

The Two Covenants

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1. When God was about to speak the law to Israel, of what did he tell Moses to remind them?

"Tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." Ex. 19:3, 4.

2. What covenant did he propose to make with them?

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." Verses 5, 6.

3. What is a covenant?

"A mutual agreement of two or more persons or parties, in writing and under seal, to do or to refrain from some act or thing; a contract."- Webster.

4. When Moses told the people what the Lord had proposed, what did they say?

"And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." Ex. 19:7, 8.

5. In the covenant which the Lord proposed to make with Israel what did he say that they were to do?

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant." Verse 5, first part.

6. What was his covenant which they were to keep as their part of the mutual agreement or covenant between him and them?

"And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone." Deut. 4:12, 13.

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7. What relation did the ten commandments bear to the covenant made between God and the children of Israel?

As seen by the last text quoted, the ten commandments were the "covenant" to which the Lord referred, when in proposing a covenant with Israel, he said, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant," etc. Ex. 19:5. The ten commandments were termed God's covenant before the covenant was made with Israel. They were not an agreement made, but something which God commanded them to perform, and he promised them something, provided they would keep them. Thus the ten commandments-God's covenant - became the basis of the covenant made between

him and Israel. The ten commandments, in all their details, are "all these words," concerning which the covenant was made. See Ex. 24:8.

8. After God had spoken his law (the "covenant which he commanded," Ex. 20:3-17), did he continue speaking to the people?

"And he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." Deut. 5:22, last part.

9. What was the nature of the instruction afterward given to Moses (Ex. 20 22 to close of Ex. 23)?

It was a practical application or explanation of the ten commandments, so that the people might be able better to understand what was involved in the keeping of them. The reference to the altar-how it should be built, and how approached -in Ex. 20:24-26, simply shows the care that God would have taken in his worship. In Ex. 23:14-19 we have other commandments also concerning worship.

10. When Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and they promised to be obedient (Ex. 24:3), what did Moses then do, that there might be no misunderstanding?

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. . . . And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people." Ex. 24:4, 7.

11. When the people had again heard the words of the Lord, and again promised obedience (verse 7), what was done to ratify the covenant which had thus been made?

"And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Ex. 24:8. "And sprinkled both the book and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." Heb. 9: 19, 20.

NOTE.-We have here the complete account of the making of the first covenant. It consisted of a promise of obedience to the ten commandments, on the part of the children of Israel, and the statement by the Lord of what he would do for them provided they obeyed his voice.

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12. Is the covenant made at Sinai the only covenant which God made with Israel?

"Behold, the days come, saith 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 ; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord." Jer. 31:31, 32.

13. What comparison does God make between the two covenants?

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." Heb. 8:6, 7.

14. In what respect was the first covenant faulty?

It must have been faulty in the very particulars wherein the second was better, namely, in the promises, as seen by last part of verse 6: "He [Christ] is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

15. What are the promises of the new covenant?

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith 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: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Heb. 8:10, 11. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 31: 34, last part.

16. Are these promises stated in the order of their fulfillment?

It is evident that in Jer. 31:33, 34, where the promises of the new covenant are more fully stated than in Heb. 8:10, 11, those promises are not stated in the regular order of their fulfillment; because forgiveness of sins is mentioned last, whereas it must necessarily precede the writing of the law in the heart. The order is as follows: Forgiveness of sins; putting the law in the inward parts, an writing it in the heart; remembering sin no more, or blotting out of sin; and translating the people to the heavenly Jerusalem, where all shall see and know the Lord. See Isa. 54:11-13; Rev. 21:2-4.

17. In the first covenant, to what was Israel's promise really equivalent?

In the first covenant the people promised to keep all the commandments of God, so as to be worthy of a place in his kingdom. This was a virtual promise to make themselves righteous; for God did not promise to help them. But says Christ, "Without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. And the prophet says, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isa. 64:6. The only perfect righteousness is God's righteousness, and that can be obtained only through faith in Christ. See Rom. 3:20-26. The only righteousness that will insure us an entrance into the kingdom of God, is "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. 3:9. Of those who shall

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inherit the kingdom of God, the Lord says, "Their righteousness is of me" (Isa. 54:17); and the prophet says of Christ, when he has taken his place as king over all the true Israel, "This is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." Jer. 23:6.

18. Yet what must be done in order to have eternal life?

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matt. 19:17, last part. See also Rev. 22:14.

19. Then how could ancient Israel have any chance for eternal life?

"How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the

transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Heb. 9:14, 15.

NOTE.-The fact that Christ, as mediator of the second covenant, died for the remission of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, shows that there was no forgiveness by virtue of that first covenant.

20. How alone can the good works required by the law be manifested in the lives of men?

See John 15:4, 5; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:20.

21. In order to have God make us "perfect in every good work to do his will," what must be our position?

"Submit yourselves therefore to God resist the Devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Rom. 6:13.

22. What is said of the law in the second, or new covenant?

23. "I [the Lord] will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Jer. 31:33.

24. Since no such promise was made in the old covenant (see Ex. 19:5-8; 24:3-7), were not the promises of the new covenant much "better" than those of the old?

25. When and how was the second covenant ratified?

26. By the death of Christ: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." Dan. 9:27, first part. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Heb. 9:16, 17.

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27. Then how could the Israelites, or any people before the first advent, derive any benefit from it?

By faith in the promised Redeemer. See Heb. 6:13, 16-20; Rom. 4:17.

28. How and in whom was the covenant with Abraham confirmed? In Christ. See Heb. 6:13, 16-20; Gal. 3:17.

29. Is there anything in the second covenant that was not in the Abrahamic covenant?

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:29. See also verses 6-9.

NOTE.-None should allow themselves to be confused by the terms first covenant and second covenant. While the covenant made at Sinai is called "the first covenant," it is by no means the first covenant that God ever made with man. Long before that he made a covenant with Abraham, and

he also made a covenant with Noah, and with Adam. Neither must it be supposed that the first or old covenant existed for a period of time as the only covenant with the people before the promise of the second or new covenant could be shared. If that had been the case, then during that time there would have been no pardon for the people. What is called the "second covenant" virtually existed before the covenant was made at Sinai; for the covenant with Abraham was confirmed in Christ (Gal. 3:17), and it is only through Christ that there is any value to what is known as the second covenant. There is no blessing that can be gained by virtue of the second covenant, that was not promised to Abraham. And we, with whom the second covenant is made, can share the inheritance which it promises, only by being children of Abraham. To be Christ's is the same as to be children of Abraham (Gal. 3:29); all who are of faith are the children of Abraham, and share in his blessing (Gal. 3:7-9); and since no one can have anything except as children of Abraham, it follows that there is nothing in what is called the second covenant that was not in the covenant made with Abraham. The second covenant existed in every feature long before the first, even from the days of Adam. It is called "second" because both its ratification by blood and its more minute statement, were after that of the covenant made at Sinai. More than this, it was the second covenant made with the Jewish people. The one from Sinai was the first made with that nation.

30. Then why was the covenant made at Sinai?

The Lord was just giving his law. The promise of the Israelites to keep it perfectly, and their failure; brought them face to face with the consequences of violating the law of God. The consciousness of guilt, and a sense of its consequences, would be much more forcibly impressed upon their minds than if they had not made the promise which they did. And being thus brought face to face with their sin, and realizing its full enormity, they would be driven to the only source of help, ample provision for which had been made in the covenant with their father Abraham. **Thus it might be said that the first covenant was made in order to bring the second covenant** (all the terms of which were the Abrahamic covenant) into bolder relief, and to secure its acceptance by the people.

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When it is demonstrated that the first covenant-the Sinaitic covenant-contained no provisions for pardon of sins, some will at once say, "But they did have pardon under that covenant." The trouble arises from a confusion of terms. It is not denied that under the old covenant, i. e., during the time when it was specially in force, there was pardon of sins, but that pardon was not offered in the old covenant, and could not be secured by virtue of it. The pardon was secured by virtue of something else, as shown by Heb. 9:15. Not only was there the opportunity of finding free pardon of sins, and grace to help in time of need, during the time of the old covenant, but the same opportunity existed before that covenant was made, by virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, which differs in no respect from that made with Adam and Eve, except that we have the particulars given more in detail. We see, then, that there was no necessity for provisions to be made in the Sinaitic covenant for forgiveness of sins. The plan of salvation was developed long before the gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), and was amply sufficient to save to the uttermost all who would accept it the covenant at Sinai was made for the purpose of making the people see the necessity of accepting the gospel.

Hebrews 9:1 is a text that hinders many from seeing that all God's blessings to man are gained by virtue of the second covenant, and not by the first. That text reads: "Then verily the first covenant

had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." This, together with the fact that when men complied with these ordinances of divine service, they were forgiven (Leviticus 4), seems to some conclusive evidence that the old covenant contained the gospel and its blessings. But forgiveness of sins was not secured by virtue of those offerings; "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Heb. 10:4. Forgiveness was obtained only by virtue of the promised sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9:15), the mediator of the new covenant, their faith in whom was shown by their offerings. So it was by virtue of the second or new covenant that pardon was secured to those who offered the sacrifices provided for in the ordinances of divine service connected with the old or first covenant.

Moreover, those "ordinances of divine service" formed no part of the first covenant. If they had, they must have been mentioned in the making of that covenant; but they were not. They were connected with it, but not a part of it. They were simply the means by which the people acknowledged the justice of their condemnation to death for the violation of the law which they had covenanted to keep, and their faith in the mediator of the new covenant.

In brief, then, God's plan in the salvation of sinners, whether now or in the days of Moses, is: **The law sent home emphatically to the individual, to produce conviction of sin, and thus to drive the sinner to seek freedom; then the acceptance of Christ's gracious invitation, which was extended long before, but which the sinner would not listen to; and lastly, having accepted Christ, and being justified by faith, the manifestation of the faith, through the ordinances of the gospel, and the living of a life of righteousness by faith in Christ.**