

THE UNCONDITIONAL OATH-BOUND COVENANT

AND THE "OLD" AND "NEW" COVENANTS ADDED THERETO.

"Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto."--[Gal. 3:15](#).

A CLEAR appreciation of the divine covenants is important and valuable to the Christian. In the knowledge of these he possesses the key to the understanding of the entire plan of God.

THE NECESSITY FOR A COVENANT.

It was because of man's fall into sin, and its accompanying degradation, mental, moral and physical, which followed ejection from Eden, and especially because of the sentence of death pronounced against him, that he had need of the divine arrangements for his recovery and blessing provided in these covenants-- original and added. The failure of Adam had cut off himself and his race from divine favor and placed them under divine sentence; and nothing that man could do would restore divine favor. The initiative toward reconciliation must come from God if at all; and the Covenants were his statements of his proposition for a reconciliation, and how and with whom and by whom it should be accomplished. God did not make his plan because of Abraham; but merely made known his predetermined purpose to faithful Abraham; and chose his family as the one through which Messiah would be sent, for the accomplishment of that plan. The plan itself was, we are told, predetermined--from the foundation of the world. Abraham's faithfulness merely brought him and his family into relationship to that plan of the ages.

To enforce the sentence of death, Adam was at once driven out from Eden and its grove of life-giving trees into the wilderness of earth, infested with thorns and briars, "accursed" or unfit for the sustenance of life. There he was permitted to prolong his days as best he could, until the sentence which was upon him should accomplish his destruction--dust to dust.

From the moment of his rejection and sentence, degeneration set in; affecting all his posterity. The unfavorable conditions of the soil and climate have since had their effect upon the physical man, and incidentally upon his mental and moral status; for since an imperfect body cannot sustain a perfect mind, the elements of decay quickly fastened themselves on the mental powers; and mental and moral impairment are the result. The undesirable conditions of the new surroundings, so different from what had previously been experienced, gradually developed selfishness as the leading characteristic of his being. Thus did the sentence, "dying thou shalt die," surely go into effect along all the lines of his organism.

With all the race since, the tendency has been downward; so that in the course of six thousand years man's physical powers have become so impaired that instead of living nine hundred and thirty years, as did Adam, the average of life is now only about thirty-five years, despite all the efforts of medical science to lengthen the span of life. And although improved nursing and medical skill and surgery have lately increased the average of life about five years (from thirty to thirty-five years), yet this longer survival of the physically impaired evidently means a general weakening of the race as a whole. Surely all can see, and should admit,

that everlasting life is abundantly proved to be beyond the reach of Adam's race. Nothing that any of the condemned can do can *perfect* himself or his [R2120 : page 80] fellows. Hence, as death reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses till now, so it must continue to reign over the race unless God shall interpose for the relief of his condemned creatures, and in some manner provide a release from the *death sentence*.

Many are inclined to consider the term "sin" applicable only to murder, theft, and such like heinous crimes; and not having been guilty of these, they consider themselves good, exemplary people. They fail to see that from God's standpoint and standard of righteousness anything short of *perfection* is imperfection, wrong, out of harmony with his original creation, "sinful." "All unrighteousness [imperfection] is sin," and the "wages [result and penalty] of sin is death."

It is written, "All his [God's] work is perfect." It was so in Adam's case and with the angels. Whatever imperfection--mental, physical or moral--there may be, is therefore, directly or indirectly, the result of disobedience to divine arrangement and command. Imperfection, therefore, is an evidence of disobedience to God and the laws which he ordained for the well-being of his creatures;--an evidence that sin lieth at the door.

But although God "could by no means *clear* the guilty," he nevertheless sympathized with his fallen creatures, and made provision for their uplifting,--from degradation back to the plane of perfection, where he can fellowship and bless them as at first. In order to accomplish this gracious plan, God "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him [obediently] should not perish, but have everlasting life." ([John 3:16](#).) Thus the man Christ Jesus became the mediator between God and man.

In his dealings with mankind God is manifesting to all his creatures, angels as well as men, the various attributes of his character--Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power. In his condemnation of Adam's sin, God brought forcibly to the notice of all the attribute of Justice, the basic principle of his character; as it is written, "Justice and judgment are the *foundation* of his throne." ([Psa. 89:14](#); [97:2](#).) This feature of his character (*viz.*, Justice) God continued to make prominently manifest for more than four thousand years; until Christ came and suffered and died, the just for the unjust, by which act the beautiful, divine quality, Love, was made manifest; as it is written, "In this was *manifested the love of God* toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." ([1 John 4:9,10](#).) "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly."--[Rom. 5:8](#).

Until then the world knew nothing of God's love, practically. There it was demonstrated. He had indeed made some gracious promises to the seed of Abraham, but as yet they were unfulfilled, while all others of mankind were without God and without hope.-- [Eph. 2:12](#).

THE UNCONDITIONAL OATHBOUND COVENANT.

It was in view of his desire and intention to bless the world of sinners, Adam's race, that God, as indicating that intention and the lines or conditions to be followed, made the great Abrahamic Covenant, and later its two dependents--(1) The Law Covenant, (2) The New Covenant. The original covenant or promise includes all that its added or dependant covenants include in the way of blessing; while the latter constitute but proper and reasonable limitations and regulations, by which the blessings promised may be made *everlasting* blessings to all the worthy.

Though little is said of Abraham prior to God's making the covenant with him, we may suppose that he was a man of honesty of heart, of good intentions, and one who had already manifested a strong faith in God. When Abraham was living in the land of the Chaldeans, God called him out from his relatives and friends, and

directed him to go into the land of Canaan, where he would make of him a great nation; promising, further, that in his seed all the families of the earth should ultimately be blessed. This covenant was [R2121 : page 80] a definite declaration of God's benevolent intentions toward humanity in general, and that it had pleased him to select Abraham's posterity as the line through which to communicate the great and much needed blessing. The only condition to the covenant was obedience in going a stranger into a strange land. Abraham's obedience manifested his faith; and his continuance in Canaan marked the continuance of his faith (see [Heb. 11:15](#)); and this faithful obedience was the only condition imposed or connected with this great Covenant. If Abraham would exercise obedient faith, God would do all therein promised *through his seed*. If Abraham had failed in faith and obedience, the same good things would in due time fulfil the divine purpose, but through another man's seed.

Abraham no doubt wondered at times how God intended to fulfil his Covenant, seeing that the Canaanites continued to live in the land, while he was never more than a sojourner in it. God's promise concerning his seed seemed also to fail; and after many years, when Isaac was born, he proved to be only a type or foreshadow of the true "Seed" through whom the promise of great prominence and world-wide influence and blessing would be fulfilled.

Four hundred and thirty years after making this Covenant with Abraham, God manifested another feature [R2121 : page 81] of his plan. When bringing Abraham's posterity out of Egyptian slavery to establish them in the promised land of Canaan, he brought them to Mount Sinai, and there entered into an additional covenant with them, known as,--

THE LAW COVENANT, ADDED.

God wrote his law in ten commandments upon two tables of stone, as representing his requirements, and appointed Moses the mediator between himself and the people of Israel, to ratify the covenant and in his name to promise the people escape from death and from every evil and blight, upon condition of their living up to the requirements of that law; as it is written, "The man that doeth them shall live in them."--[Gal. 3:12](#); [Lev. 18:5](#);

[26:3-11,14-44](#).

Israel, hopeful that the long deferred blessing of the original promise was now to be fulfilled, readily assented to the terms of this Law Covenant *addition*, and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" ([Ex. 19:8](#)); and no doubt they honestly intended full obedience and considered it possible. Moses, fulfilling his part, *ratified* the covenant on behalf of God and the people, by sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the people and on the tables of the Law, saying, This is the blood of the Covenant which God hath enjoined unto you,-- or by which you and God are joined in Covenant.--[Heb. 9:19,20](#); [Exod. 24:8](#).

This covenant was unlike the original Abrahamic Covenant, which required no mediator, because it was unconditional on Abraham's part except as to obedient faith. When Abraham entered Canaan, the terms on his part were complete, and God at once announced the Covenant and confirmed it with his own oath, thus assuring Abraham, and all who are similarly full of faith in God, that all of its provisions will surely be fulfilled regardless of human cooperation. Abraham's Seed *shall bless* all the families of the earth.

The Law Covenant, whatever its object, the Apostle assures us, could not (and hence it did not) make the original or Abrahamic Covenant useless, nor could it in any manner or degree impair its gracious promise; for it was complete in itself, and God had confirmed it most absolutely.--[Gal. 3:8,17](#).

What, then, could be God's object in making the Law Covenant with Israel, and (so far as *they* were

concerned) *adding it to* the Abrahamic Covenant? The Apostle answers our query, saying, "It [the Law Covenant] was added because of transgression [sin], till the promised seed should come." ([Gal. 3:19](#).) The promised seed of Abraham, which God had in mind when he made the Covenant with Abraham, was Christ our Lord (and incidentally the Church which is his body, his *bride*, whose blemishes he covers). And by giving Israel the Law Covenant God purposed--(1) to show them their own sinfulness and unworthiness to be the "Seed" which could and should bless all mankind. (2) The Law addition to the Abrahamic Covenant insured that the "promised seed" would be a perfect man, able to keep all the requirements of the Law Covenant perfectly, as our Lord Jesus alone did or could do. (3) If the Israelites learned the lesson of their own inability to fulfil the requirements of the Law Covenant, it would prepare them to expect Messiah's birth out of the usual order, to insure his freedom from Adamic condemnation and weakness.

Thus the Abrahamic Covenant and its confirmations assured that the "Seed" *must be* of Abraham's descendants, while the Law addition just as surely proved that he would be "holy, harmless, undefiled and *separate* from sinners."

It would appear that Israel never fully appreciated the requirements of their Law Covenant, which no one but a perfect man could fulfil; for a very large class, Pharisees and others, claimed that they kept it inviolate-- "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" ([Luke 18:9](#)), who made no such claim. But our Lord's definition of the Law showed that anger with a brother may contain the spirit of murder and be a violation of the command, "Thou shalt not kill;" and that the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," may be broken in the secret thought of the heart. And, summing up the whole Law, as meaning supreme love for God (more than for self) in every word, thought and act, and love for our neighbor as for one's self, his teachings brought conviction to all honest Jews who heard him, that none of them ever had kept or ever could hope to keep the conditions of that Law Covenant perfectly. Such saw that they could no longer hope for eternal life through their Covenant, and said, like Peter, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Such honest Jews realized what the Apostle Paul so graphically describes in [Romans 7](#), that their Law Covenant was not able to deliver them from death because of their inherited imperfections, the "dead body," sin-impaired, which hindered the obedience they would gladly have rendered to God's just, wise and good law. But by these the gospel of Christ was then seen to be a God-send; and the Jew whose heart was in proper condition, catching sight of the *mercy* of God offered in Christ, exclaimed, as represented by the Apostle-- "I thank God [for deliverance and life] through Jesus Christ our Lord; for what the Law [Covenant] could not do [for us Jews], in that it was powerless because of [our fallen] flesh, God accomplished [in another way; *viz.,*] by sending his own Son in the likeness of the flesh condemned for sin and as a sin-offering [**R2121 : page 82**] for sin-condemned flesh; that [under the mercy of the New Covenant] the righteousness of the divine Law might be reckoned as fulfilled in us, who [however imperfectly], walk *not after* the flesh, but *after* the spirit of the divine law.--[Rom. 7:25](#); [8:3,4](#).

Our Lord Jesus could and did fulfil the demands of the Law Covenant: he proved his supreme love for the Father by his obedience to the divine arrangement "unto death, even the death of the cross." Thus he demonstrated that he was the Seed of Promise, and became *sole heir* to all of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant, promised to Abraham's Seed. Hence, now, in him, and in him only, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Thus our Lord Jesus, having fulfilled the conditions of the added Law Covenant (thus proving himself the "Seed," and heir of the Abrahamic Covenant), made an end to the Law Covenant to every Jew who believed, nailing it to his cross ([Rom. 10:4](#); [Col. 2:14](#)), and was ready to begin the work of blessing.

THE NEW COVENANT, ADDED.

The Law Covenant did indicate the perfect one, the "Seed," the true heir; but it was God's purpose, additionally, to select "brethren" of Christ to be his "joint-heirs" in carrying out the original, the Abrahamic Covenant of general blessings to the world; and, as we have just seen, the Law Covenant could avail nothing in this selection--its requirements being too severe for any except perfect beings, and our race being all imperfect.

On the other hand, to *bless* the world with a knowledge of God and the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of his wisdom and love and power, and yet to have made *no provision* for the race, for justification to life everlasting, would have been but a *temporary* blessing; for after seeing and tasting they would have been obliged to *die* under their original just sentence.

It was expedient, therefore, and as an addition to the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant, that divine mercy *added* the New Covenant, that through it the original blessings may become *everlasting*--to all who conform to the terms of the New Covenant. The "New" Covenant addition is to indicate the way by which convicted sinners may return to divine favor, obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in the merit of its Mediator, Christ--in whom their holy efforts and intentions can be accepted as perfect, although actually imperfect. The "Law" addition was to the Jew only; the "New" addition is for "all the families of the earth;" for whoever of Adam's race may choose to accept its provisions.

Since all men are sinners and consequently incompetent to make a covenant of full obedience to all the requirements of the perfect, divine law (as was proved to be the case with Israel), the New Covenant must needs have a mediator, as did the Law Covenant. Moreover, it required a better, more capable mediator than Moses, or else it could be no more efficacious to mankind in general than was the Law Covenant to Israel.

The work or office of Moses as a mediator was to effect reconciliation (harmony) between God and Israel--the two parties to the Covenant, both of whom [R2122 : page 82] desired reconciliation. Similarly, the work of our Lord Jesus, as the mediator of the New Covenant, is to bring into harmony with God so many of Adam's race as may wish peace with God upon his terms; *viz.*, faith and obedience to righteousness.

Question:--What did our Lord Jesus do as a mediator for all mankind that Moses could not do, and did not do, for Israel? This: (1) he, being holy, harmless and *separate* from sinners, fulfilled the requirements of the Law in his own person; and (2) he gave himself ("the man Christ Jesus" and the seed of an unborn human race in his loins) as a ransom-price or corresponding purchase-price for Adam and his race (which was an unborn race in Adam's loins at the time of his trial and failure and death sentence). Because this was done in obedience to the divine will and plan, our Lord Jesus was perfected as a "new creature," partaker of the divine nature, in his resurrection from death, and is now highly exalted "far above" men, angels, principalities and powers, in heavenly glory;-- sharer of the Heavenly Father's throne.

By means of his sacrifice of himself as "the man Christ Jesus," a ransom-price *for* the first man, Adam, he, as we have just seen, redeemed (purchased) Adam's race from the divine sentence--death, *extinction*. Not that the race was *set free* by his sacrifice, but that the divine law (justice) having been met, the race is delivered over to him who "bought" it with his own precious blood, that he may release from death and bring to everlasting life the *willing* and *obedient*.-- [John 3:36](#).

Thus, by purchase, by the full satisfaction of the claims of Justice against Adam, the new Mediator has a great advantage over Moses, and is thus a "better mediator," competent to do all that can be done to reconcile, or make at-one, God and his sinful, fallen creatures. As the sentence of death brought exclusion from the grove of life-sustaining trees in Eden ([Gen. 3:22-24](#)), and death as the result, so now by reason of having paid man's ransom-price, the great Mediator is permitted to feed his people with "the bread of life which came down from heaven," and thus to revivify them.

But the Mediator can do nothing for the redeemed except in harmony with the spirit of the divine Law, nor [R2122 : page 83] does he otherwise desire. Hence the New Covenant, sealed and ratified by the Mediator's blood, and under which alone the blessings are obtainable, demands:--

- (1) *Faith* in God, acknowledgement and repentance of all sins, a full recognition of the Mediator, and of the fact that this, the only covenant of *grace*, mercy peace, was sealed and ratified by "the precious blood of Christ"--his sacrificial death.
- (2) It requires also *obedience and reformation* from sin to the extent of the sinner's ability, and a full desire of heart and effort of life to live righteously, soberly and godly--a desire to know and to do the heavenly Father's will, under the guidance and help of the Mediator.--[James 1:25](#).

WHO WILL BENEFIT BY THE NEW COVENANT?

Thus the rights, privileges and blessings of the New Covenant, while open to all, as required by the original Covenant, will be of *everlasting* benefit only to the *willing and obedient*--such as desire and seek God and his [standard of] righteousness; and they alone will gain everlasting life under this Covenant, either in this or in the coming age.

Since the trial for everlasting life under the New Covenant has as its primary qualification *faith*, it is evident that only a very small proportion of the world's inhabitants have yet benefited by it. As the Apostle says,-- "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? ([Rom. 10:14](#).) But any doubt that the blessings of this New Covenant are to be extended ultimately to every member of Adam's race, by bringing each one to this necessary knowledge, is not only set at rest by the Apostle Paul's declaration that it is the will of God that *all* shall *come to the knowledge of the truth*, and that it shall be testified to all "*in due time*" ([1 Tim. 2:4-6](#)), but it is guaranteed by the oath by which God attested the original covenant with Abraham, saying, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."--[Gal. 3:16,29](#).

The whole subject becomes transparent when we see that the *Abrahamic Covenant* (which needed no mediator because it was God's *unconditional* promise, confirmed by his oath) is the full, broad statement of the divine plan, and that as the Law Covenant was *added* (to illustrate the inability of sinners to help themselves and) to manifest Christ Jesus as the Seed of Promise, so the New Covenant is *added* (to the Abrahamic Covenant) also,--not to hinder the "*blessing*" of every creature, but to make that "*blessing*" of knowledge and the Millennial Kingdom opportunities more effective,--even unto everlasting life--to those approved under it.

THE FULFILMENT OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

From this standpoint we can see that the only steps thus far taken in the fulfilment of the original and comprehensive statement of the divine plan, the "Covenant with Abraham" (which, as the Apostle declares, was an advance declaration of the whole *gospel*--the good tidings in an epitomized form--[Gal. 3:8](#)), are:--

- (1) The manifestation of God's only begotten Son as "*the man* Christ Jesus," and his approval as perfect under the Law.
- (2) By the same act of obedience and faithfulness he "bought" Adam and his race; and by meeting the terms of their sentence, according to the divine plan, he has made it possible for God to be *just* and yet be the

justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; and made it possible for himself, as the divinely proposed and foreordained "Seed of Abraham," to make the blessing upon the willing and obedient an *everlasting* blessing.

(3) According to the original divine plan a *multitudinous* "Seed" was contemplated from the beginning ([Gal. 3:29](#); [Eph. 1:4](#))--the fullness, power and authority of which should always reside in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer. The next step in the divine plan has been the *selection* from among men of this special class,--called the Church of Christ--of which Jesus is the Lord and head ([Eph. 1:22,23](#)); called the Bride, the Lamb's wife and joint-heir ([Rev. 19:7](#)); called also "members of his body," controlled by him as the Head ([1 Cor. 12:27](#)); called also his "brethren" ([Heb. 2:11](#)); called also the "royal priesthood," under him as the High Priest or Chief Priest, and sharers of his glory, honor and immortality, and joint-heirs in his Kingdom and in his inheritance in the Abrahamic Covenant as the "Seed" to whom belongs the promise.--See [Rev. 20:4](#); [Gal. 3:29](#).

This selection of the Church is along lines of severe testing; for God has *predestinated* that all who will constitute members of the multitudinous Seed must "be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among *many brethren*." ([Rom. 8:29](#).) And since none are "called" to this high honor except the "justified," and none justified except through faith, under the terms of the New Covenant, it follows that, since the vast majority thus far are blinded by the prince of this world so that they cannot believe ([2 Cor. 4:4](#)), and since even after believing and being called many fail to make their "calling and election *sure*," therefore this elect Church, when completed and perfected and glorified at the end of the "narrow way" which few find ([Matt. 7:14](#)), will be a "little flock,"--containing "not many great," rich or wise, according to the estimate of this world.--[1 Cor. 1:26-28](#); [Jas. 2:5](#).

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(4) When the elect number has been selected, and been glorified with their Head, Christ Jesus, as associates and joint-heirs in his Millennial Kingdom-- then, and not till then, will the "Seed of Abraham," contemplated in the divine Covenant and oath to Abraham, have fully come. And then, immediately, the way being all prepared, the blessing of all mankind (eventually "all that are in the graves") shall begin. All shall be blessed with the knowledge and opportunity of the gracious provisions of the New Covenant, and all who heartily accept its provisions shall have life and joy everlasting.

(5) Incidentally, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the holy prophets, faithful before the New Covenant, will receive a special blessing and be associated as earthly or human representatives of the spiritual Kingdom of God in blessing the world; but their part and service will be under the direction of the Church, God having provided some *better thing for US*, that they without US should not be made perfect.--[Heb. 11:40](#); [Luke 16:16](#).

(6) Incidentally, also, another class, "a great multitude whose number *no man knows*" ([Rev. 7:9,13-15](#)) will be developed; but not being "overcomers," having failed to "make their calling and election *sure* --although they will be privileged to "serve"--will constitute no part of the elect "Seed" in whom will reside the blessing power of royalty and priesthood.

(7) Incidentally, also, the preaching of the gospel in connection with the "calling" of the "Seed" has had a civilizing influence throughout the world. It has scattered some of the "gross darkness" by which Satan and sin have enshrouded the world of mankind. But still it is dark;--still "gross darkness covers the people;" still the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not; still "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," waiting for the glorious Millennial morning which shall accompany the shining forth of the Seed of Abraham, the Sons of God in glory, as the "Sun of Righteousness with *healing [restitution] in his beams*."--[Isa. 60:2](#); [Rom. 8:22,19](#); [Mal. 4:2](#); [Acts 3:19-21](#).

