry and they go so far as to wish God had never saved them.

*“Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained... “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” – Exodus 16:2-3*

By another miracle God provides meat, as much as they want to eat. Then He establishes the way He will feed them for their entire wilderness journey. He gives the people manna every morning, but again this comes with a command to be obedient. He institutes a law, they are to collect food for every day, nothing must be left overnight, except on the 6th day they are to collect food for two days, because on the 7th they must rest. God is testing both their trust in Him and their obedience. Once again, they fail.

*“Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?” – Exodus 16:27-18*

So God continues to test them, and only a few days go by before the people have worked themselves into a furious state.

*“And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!” – Exodus 17:3-4*

God replies with another miracle, He brings water out of a rock. By now the people are three months into their journey, and God has sent 10 plagues to loose them from Egypt, He has parted the Red Sea and closed it on the Egyptian army again. A cloud leads them by day and a pillar of fire by night, they receive manna from heaven every morning, and God has provided water twice, and **despite all this they still complain and have disobeyed every law God has given thus far.**

At this point the Israelites are camping at the foot of mount Sinai and God announces that He wants to establish a covenant with them. But this covenant will be deeply rooted in a set of rules. If they will obey God, He will do extraordinary things for and through them.

*“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.**” – Exodus 19:4-5*

To this the Israelites answer that they will obey all the commands of the Lord. God then prepares them for what is coming. He tells Moses that the people must cleanse and ready themselves because He will visit them on the third day.

*“Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled... Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.” – Exodus 19:16, 18*

In the midst of this extraordinary display of power, God’s voice speaks directly to the people from the mount, and gives them what we now call, “The 10 Commandments”. But all this thunderous presence becomes too overwhelming for them:

*“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” – Exodus 20:18-19*

So from there on, the Lord speaks only to Moses, who writes everything down in, “The Book of the Covenant”. Chapters 21-23 document those commands. Moses then makes an altar and sacrifices a peace offering to God.

*“Then he took **the Book of the Covenant** and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, **“This is the blood of the covenant** which the LORD has made with you **according to all these words.**” – Exodus 24:7-8*

Notice how the commands are actually considered to be the very same thing as the covenant. The scriptures confirm this later again where various passages call the stone tablets of the ten commandments the “tablets of the covenant”.

*“He wrote on the tablets **the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**” – Exodus 34:28b*

*“So **He declared to you His covenant** which He commanded you to perform, **the Ten Commandments;** and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.” – Deuteronomy 4:13*

*“...**the two tablets of the covenant** were in my two hands.” – Deuteronomy 9:15*

It is critical that we understand this: The law of a covenant is literally an expression of the workings of that covenant, **the covenant and its law cannot be separated.** We see this clearly when the Old Covenant changes over to the New Covenant, and the Bible says, “of necessity there is also a change of the law,” (we will come back to this point soon).

Back to our story, and God calls Moses up the mountain to receive the stone tablets (Exodus 24:12-18). During those 40 days, God shows him the pattern of the Tabernacle he must build, exactly how it was to be made and used. And at the end of it, He tells Moses what the sign of this covenant will be.

*“Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely **My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you** throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. ‘Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath... **as a perpetual covenant.**’ – Exodus 31:13, 16*

God then sends Moses down to face the Israelite’s. Only days before, God had so gloriously appeared on the top of the mount that the entire camp of Israel feared for their lives, they have just sealed a covenant with God promising to obey His every word – and even before Moses could return from receiving the ordinances of that covenant, the people have utterly betrayed their God. Literally the first words God had said to them those few days before was:

*“**I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...**” – Exodus 20:2-5a*

And when Moses arrives on the scene, Israel has made a golden calf and are busy worshipping it – claiming that it is the god who delivered them from their slavery in Egypt! It is hard to imagine how God must have felt seeing that sight. But this is how the second major covenant came to be, and the whole story of Israel through the Old Testament is one of continual rebellion and repentance and rebellion again.

So God calls Moses back up to the mountain:

*“Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed... “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” – Exodus 34:5-7a*

Moses, aware that Israel has already broken the covenant, hears the Lord’s words and calls on His mercy to renew it again:

*“So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. Then he said, ‘If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.’ And He said: ‘Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.’” – Exodus 34:8-10*

So there we have the basics of the Mosaic (or Old) Covenant, re-established by a merciful God. We now know it was:

- Between God and the nation of Israel.
- God promised to make them His special treasure and show Himself mightily to and through them in such a way that the world would marvel.
- The 10 commandments (and with them the entire law), are the rules and foundation on which it stands.
- A sacrifice of calves and goats was made and their blood was used to seal it.
- The sign of the covenant is their keeping the Sabbath day.

Under the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant, the Israelites took the promised land and flourished. When they obeyed the commands, they had peace and prosperity. All that God had promised them, He fulfilled. But the Israelites were far less faithful. They betrayed God for idols, and disobeyed Him time and time again. Over the years God had to draw them back to Himself many, many times, through exiles, defeats and warnings brought by His prophets. More than 16 prophets later, God is done with the stubborn-heartedness of His people. He sends one final prophet (Malachi), to His people with this message:

*“I have loved you,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’... ‘A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a Father, where is My honour? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?’ Says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name... **I have no pleasure in you... nor will I accept an offering from your hands.** For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, **My name shall be great among the Gentiles...** I am a great King... and My name is to be feared among the nations. But you profane it... If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name... I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart... **you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law, you have corrupted the covenant...**” – Extracts from Malachi*

The Mosaic Covenant had not given God the relationship He wanted with mankind. He wanted a people who would love Him with all their hearts, all their souls and with all their strength (Mark 12:30). But sin was too deeply engrained in the human condition for that to be possible. Mankind wanted to sin. They loved to sin. It would take more than a law to remedy that.

Israel’s entire history proved that no matter how many laws God put down, or how many miraculous ways He manifested His power, they were still drawn to sin. The impurity was entwined in the fabric of their hearts. God would have to change the actual essence of their nature. Therefore He promised something better than the Mosaic Covenant – a New Covenant.

*“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant... not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,** says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make... **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.** No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for **they all shall know Me,** from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” – Jeremiah 31:31-34*

In around 400BC, God’s final prophet announces that the Messiah of the New Covenant is coming, then God falls silent.

*“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even **the Messenger of the Covenant... Behold, He is coming**” – from Malachi 3:1*

Section Four:

## THE NEW COVENANT

**The New Covenant is vastly different to the Mosaic Covenant which has gone before.** It will fix everything that has been broken, it will change the core nature of God’s people. In fact, it will so transform them that God will be able to unite with them completely. So that in this covenant God can say:

*“...as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; **that they also may be one in Us.**” – John 17:21b*

*“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” – 1 Corinthians 6:17*

*“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and **the two shall become one flesh.**’ This is a great mystery, **but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**” – Ephesians 5:31-32*

But before this can happen, God must make mankind every bit as pure and holy as He is, because even the tiniest sin would drive a wedge in the relationship. But we know that no man is capable of God’s purity.

*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” – Romans 3:23*

Enter God’s extraordinary solution – He becomes a man Himself! That way the perfection of God, the righteousness of God and the purity of God can be found in mankind, even if it is only in One man among them all. So God sends His Son to earth in the likeness of human flesh to stand proxy for all of mankind. The scriptures give us a glimpse of Jesus’ heart:

*“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, “Behold, I have come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. **I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.**” – From Hebrews 10:5-7 also Psalm 40:6-8*

Sacrifices were only necessary to remedy sin. Instead, Jesus brought the thing God truly desired – He came in perfect obedience, the kind that did not need any remedy. God’s law was already in Jesus’ heart, which was the very thing God wanted to bring about in His New Covenant people.

What law is being spoken of here? The 10 Commandments and all the Law of Moses was the “rules” of the Old Covenant. The rules of the New Covenant, however, are far more demanding. Jesus gave us a taste of it when He said:

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, [in the Mosaic Covenant], ‘You shall not murder.’ But I say to you [in the New Covenant] **that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.... You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.**” – Matthew 5:21-22, 38-39*

Jesus sums up the rules of this New Covenant when He says:

*“Therefore you shall **be perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” – Matthew 5:48*

So when Jesus came in complete obedience, it was to do more than just fulfil the earthly law of the 10 Commandments. He came to live out the heavenly law of perfect righteousness. To put that differently: Jesus was sent to earth to live out the laws which govern heaven. The Father in heaven is perfect. All that share heaven with Him are perfect too. These New Covenant people will also need to be perfect – and Jesus has come to walk out that heavenly perfection as a man here on earth. Jesus:

*“has come, **not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life...** Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant... [for He is] holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens... **the Son who has been perfected forever.**” – Extracts from Hebrews 7:16-28*

Because this heavenly law is higher than the earthly, “fleshly commandment” (or Mosaic law), the earthly is automatically fulfilled in the process. For example: if one doesn’t even look at a woman to lust after her (as the heavenly law demands), then he consequently will not even come close to committing adultery with her (which is the earthly law’s demand). The heavenly law governs the intent of the heart, while the earthly law governs the actions. In the heavenly law, every thought, every intent, every action, every desire of the heart must be perfectly holy, which in turn creates perfect unity with the Father, because the Father is perfectly holy. **So the heavenly law then is to share God’s heart**, and when Jesus fulfilled that law, He and the Father moved as one:

*“Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does... because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” – John 5:19-20a, 30*

*A more in-depth discussion on this issue of the earthly and heavenly laws can be found on our website:  
[www.GodSessions.com](http://www.GodSessions.com)*

With this singular, extraordinary, perfect man, God has a kind of second Adam on the earth. He has a man with an entirely different nature to the fallen, sinful core of Adam (and his descendants). From this new Man, God can birth a new line of men with righteousness interwoven in the very fabric of their beings. And with this Man, God can covenant Himself completely.

### GOD’S SOVEREIGN COVENANT

When the Lord promised the Messiah’s coming through Malachi, He called Jesus the “Messenger of the Covenant”. How strange then that Jesus never once brought a message about the New Covenant. He never spoke of it, not in all the years of His ministry – not, that is, until a few hours before His death. After one final meal with His disciples, we read:

*“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’ – Matthew 26:26-28*

Jesus is about to inaugurate the New Covenant with His own blood, on a cross outside Jerusalem. They are only hours away and though Jesus has spent years teaching His disciples about the “Kingdom of Heaven,” He has told them nothing about any covenant. The reason for this was that they had no part to play in establishing it. **Jesus alone establishes the New Covenant with His Father.** Through His obedience, Jesus has fulfilled all the heavenly “rules” of this New Covenant. Jesus will offer the blood to seal this New Covenant. Jesus (as we will soon show) will receive the special promises this covenant offers and Jesus will also provide the unique sign of this covenant.

When Jesus breathes His last and says, “It is finished,” the covenant is established. God the Father is now in New-Covenant relationship with one Man – but that Man has just died and been laid to rest in a stone tomb. It almost seems as though all is lost until the third day. That is when God begins to fulfil the extraordinary promises of this New Covenant – the first being resurrection life. In a glorious display of God’s power over both life and death, He raises Jesus back to life again. And when Jesus shows Himself alive to His disciples, He tells them:

*“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” – Matthew 28:18b*

Jesus has offered up all He is on the altar to God. He has made Himself nothing for His Father’s sake. Therefore, God raises Him up to the highest place and causes all His creation to worship His Son.

*“[Jesus] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men... He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth” – Philippians 2:6-7a, b8-10*

**This becomes a pattern for the New Covenant.** Men who are grafted into this covenant also first need to lay themselves on the altar in surrender. They also need to die a kind of death, so that God can raise them up into a powerful, supernatural, resurrection life. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Back to Jesus’ story, and He is taken up to heaven before His disciples’ eyes and Father seats Him at His right hand in glory. Jesus has now become the centre of all God has done and the One through whom God has played out His salvation plan. Jesus becomes the expression of the Father.

*“He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation... For it pleased the Father that in*



*Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” – Colossians 1:15, 19-20*

Now God’s entire pilgrimage with mankind has become centred and focused in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. So let’s summarise what we know of this New Covenant so far:

- It was established between God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.
- The rules are the law of heavenly perfection.
- The blood shed to seal the Covenant was Jesus’ own.
- The blessings of this covenant are resurrection from death into eternal life, and the rich reward found in heavenly places.

So where does that leave the rest of mankind? How does anyone else take part in any of this?

God gives us a clue 700 years before Christ ever comes, when He gives His prophet Isaiah a glimpse of a conversation no man would ever witness. In this conversation, God the Father says to His Son:

*“I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles” – Isaiah 42:6*

And only a few chapters later we see it again:

*“Thus says the LORD: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages’ “ – Isaiah 49:8*

Jesus is given “as” a covenant – how remarkable! In other words, **Jesus IS the covenant**, given to the people. He has established the covenant with Father God on behalf of mankind, that is why He is referred to as the “Mediator of a better covenant.”

*“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” – Hebrews 8:6*

Why did Jesus have to establish the covenant for us first? The answer is very simple – we were not capable of doing it ourselves. We could not be obedient. If it was up to us, the covenant would have been destroyed, just as it was with the Israelites. Jesus fulfilled the law of heavenly perfection to create a way for us to share in the same, let’s take a look at how this happens.

#### GOD’S IMPUTED COVENANT

We said that in Jesus Christ, God had a new Adam, a righteous kind of man through whom a new lineage of mankind could be established. So how does God make other humans who are just like Him? The short answer is – God knits us into His Son, He literally grafts us into Jesus (spiritually speaking) and as a result, we become part of Him. The Bible uses the term, we are “in Christ”.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” – John 15:5*

*“For if the root is holy [which is Jesus Christ], so are the branches [which is us], and you were grafted in and became a partaker of the root” – Short-phrase of Romans 11:16-17*

The result is that all the attributes that belong to Him become accounted to us as if they were ours. That means that if Jesus has a New Covenant bond with God, we do too. If Jesus is righteous, we are credited with His righteousness also. All that He is and has, is “imputed” to us, which simply means it is considered to be ours as well.

*“...you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” – 1 Corinthians 1:30b*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.**” – Ephesians 1:3*

But we should not make the mistake of thinking that these attributes have actually become ours. They are only Jesus’ attributes. But so long as we remain “in Him,” we have a full share in them **as if they were our own**. If we were to leave Him, all of it would be gone. That is why Jesus tells us to abide in Him.

*“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered...” – John 15:6b*

For example, we can have wisdom in Him, so that our hearts can understand deep spiritual mysteries, but if we distance ourselves from Him, that understanding is gone – we cannot remember, nor even figure out things we instinctively knew when His power was active in us. It is a supernatural deposit of His qualities which seem to come naturally to us while we are abiding “in Him”.

Experiencing these attributes is a work of the Holy Spirit in us. We can summarise it this way:

- Jesus Christ is the One who does everything **for us**.
- The Holy Spirit is the One who does everything **in us**.

That is why when God initiated this New Covenant relationship, He also promised to send His Holy Spirit to abide in all those who are a part of the covenant “in Jesus”.

*“And I [Jesus] will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” – John 14:16-17*

It is the very presence of the Holy Spirit in us which is the sign that God has actually grafted us into Christ, and consequently into the New Covenant. His indwelling us is how we know that we are part of God’s people.

*“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, **who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.**” – 2 Corinthians 1:21-22*

*“In Him [Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**” – Ephesians 1:13*

### **How to be grafted into Jesus Christ**

Now that we know that we can only be a part of the New Covenant if we are grafted into Jesus Christ, we need to ask how that actually happens.

The entire New Covenant, from beginning to end, is heavenly (and therefore spiritual) in nature. The One who secured it for us came down from heaven first. His divine blood was shed to seal the bond. The rules of this covenant are heaven’s norms. The blessings of this covenant are found in “heavenly places.” The sign of this covenant is the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. And those who become part of this covenant become creatures of heaven as well.

*“‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam [Jesus] became a life-giving spirit... The first man was of the earth, made of dust; **the second Man is the Lord from heaven.** As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and **as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.**” – 1 Corinthians 15:45b, 47-48*

*“For our citizenship is in heaven” – Philippians 3:20*

It follows then that if we are to become a part of this extraordinary covenant, the process will be a spiritual one as well. Jesus put it in the simplest of terms. He said:

*“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**” – John 3:6*

In other words, humans (which are flesh) cannot share in this spiritual kingdom or covenant, unless they have another birth, one in which a spiritual nature is born within them – a nature which can share in these precious heavenly things.

*“Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... **unless one is born of water (flesh) and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**” – John 3:3, 5b.*

This spiritual birth is something God offers us as a gift, something He does for us – on our behalf. But that doesn't change God's original desire. **He still wants a people who WANT to love Him with their whole hearts and WANT to walk in obedience – His question is whether or not WE want to be one of those people. ONLY those who long to be a part of this covenant are grafted into it.** So the bottom line is that we need to make the choice, each one individually.

*“... the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” – John 6:37b*

To be grafted into God's family, **we must be willing to abandon all we have been, all we have stood for, all we have held dear. We must offer ourselves up to God in surrender** (just as Jesus did). We must be willing to let go of our old selves, to let God kill the person we used to be, and make us something completely new. Then He will give us a righteous nature to replace the old sinful one.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” – 2 Corinthians 5:17*

When we come to God in this way He responds by imputing all our sinfulness onto Jesus, and imputing all Jesus' righteousness onto us. The result is that, instantaneously, we become children of heaven. In the blink of an eye we are spiritually uprooted from the kingdom of darkness and planted into the Kingdom of Heaven. This is salvation or spiritual birth.

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” – Ephesians 2:4-6*

As new children of God, we discover strange new desires welling up from inside of us. We begin to experience the love God has for us and we begin to love the things of God. This is evidence that the Holy Spirit has come to live inside us. If we remain in obedience, this bond will only grow deeper and richer, and become more satisfying:

*“As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” – John 15:9-12*

One more piece of the puzzle completes the picture. Just before Jesus ascended to heaven He told His disciples:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen” – Matthew 28:19-20*

Therefore our first step of obedience should be baptism. Baptism is the great divide between our old sinful life and our new righteous one, as the Apostle Paul explains:

*“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin...”*

*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Romans 6:3-6, 11*

Baptism then, knits us into the supernatural resurrection life of Jesus Christ. We become creatures who have died, and been raised again. We died to the Adam-ness of our old ways and have been resurrected into the new life of Jesus Christ.

*For more on baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit in us, go to:  
<https://www.godsessions.com/brand-new-life>*

And so we see the extraordinary New Covenant which God has provided for us. Let's take stock of what we have discussed:

- It was established between God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.  
*(It also extends to all those who have been grafted into Jesus Christ.)*
- The rules are the heavenly law of perfect righteousness and obedience, which Jesus Christ completely fulfilled.  
*(We are accounted as righteous by the finished work of Jesus. Now God asks us to keep walking in obedience and purity by the power of the Holy Spirit in us.)*
- The blood shed to seal the Covenant was Jesus' own.  
*(That same blood was the price paid to release us from the power of death and sin.)*
- The blessings of this covenant are resurrection from death into eternal life, and the rich reward found in heavenly places.  
*(We partake of this as those who have been crucified and resurrected with Christ through baptism, and are now seated with Christ.)*
- And the unique sign or seal of this Covenant is the Holy Spirit which Jesus sent after His resurrection.  
*(The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee that we are grafted into Jesus Christ and all the covenant means.)*

Paul summarises everything we have said in just four verses:

*“But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:4-7*

Now that we have a picture of each of the major covenants, it's time to see why God did things that way.

*Section Five:*

## THE PURPOSE OF THE COVENANTS & HOW THEY FIT TOGETHER

In this section of our discussion we will show the following:

Firstly, that the Abrahamic Covenant was of the same nature as the New Covenant and was always intended to be a precursor, or a promise, leading towards God's ultimate and perfect plan – the New Covenant. Through the Abrahamic Covenant, God gave a glorious foreshadow of the good things to come in Christ Jesus.

Then came the Mosaic Covenant. It is of a very different nature to the other two and was only brought in because of the “stiff-necked,” sinful nature of God's people. This was always meant to be a temporary covenant to carry the Israelites to the time of Christ.

And finally came God's ultimate plan, which He had predestined even before the world was made. In His Son, God would reconcile all things to Himself, remove the power of sin, destroy the works of the devil and create a pure people who could live with Him eternally.

With that said, let us look deeper into each of these points.

## PURPOSE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

We have said that the Abrahamic Covenant is a foreshadow of Jesus Christ. What do we mean by that? Well let's look at an event in Abraham's life which begins to tell the story.

Abraham was a man with one powerfully defining characteristic – he had extraordinary faith in his God. He waited 14 long years for God's promise of a son to be fulfilled, when some years later, God does the unthinkable. He asks Abraham to offer his precious son back to Him, in sacrifice. What a moment that must have been. What torture those words must have been to him. And what does Abraham do? It says that early the next morning Abraham begins the pilgrimage to render his “only” son back to God. What kind of man was this who could put such unwavering faith in His God? God tests him to the final second, and seeing that Abraham has made no attempt even to plead for mercy, but has utterly trusted himself and his son into God's hands – He suddenly provides a substitute offering to spare Abraham's son.

Earlier in his life, this peculiarly faithful man had won the title of being called God's friend.

*“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God.” – James 2:23b*

So through this whole journey with his son, God has given Abraham a most intimate glimpse into His own Father-heart. He has allowed Abraham to share in the depths of the agony God will endure when He offers His only Son as a sacrifice for mankind. **God counted Abraham such a friend, that He shared this experience with him** – how extraordinary!

But this is not the only foreshadow of the New Covenant in his story. You will recall the unusual encounter Abraham has with the Priest-King Melchizedek. Hebrews chapter 7 goes to great lengths to show how this Melchizedek is a type for Christ and how **His heavenly priesthood** far outshines **the earthly Levitical priesthood** of the Mosaic Covenant – therefore when the priesthood changed (from the Levites to Melchizedek), the law had to change also.

*“Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? **For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law...** For it is evident that our Lord arose... in the likeness of Melchizedek... who has come, **not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life...**” – Hebrews 7:11-12, 15-16*

To summarise this deep and complex line of thought, we will simply point out that Melchizedek and Jesus Christ represent the same heavenly priesthood and therefore the New and Abrahamic Covenants fall under the same line of priestly authority and the same heavenly law – “be blameless” (Genesis 17:1), “be perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

*“The LORD has sworn and will not relent, ‘You [Jesus Christ] are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’” – Hebrews 7:21b*

Maybe that makes it clearer why Melchizedek offers Abraham bread and wine when they meet. These are the very same symbols Jesus uses for the New Covenant at the last supper. Furthermore, we read that Abraham's righteousness was imputed to him because of his faith. Yet without the perfect life of Jesus Christ, imputed righteousness is impossible because it is His righteousness which God credits as ours. And so Abraham becomes the father of all those who will trust God to saving faith (through Jesus Christ) – how beautiful.

The most important thing we need to realise is that **the Abrahamic Covenant and New Covenant both function on the principal of grace**. Any time there is imputed righteousness grace is at work. That is because imputed righteousness is simply giving you more credit than you have earned by your own merit. It is still a just system, because someone had to earn it, but they have decided to hand their hard-earned reward over to you as a gift. And that someone was Jesus Christ.

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” – 2 Corinthians 5:21*

In the Abrahamic Covenant, circumcision became a sign of this imputed righteousness.

*“And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also” – Romans 4:11*

When it comes to the New Covenant, something extraordinary happens. You recall that we said the New Covenant is spiritual (or heavenly) in nature? Well everything in the New Covenant takes on a spiritual nature as well. When circumcision is transferred from the Old to the New Testaments, it goes from being a physical thing (cut into the flesh), into something spiritual (cut into the heart). So it still signifies our imputed righteousness – but now the evidence is seen in our brand new hearts:

*“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” – Colossians 2:11-12*

*“...we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” – Philippians 3:3*

*“and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit” – extract from Romans 2:29*

As with all other things, this transition is done through Jesus Christ. As a man He was a Jew, circumcised in His flesh. And so when we are grafted into Him, His physical circumcision becomes imputed to us, and we are grafted into the people of God, the children of Abraham, the man of faith.

*“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ..” – Galatians 3:16*

*“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” – Galatians 3:29*

And so it turns out that the promise God made to Abraham’s seed to be a God to them, now falls to those who are grafted into the one Seed, who is Christ. Circumcision then (as a physical sign in our bodies), falls away, since it is already fulfilled in Christ. As a result we find that the Abrahamic Covenant’s purpose was to point to Christ and be a foreshadow, a precursor leading directly into the New Covenant.

Now let’s take a look at the Mosaic Covenant in relation to the others.

#### PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT

**The Mosaic Covenant is very different because it functions on the principal of justice.** It measures out to you exactly the credit you deserve. You get everything you have earned – nothing more, nothing less.

The Mosaic Covenant revealed God’s righteous nature. God is morally upright and absolutely pure. One of the characteristics of His righteousness is that it does not tolerate evil or injustice, it demands that wrong things be set right, evil must be punished and sin must get its just deserts. God alone is holy and able to judge mankind impartially. He will set every record straight. In the end no sin will go unpunished and no good deed will go unrewarded – this is His justice.

*“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.” – Romans 12:19*

Under the Old Covenant, God rewarded the Israelites when they did well, and punished them when they did evil. The entire Mosaic Covenant is an, “If you will do x, then I will do y”, arrangement. God even used Israel to deal with other nations this way. When a people had fallen into deep depravity, God would send the Israelites to make war against them and prevail over them. In this way God proclaimed judgment over men and used His people to execute it. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth – this was the way of the Old Covenant, and this was perfectly fair and perfectly just.

So why did God first introduce the grace-based (Abrahamic) covenant, then switch over to a justice based (Mosaic) covenant, only to return to a grace-based (New) covenant again?

Most people think that under a grace-based system people are more unruly. The argument goes that without a strict law they would run wild, and that people are therefore more obedient in a justice-based system. Ironically, God does it the other way around because He begins with the heart condition. He introduces a grace-based system when there is already obedience present, and a justice-based system to curb rebellion.

God introduced the Mosaic Covenant because the Israelites were a “stiff-necked,” rebellious people. Abraham did not need a law to keep him in line. God had told him to “be blameless,” and the man walked faithful to his God to the end. He desired to be faithful and therefore God did not need to say more. The Israelites, on the other hand, tested God on every side. And so for them He drew out the exact boundaries of acceptable behaviour – that was called “the Law”.

*“What purpose then does the law serve? **It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.**” – Galatians 3:19a*

The entire covenant-system was meant to govern Israel, “till the Seed should come,” at which point God would be able to change their hearts. Then He could release them from the outward-law because the desire to obey Him would be embedded inside their hearts, they would have an inward-law. But before God can do this, His people are still sin-loving creatures, so the law acts as a hedge to steer them away from rebellion by the powerful threat of just punishment. But even this was not enough to save them.

*“...if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore **the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith...** after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” – Galatians 3:21b-25*

The law’s purpose then was to bring the Israelite’s to Christ. For that reason all the symbolism embedded into the Mosaic Covenant is a foreshadow of the New Covenant. Every detail of how God told Moses to build the tabernacle and its functions were a shadow, or a copy of the actual things in heaven.

*“For Christ has not entered the Holy Place made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” – Hebrews 9:24*

The Mosaic system is a promise of what God will do when He sends His Son to earth to die on a cross, and raises Him back to heaven. Their animal sacrifices are supposed to give the Israelites a visual, tangible image of the price that will have to be paid to correct their disobedience and be a reminder that they continually fall into sin.

*“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never... make those who approach perfect.**” – Hebrews 10:1*

To be righteous under a justice system, you have to fulfil 100% of the law perfectly and permanently. Any shortcoming at all leaves you as a transgressor of the law. If you murder someone you are worthy of just punishment, you don’t have to steal, be convicted of treason or break any other law to be a criminal. Nor do you have to fall twice, only one fault is enough.

*“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” – James 2:10*

But, as we have shown, no one achieved the mark of full obedience to the Mosaic law. So, despite all their best efforts, they remained unrighteous and unworthy of heaven’s perfection. All men are sinners, and so **the end result of a justice-based system is everyone must be punished. And the just punishment for sin is death.** So if this was the only way God ever interacted with mankind, then death would be all that remained. It would be justice and yet it would not please God.

*“The Lord is... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” – 2 Peter 3:9*

*“[God our Saviour] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” – 1 Timothy 2:3b-4*

Therefore God could not leave the Mosaic law as the final hope for mankind – since it was no hope at all.

*“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” – Hebrews 10:4*

*“...if that first [Old] covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.” – Hebrews 8:7*

God was entirely unsatisfied with only getting justice. Therefore the Mosaic Covenant was a temporary measure until God could introduce the New Covenant to make a completely different way to deal with sin and mankind.

*“...in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed [under the Mosaic Covenant], to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” – Romans 3:26, 28*

*“For as in Adam all die [which is Old Covenant justice], even so in Christ all shall be made alive [through New Covenant grace].” – 1 Corinthians 15:22*

*“For the wages of sin is death [in Old Covenant justice], but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord [in New Covenant grace].” – Romans 6:23*

**There can be no mixing of the natures of the Mosaic and New Covenants. They function in two entirely different ways and we are either in the one or the other.** Either we achieve righteousness by our own perfection, or our Lord has done it for us. Either we save ourselves by perfectly keeping the whole law, or God saves us through our faith in Him. There is no version where the two work together.

*“The law is not faith...” – Galatians 3:12a*

*“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” – Hebrews 11:6*

To seek righteousness by our own good deeds then, is a total rejection of all our Saviour has done for us.

*“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” – Galatians 5:4*

The Mosaic Covenant was a necessity for a time, but it was never God's true desire. Through all that time, He was continually pointing to His Son who would redeem all men – no matter which covenant they were under, as this Mosaic Covenant quote shows:

*“I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” – Ezekiel 20:12*

So the New Covenant becomes the only true hope for all men.

*“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” – Hebrews 7:18-19*

We conclude that God intended for the Old Covenant to show His people they were in desperate need of the Saviour of the New Covenant. Then the old would be absorbed into the new, so that the old no longer served any functional purpose.



*“Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant... **In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete.** Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” – Hebrews 8:8, 13*

## PURPOSE OF THE NEW COVENANT

Even though the New Covenant came last in the sequence, it was by no means God’s plan B or C. Even in the days of Adam’s fall God spoke to the serpent of the Seed of the woman that would one day crush his head – that seed we know is Jesus Christ. His sacrifice for the redemption of all mankind was ordained even before the world was formed. Therefore He is called, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelations 13:8).

*“He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” – 1 Peter 1:20*

God knew mankind would sin, and therefore even before they ever did, His redemptive plan was in place. The New Covenant was always God’s plan A. The others came before hand simply because God had appointed a time to send His Son, and the other covenants ushered His people to that day.

With the New Covenant, God shows us a facet of His nature which is even more powerful than His righteousness. It is by His love that He overcomes the limitations of mankind’s sinfulness. His righteousness cannot let sin go unpunished. But His love cannot leave mankind hopeless. So Jesus offers Himself as the substitute sacrifice. He takes on the injury of all our due punishment. Christ steps in to settle our account with God. Jesus Christ “buys back” the people His Father so dearly loves.

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” – John 3:16*

Love bears our wrongs so that **its power** can set things right.

*“[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” – 1 Corinthians 13:7-8*

*“...love covers all sins.” – Proverbs 10:12b*

In the New Covenant God’s love has won a glorious victory over death and our sin. And all who accept this priceless gift from Him, become a people redeemed by love, and **a people knit into Love**. We become a testimony of the heart of God to the rest of the world – and the darker our sins have been, the brighter that testimony shines. That is why the so-called “law” of the New Covenant is to love perfectly, to forgive others, to repay wrong with right and to be so completely what the world is not.

*“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you... To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.... love your enemies, do good... and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” – Luke 6:27, 29, 35*

God wants us to overcome evil with good, just as **He has overcome our evil with His good** – this is the way of the New Covenant and it is perfectly pure and endlessly glorious.

*“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” – Romans 12:21*

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... ‘We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Romans 8:35, 36b-37*

God, through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in us, finally has a way to fashion a people who are more at home with Him in heaven, than they are here on earth. A people who reflect His very nature, who He can

reveal Himself to and through. They are conduits of His power, of His love, of His righteousness and His mercy. They are a people the world is not worthy of, cannot understand, and will not accept. They are foreigners in a strange land because they are not home yet. This is God's dream and the purpose of the New Covenant.

In the New Covenant, sin has been completely conquered, and all who are grafted into Jesus can live in that reality.

*“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” – 1 John 3:8*

*“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” – Romans 8:2*

## CONCLUSION

New Covenant life then is a supernatural thing. It cannot be achieved by anyone in their own strength. Not one single element of this new resurrection life is within our reach. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us and working through us to make it a reality in our lives. And the Holy Spirit works ONLY in those who give Him room. He will come in and be Lord of the whole of your life if you ask Him to. But He will not come in at all if you do not truly intend to lay yourself completely in God's hands. **Total surrender is our part to play. But the power to live out true Christianity comes from God.**

The trouble in the church today is that we have too many people who have no real personal experience of the love of God or the supernatural power of the New Covenant. Their inner nature has not yet been transformed into something which loves righteousness. This is the tragedy of our times. Our gospel has become about what God can do for us instead of entering into what God has already done for us.

**When it comes to interpreting the Bible, we need to be careful not to mix the Old and New Covenants together as if they are the same thing. They are not.** Therefore we must note which Covenant each passage or verse falls under. God may say in the Old Covenant that a man must stone another to death when he is found in sin. But no Christian can take this verse as instructions. Under the New Covenant we confront and correct our brother in love, and then forgive his sins. In the New Covenant, we are the voice calling men to respond to the goodness and mercy of a loving God who has dealt with sin on our behalf. Love and grace must conquer sin and unrighteousness, this is the New Covenant. **Jesus has come – that changes everything.**

That is why the New Testament must supersede (or override) the Old. The Old Testament still serves to teach us about the character of God, His faithfulness and work with mankind, His promises, His redemptive plan throughout history, His power and more. God has not changed, all that has changed is how He deals with us. **The Old Testament was the way God HAD to deal with sinful men. The New Testament is the way God WANTS to deal with sinful men.** May we come to understand the full measure of the gift we have in Christ Jesus our Lord:

*“that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe...” – Ephesians 1:18b-19a*

We conclude then that the character and will of God has not changed since the very beginning. But God has dealt with His people in different ways at different times because of the framework of His covenants, and because certain facets of God's nature could not fully show through until Jesus Christ came to take our sins and sinfulness out of the way.

May God receive glory for His endless love, His mercy and every perfect gift He offers us in Christ Jesus.