

## Which Covenant Are We Of?

By Michael Clark and George Davis

To the learned Pharisees and scribes Jesus said, "And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent, him you believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And you will not come to me, that you might have life" (John 5:38-40 KJ2000). We can have all knowledge and wisdom, but without His love in us as our motivating power, it profits us nothing.

The question is, will we come to Him as a child or will we be like so many proud scholars that are blind because they say they see? The gospel is so simple that even a child can receive Christ, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But men with carnal minds have made it complicated so that they can secure a position for themselves among the saints of God. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies, and we love to accumulate knowledge!

How did the early church ever have faith in Christ without personal Bibles and all these scholastic resources and Bible teachers we depend on today? They had no seminaries, Bible schools, Sunday school classes, vacation Bible schools, study guides, concordances, or daily devotionals, yet they had a faith in Christ that turned the world upside down. Jesus gave us the answer in a promise. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14 KJ2000).



Did you read this and say, "Yes, but Jesus was talking to the apostles when He said this and they were special"? The apostle John was so convinced of the need of the Spirit abiding in each saint as their Teacher and Leader that he wrote to the early church and said, "The anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:27). Even the prophets knew that indwelling Spirit of God would be foundational to the New Covenant. Jeremiah wrote:

Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; my covenant which they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* (Jeremiah 31:31-34 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

In the Old Covenant, the people of Israel knew the Law as a kind of straight jacket. If they failed to perform, they had to suffer the consequences, often by being stoned to death. They still broke the law because they lacked the heart change with the necessary motivating Force within. Even Peter described the Law as "a yoke upon the neck...which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (See Acts 15:10). So what was God's solution to the inadequacies of mankind? Ezekiel wrote:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:26-27 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

It is having a new heart put in us by God and His wonderful Spirit placed in us that enables us to do both know and do the Father's will. But what is that will? The writer of Hebrews spoke of a new priesthood in this New Covenant and a new law to go with it. "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the

priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:11-12 KJ2000 - emphasis added). Jesus spoke of this new law. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another" (John 13:34-35 KJ2000).

Are we free to do whatever we will now that Christ has set us free? We are still in bondage if we are living by the dictates of our flesh instead of the Spirit of God. Paul went on to say this:

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law. For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10 KJ2000)

Love is the summation of the whole law and as we walk in Jesus' New Covenant His love fills our new hearts and we fulfill everything God requires of us.

The New Covenant is not according to the covenant God made with the Children of Israel that they did not keep. The old covenant was broken and replaced by a New Covenant based on Jesus, not Moses. John wrote, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17 KJ2000)

The author of Hebrews used Jeremiah 31 to describe the change from the old covenant to the new. "For finding fault with them, he says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers; For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he says, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and grows old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:8-13 KJ2000).

The Old Covenant was filled with commands for the children of Israel to do and prohibitions for them not to do. It was a covenant based on works. Hebrew chapter 8 points out how different the New Covenant is. Here the prophet specifies a NEW Covenant based on what God is doing in and for us because of what Christ did on the cross, not on what we have to do for God. It is based on a big DONE as far as man is concerned. There is not a single "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not" in that list: every one of the attributes listed start out with God saying, "I will";

When Jesus hung on the cross He cried out, "It is FINISHED!" At that moment all the just requirements of the Old Law and the prophecies about the Sacrificial Lamb of God were fulfilled. We and our sins were crucified with Him. We also rose again with Him and now sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In the newness of our New Covenant lives, the only works we can do are those done while resting in Him. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10 KJ2000).

All other works done outside this position of rest are dead works and of no account in God's kingdom. Speaking of the dead, self-righteous works of the Jews Jesus said, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." First Father grafts us in and then we rest and abide in His Son, the Vine. Our fruit comes naturally after that because it is HIS fruit that we bear.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us." (1 John 3:22-24 KJ2000).

"This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12 KJ2000).

Anyone who has read Jeremiah, Acts, Galatians, Romans, Timothy or Hebrews knows that the law was given to show us that we can't keep it. It points us to the righteousness that is ours by faith in Christ alone and His power to keep us. The old Adam and the sin nature is crucified and the life we now live we live by the life and faith of Jesus Christ who lives in us. Paul wrote, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, self-control: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22-25 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

Paul warned us about those who teach the law. "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talk; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor the things they affirm." (1 Timothy 1:5-7 KJ2000)

For Christ is the end of the Law [the limit at which it ceases to be, for the Law leads up to Him Who is the fulfillment of its types, and in Him the purpose which it was designed to accomplish is fulfilled. That is, the purpose of the Law is fulfilled in Him] as the means of righteousness (right relationship to God) for everyone who trusts in and adheres to and relies on Him. (Romans 10:4 AMP)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words; *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.* But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (Galatians 5:1-6 NIV - emphasis added)

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." If you keep the law of the tithe or Sabbath Day observances or even circumcision to be righteous you are bound by the law to keep the whole law. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10 KJV).

If we are truly born again, God has taken that heart of stone out of us and put a heart of flesh in its place. He has put His Spirit in us. He has put HIS laws in our minds and in our hearts. We are a NEW creation in Christ, and that is what the New Covenant is all about. "They that are in Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (Galatians 5:24). "Our old man was crucified with Him" (Romans 6:6).

In Christ we are new creatures and He is our righteousness. It is by His grace that we live in Him, move in Him and have our being in Him, not in the flesh of fallen Adam or the law (see Acts 17:28). Yield yourselves unto Christ and live in His righteousness and you will be free from dead religion and the lusts of the flesh.

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