

The New Covenant

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In the case of Scriptures which are referred to but not quoted in full, it is strongly recommended to readers not fully conversant with them, that the references should be looked up in the Bible and carefully read.

Quotations of Scripture are generally taken from the "New Translation," by J. N. Darby.

INTRODUCTION

Some introductory remarks may be made as to the thought of covenant in the Scriptures generally. The word is of very frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, being first found in Genesis in the case of the covenant made by God with Noah (chap. vi), and with every living creature (chap. ix); and then with Abraham (chaps. xv and xvii) both in regard to the promised land, and also the seed to possess it. The word is found in many different connections in most of the Old Testament books. In Hosea vi, 7 we find that the commandment of God transgressed by Adam in Eden is spoken of as a covenant of similar character to the Mosaic law transgressed by Israel. There is a reference to this in Rom. v, 14.

The general idea is that of a bond or agreement between two parties. In the case of God's covenants they set forth the terms on which God has proposed to establish relations with men.

The corresponding word in the New Testament (Greek, *diatheke*) has, in addition, another meaning. It includes both the idea of a covenant or agreement, and also that of a will or testament as showing the disposition of a testator. This has led to some obscurity in the Authorised Version where the translation changes in some instances from covenant to testament in a confusing way. There seems to be no doubt that as indicating the connection with the Old Testament word and the bond between God and His people, the better translation is covenant in every case, except in Heb. ix, 16, 17, where the

context in verse 15, referring to the eternal *inheritance*, leads on to the thought of a testament or will, which comes into force on the death of a testator. The death of Christ fully disclosed the disposition of God and brought into force His will or testament. Eternal redemption having been accomplished by His death, He has secured the promise of the eternal inheritance.

For the purpose of this paper we may confine our attention to two covenants, viz., the Mosaic Covenant made with Israel referred to in the New Testament as the first Covenant or the Old Covenant, and in contrast to this the New Covenant prophesied of by Jeremiah (chap. xxxi). This is also to be made with Israel in a coming day, but in its spirit and essential features, as we shall see from the New Testament Scriptures, it is to be known and enjoyed and answered to in a practical way by the people of God during the present period.

The literal terms of the Mosaic Covenant introduced a system of legal demand, righteously due to God, whose law is holy, just and good, but the requirements of which Israel totally failed to meet. It is contrasted with the system of grace on the principle of faith, brought in by Christ and established by His death. In each of these two covenants we find there is a mediator, the full significance of which is seen in Christ, upon whom everything depends both for God and for His people.

It may be said that the Scriptures of the Old Testament (though looking on to Christ, and recording the unconditional promises of God and His purposes of blessing for His people) are in the main characterised by law, and the New Testament Scriptures by grace. • Indeed, the name of "Testament" which we are accustomed to use for each of

the two great divisions of the Bible, is taken from 2 Cor. iii, 14, 15, where the Apostle Paul states that at the present time the veil remains upon the heart of Israel and their thoughts are darkened when they read "the Old Testament" or Covenant.

Whilst the Old and New Covenants are thus put in contrast to one another, it must be remembered that the institutions and sacrifices connected with the legal system, and the various dealings of God with His people as recorded in the Old Testament, are full of instruction for us as types which have their fulfilment in Christ and the system of grace introduced by Him (Col. ii, 17; Heb. viii, 5; x, 1; 1 Cor. x, 11). These types have a very important place in the Old Testament Scriptures, but although occasional allusion will be made to them, it is not within the scope of this paper to develop in detail their teaching and application to Christianity.

It is also to be noticed that behind the letter of the law there was in measure a revelation of God's goodness, mercy and love in His dealings with the people, which was appreciated and responded to by the godly remnant of Israel all through the Old Testament history. Reference may be made in this connection to the book of Deuteronomy and to the renewal of the covenant which had been made at Horeb, with some additional features at the end of the wilderness journey in view of Israel entering the land. The faithful pleading of Moses brought before the people the governmental blessings and curses of the covenant following on obedience or disobedience, and also the provision in case of departure, for forgiveness and recovery by way of repentance and returning in heart to Jehovah (Deut., chaps. xxviii to xxx). There are many instances of this recovery, as in the case of the Judges, and especially under kings such as David, Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, and in the remnant brought back from Babylon.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE FIRST COVENANT AS RECORDED IN EXODUS

Before considering the present application of the New Covenant in Christianity, it may be well first to call attention to the account given in the book of Exodus of the circumstances connected with the introduction of the Law, in view of the fact that in the references to the New Covenant which will come before us in the New Testament, there is both comparison and contrast in regard to some significant incidents in the narrative recorded in Exodus.

In the early part of the book we have the intervention of God in raising up Moses, in order that His people Israel might be delivered from bondage to the Egyptian world-system, and be brought into the land of Canaan in accordance with His promise to Abraham. This involved the judgment of the Egyptians and the salvation of Israel at the Red Sea, after they had been placed on the ground of redemption typically set forth in the institution of the Passover. The song of victory in chapter xv brings into view Jehovah's kingdom, His holy habitation, and the mountain of His inheritance into which He will bring His people.

The journeyings of Israel from the Red Sea until they reached Sinai were on the principle of pure grace notwithstanding their murmurings, but at Mount Sinai (chap. xix) they were placed under the Covenant of Law, by which the blessing of the people was made dependent not only on the faithfulness of God, but also on their own obedience. They accepted these conditions saying "all that Jehovah has spoken will we do." The giving of the law was then invested with every circumstance that was calculated to impress the people with the seriousness of the conditions they had undertaken. They were kept at a distance and God descended to Sinai

in a cloud of darkness. There were thunders, lightnings, fire, smoke and an earthquake, and even Moses the mediator, or intermediary between God and the people, was full of fear and trembling.

After the commandments and judgments were given to Moses, he wrote them in the book of the Covenant (chap. xxiv). He then built an altar with which all the twelve tribes were identified, and sent the *youths* of the children of Israel (typically signifying a new generation morally) who offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. The blood of the sacrifices was then sprinkled upon the people by Moses, who said: "Behold the blood of the covenant that Jehovah has made with you." This was followed by the remarkable incident recorded in verses 9-11, where the representatives of the people went up with Moses and Aaron and saw the God of Israel in peace. Thus, whilst in relation to the public governmental dealings of God, the people were placed under the responsibility of the Covenant of Law; they were also typically identified with the sacrificial death of Christ, which is the only secure ground on which the relations of God with His people can be established in blessing, however little this may have been understood by Israel at the time (Heb. ix 18-23).

Moses was then called up into the mountain to receive the commandments written on the tables of stone, and he remained there for a period of forty days, during which he received instructions as to the making of the tabernacle, according to the pattern shown to him, for God proposed that the people should make Him a sanctuary that He might dwell amongst them. Here we see the connection between these two important institutions in Israel. The *Law* raised the question of *righteousness*, being the statement of the will of God to be fulfilled in obedience by His people. The *Sanctuary* where God proposed

to dwell amongst His people, called for the *holiness*, suited to His presence. The tabernacle in its typical significance had in view the vast divine system which would find its centre in Christ, typified by the Ark of the testimony where the tables of the testimony were to find a resting place. Whilst the *Covenant* is to form the bond between God and His people, the *Testimony* looks on to the day of display when the will of God as established by Christ is to be the moral foundation of the world to come.

Moses having received the tables of stone (chap. xxxi, 18), returned to the camp of Israel, and found that during his absence they had made a golden calf and were worshipping and sacrificing to it. In anger he threw down and broke the tables, and judgment was executed against the people. Moses as mediator pleaded with God for them, identifying himself with the people that they might not be utterly destroyed. He then pitched the tent of meeting provisionally outside the camp (chap. xxxiii), pending the decision of Jehovah as to how He would deal with Israel and whether He would grant the favour of His presence with them. Those who sought Jehovah went out to the tent, and there He spoke with Moses face to face as a man with his friend. Finding grace in God's eyes and reassured as to the divine presence with him and the people, he asked to see His glory, confident that God had resources by which He could fulfil His purposes of blessing. God then proclaimed the name of Jehovah and disclosed His goodness and grace in the sovereignty of mercy, but made it clear that whilst in long suffering He forbore with the people forgiving transgression, in His governmental ways He would not clear the guilty. As God's glory passed by, Moses was allowed to see it from behind, for the day had not yet come for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Law was given the second time on tables of stone hewn by Moses (chap. xxxiv), and we see from Deuteronomy x that before the tabernacle had been made, he prepared by divine instruction an ark of wood (typifying the new order of humanity seen in its perfection in Christ) in which the tables were to be placed. When Moses returned from the mountain after a second period of 40 days, his face shone as he came from the presence of God, reflecting the glory connected with the proclamation of Jehovah's name. The people were afraid to come near him on account of the glory, and he put a veil on his face whilst he spoke with them.

In the second giving of the Law, whilst the people were spared in God's mercy, the principle of their responsibility was not changed. The subsequent record in the historical books of the Old Testament of God's governmental forgiveness and long-suffering throughout their long history, only demonstrated the more fully their total failure and condemnation, as is pathetically described in 2 Chron. xxxvi, 11-16.

Along with the unfaithfulness of the people, the history recorded in Exodus not only shows Moses to be a remarkable type of Christ as Mediator, but also the Spirit of Christ is clearly seen in him, both in his faithfulness to God and his love for the people. The partial revelation of God's glory looks on to its full shining out in Christ, and Moses, in view of the people's failure, was conscious that God had hidden resources of wisdom and power which would come to light in His time (Deut. xxix, 29).

It was in the sad circumstances of the failure of Israel—kings, priests, and people—referred to in 2 Chron. xxxvi, that the prophet Jeremiah gave the message of Jehovah that the days are coming when He will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, the terms of which are, that He will write His law in their heart, and that all of them will know Him from the least to the

greatest; He will be their God and they shall be His people, and their sin He will remember no more (Jer. xxxi).

The terms of the Old Covenant as summed up by the Lord in Matt. xxii, 37-40 are, that "*thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy understanding,*" and "*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" It came to men as a righteous demand written on tables of stone, and it stated the conditions on which they were to live (Rom. x, 5). The New Covenant begins with God's "*I will,*" and instead of being a demand from without, it is a response created within being written by God in the heart.

THE NEW COVENANT IN ITS PRESENT APPLICATION AS SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We may now consider the present bearing of the New Covenant as presented in some of the New Testament Scriptures. Whilst these are in full agreement with each other as to the character of the covenant, there are some differences in the way of emphasis upon special features, which will come before us in considering the several Scriptures.

The application of the New Covenant in Christianity is more readily understood if we remember that God now has "*a people*" on earth, but with a heavenly calling, called out from both Jews and Gentiles (1 Peter ii, 9, 10; Acts xv, 14; Titus ii, 14). They have taken the place of the nation of Israel which has been set aside by God for the time being, as "*not my people*" (Hosea i, 9; Rom. xi, 25-27).

The establishment of the New Covenant was necessary, not only in relation to the responsible daily life of the people of God at the present time, according to the type of Israel's journey through

the wilderness, and for approach to God and priestly service in *the Sanctuary*; but also as securing and maintaining conditions needed for entrance into the purpose of God, with the spiritual wealth typified by *the Land of Promise*—the present realisation and enjoyment of eternal life, and the spiritual blessings with which God has blest us in the heavenly places in Christ.

THE NEW COVENANT AS PRESENTED IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The New Covenant has a specially important place in the epistle to the Hebrews which was written to Jewish Christians to establish them in the truth of Christianity. The writer tells them that they had not come to Mount Sinai with its terrors, but to the faith system connected with Mount Zion, the centre of blessing according to sovereign mercy, now seen in the risen and exalted Christ (Psalms lxxviii, lxxxvii, cxxxii to cxxxiv). He then gives a summary of the features characterising the divine system connected with Zion, closing with Jesus, Mediator of a New Covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, the basis on which all is established (Heb. xii).

The main subject of the epistle is the greatness and glory of Christ and the perfection of His work in accomplishing the will of God by the sacrificial offering of Himself. God has spoken in the Son who is the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession, and in the excellency of His Person He supersedes all that had gone before. It should be noted that there is a definite statement of the Deity of the Son in chap. i, 2, 3, as also of His incarnation in chaps. ii, 14; x, 5-10. He inaugurates and maintains the divine system, fulfilling all that had been typically set forth in Moses the mediator, and Aaron

the high priest, and the system of offerings connected with the material tabernacle in Israel under the first covenant. The abiding perfection and finality of that which the Son has brought in is emphasised, in contrast to the temporary and provisional character of all that was connected with the legal system. He is the Author of eternal salvation, He has obtained eternal redemption, and the inheritance is also eternal. He has secured a flock for God in virtue of the blood of the eternal covenant.

In the teaching of the epistle the people of God at the present time are looked at in two ways, corresponding with the type of Israel in the wilderness:—

(1) They are viewed in relation to the spiritual tabernacle as a sanctified people who are all of one with the Sanctifier, the great Priest over the house of God, and they have present liberty of approach to God in the holiest (chap. x). This is a contrast to the limitations of Israel under the Aaronic priesthood.

(2) They are also looked upon as journeying through this life in the path of faith leading on to the rest of God. Israel's failure through unbelief is recalled as a warning (chaps. iii and iv), whilst the numerous examples of faith seen in individual believers of old who acted in the light of the world to come (chap. xi), are for encouragement to run the race with endurance, Jesus Himself being the supreme example, the Leader and Completer of faith. The public position of reproach in identification with a rejected Christ "without the camp" (chap. xiii), goes along with the title by the blood of Jesus to enter the holiest.

The epistle shows the significance and importance of the New Covenant in each of the above connections.

First : In relation to the question of approach to God, the greatness of Christ as High Priest is seen both in His Person as the Son and His present position as seated at the right hand of God, where, in accordance with Psalm cx, He is constituted a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek (chap vii). This is contrasted with the weakness of the priest of Aaron's order instituted in connection with the law introduced by Moses, the whole system being ineffective owing to the self-will of the people and the insubject character of the flesh. There was consequently a necessity that both the priesthood and the law or covenant should be changed. Christ therefore, in order to take up His priestly service as Minister of the sanctuary (or "the Holies"), becomes Mediator of a better covenant (chap. viii, 1, 2, 6).

The mediator and the priest of old were different persons, and the priest was not equal to the mediator, whilst the repeated sacrifices were only types, having no intrinsic value, being unable to clear the conscience from sins, or to meet the claims of God's holiness or to establish His will. In contrast to this, all these types are now fulfilled in one Person, for Christ is both Mediator of the New Covenant and the Son who builds God's house and is over it as High Priest, having offered Himself to God a sacrifice perfect and final, by which the will of God was accomplished and eternal redemption obtained. His personal greatness is strongly emphasised, and also the infinite value and efficacy of His blood-shedding—the spotless perfection of the life which He laid down sacrificially. This is developed in chapters ix and x by way of contrast with the sacrifices and the blood of sprinkling which introduced the Old Covenant in Exodus xxiv, and also with the sacrifice for sin on the day of atonement (Lev. xvi), when the high priest under the Old Covenant as representing the people, was allowed to enter the holiest once a

year only, with the blood of the sin offering, the Holy Spirit showing by this limitation that the way into the holiest had not yet been made manifest. The Old Covenant, the material tabernacle, the Aaronic order of priesthood and the continually repeated sacrifices all formed part of the legal system which has now been fulfilled and done away in Christ.

The Mediator of the New Covenant by His sacrificial death secures for God and for His will a people who are delivered from lawlessness and who are bound to God in covenant relations in intelligent and responsive affection; for the death of the Mediator not only has efficacy for the removal of sin and sins, but it is the way in which God has become known in fulness of light, in righteousness and holiness and in His love. Those who are taught by the Mediator to know God thus revealed have full liberty to approach Him in the holiest. Here we see the connection between the present bearing of the New Covenant and the church or assembly as the house of God, where divine service is carried on in a spiritual way by those who know God, and who can approach Him with the sacrifice of praise in relation to the perfections of Christ, seen in making God known and in fulfilling and bringing to light all the typical significance of the various offerings of old.

It is because Christ is Mediator of a better Covenant than that of Moses that He has obtained a more excellent ministry than the Aaronic priesthood. We have a High Priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; Minister of the Sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, a spiritual structure not of this creation (chaps. viii and ix). He is thus able as great Priest over the house of God to lead in to Him by a new and living way, a people in all the value of His redemption work, who are of His own order as the

Sanctifier, and whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. He declares to them God's name and then takes His place in the midst of the assembly and sings praises to God (chap. ii, 11-12).

Secondly : The New Covenant is also a necessity for the journey through the wilderness in the pathway of righteousness according to the will of God. The love of God being made known by the Mediator, He brings to God a people answering to Him in a living way, their hearts and minds being won in willing obedience. This was what was lacking in Israel under the first Covenant, both in the wilderness journey and in their subsequent history, notwithstanding the faithful pleading of Moses. (See Deut. v, 28-29; xxx, 15-20 and throughout the book). There was a demand made that they should love God and obey His voice, but there was not a heart in the people to respond. Indeed, they hardened their hearts in unbelief, not hearkening to the word (Heb. chaps. iii and iv).

Those who have been secured by the Mediator of the New Covenant as a people for God, and who seek to answer to His mind and will by a walk characterised by obedience and righteousness, have also the unfailing sympathy and support of Christ as High Priest, to maintain them in the path of faith all the way through to the end of the wilderness journey.

Consequent upon the death of Christ, God has now a company of sons whom He is bringing to glory through the difficulties and temptations of the pathway, the Leader of their salvation having been made perfect through sufferings, for Christ became Man for the suffering of death (chap. ii). Although Son, yet He learned obedience from the things which He suffered, and having been perfected, became to all them that obey Him Author of eternal salvation (chap. v). He was tested and proved in

His pathway of obedience and suffering even to death, and now as High Priest He is able in His place of exaltation and glory to sympathise with and help those whom He is leading on to glory, ministering present supplies of grace and power so that they may hold fast their confession notwithstanding conditions of infirmity and circumstances of difficulty and pressure (chap. iv). Encouragement and strength are found to maintain us in this path according to the will of God, as we look steadfastly on Jesus, the Leader and Completer of the whole course of faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. The trials and sufferings of the way are to be endured as the chastening of God dealing in love with sons that we may be partakers of His holiness (chap. xii).

There is a remarkable conclusion to the epistle at the end of chapter xiii, indicating how by the work of God the New Covenant becomes effective in us in a practical way. As the God of peace, He brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the power (or virtue) of the blood of the eternal covenant. A flock has been secured for God bound to Him in this holy bond of love by the Lord Jesus, according to the abiding efficacy of His sacrificial death and its unchanging witness to the love of God. The end in view is that God might perfect us in every good work to do *His will*, working in us that which is *well pleasing* in His sight through Jesus Christ. We come under divine teaching that we may take character from the Shepherd who has been here entirely for *God's will*, and upon whom the heavens opened as the One in whom God was *well pleased*. The love of God which was brought fully to light in Christ's death, thus finds a present answer in His people in their daily lives, as they are formed in response to His love for His will and pleasure.

Along with the remarkable development of the truth according to the divine speaking in the Son, there is also running through the epistle a striking note of exhortation and encouragement. We are called on to give heed to the importance of what has been spoken, and to consider in His varied glories the One who is both the Speaker and the subject matter of these wonderful communications, so that in the appreciation of what is set forth in Christ, there may be diligence and energy in following it up in full assurance of faith and of hope. We are not to stop short through neglect or slothfulness at what is elementary, but to go on to perfection or full growth according to the height of the divine calling, both in relation to the service of the sanctuary and to the end in view in the pathway of faith.

THE NEW COVENANT IN RELATION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the institution of the Supper on the night of His betrayal, the way in which the Lord referred to the New Covenant has special interest and significance. He said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." This is evidently a reference (both in fulfilment of the type and by way of contrast) to the blood of the Covenant of which Moses spoke, as we have seen in Exod. xxiv and Heb. ix 18-23; and the teaching of the Supper (although having a unique setting of its own) corresponds with the present bearing of the New Covenant which we have considered as it is developed in the epistle to the Hebrews.

From the gospel narratives we see that it was when the Lord was gathered with His disciples to eat the Passover, which He was about to fulfil by His sacrificial death, that He instituted the Supper as a memorial of Himself. The typical meaning of

the Passover—the sprinkled blood of the Lamb slain and roast with fire—speaks of the redeeming value and sacrificial efficacy of the sufferings and death of Christ as meeting the claims of God's righteousness and holiness. In keeping the feast of unleavened bread we are to be maintained continually as a redeemed people in accord with the significance of the Passover Lamb (1 Cor. v, 7, 8), and thus in sincerity and truth we will be found in moral suitability when we come together to eat the Lord's Supper.

In the teaching of the first epistle to the Corinthians we see the Lord's Supper in its setting in relation to the church. The Apostle Paul had received it from the Lord Jesus and delivered it to the church at Corinth. Their disorder in partaking of it when come together in assembly (chap. xi), and the way in which some were compromising the fellowship by association with idolatry and idol sacrifices (chap x), is the occasion for the Apostle recalling them to the true significance of the Supper. It was intended to be the expression of the fellowship or communion of the blood and the body of Christ. In partaking of it together, the saints as being part of the "one body," are identified with the death of Christ, and engage themselves to be true to Him in His absence. This gives the character of the Christian fellowship, not only locally but universally. It is contrasted in chap. x with the communion or fellowship in Israel, where those who ate of the sacrifices, such as the peace offering, were identified with the altar (Lev. vii, 11, etc.). Similarly in the case of the Gentiles in their idol sacrifices they were identified with demons. The Apostle insists on the exclusive character of the Lord's table as the expression of the Christian fellowship.

The loaf and the cup (Luke xxii; 1 Cor. xi) both present Christ as having given Himself in death.

The one signifying His body devoted to the will of God and given for us, and the other His blood poured out, His life laid down for us. This speaks not only of the efficacy of His death in the accomplishment of the will of God, but it is also the abiding witness of the love of God in sending His Son that we might live through Him. It thus goes far beyond anything that could be set forth even typically in the sacrifices under the Law, not only in that they could not take away sins as is pointed out in the epistle to the Hebrews, but also they could not make God known nor declare His love. Thus the Lord's invitation to *drink* of the cup of the New Covenant in His blood, introduces a new feature not found in the Old Testament type of the blood as seen in Exodus xxiv and elsewhere. Compare the prohibition in Lev. xvii. Christ as the Mediator of the New Covenant brings to God a redeemed people who know Him as revealed in holy love, the death of the Mediator having fully met every claim of righteousness.

The object of the Supper is that by way of His death we might call the Lord to mind during the time of His absence. We are set free in the abiding value and efficacy of His redemption work, to be occupied with the Lord Himself and the love made manifest in His death, but which abides unchanging in all its greatness in present activity towards His own. Until He comes again, we thus announce His death in the scene where He died.

The love of Christ as Mediator cannot be separated from the love of God, whose will He came to do. The Mediator of the covenant is the beloved Son whose love to God was the spring and motive of His devoted obedience even unto death. It is His Person that gives character and value to the work He undertook in the body prepared for Him that He might accomplish the will of God.

He is Himself the perfect expression of the love He came to make known, and those whom He wins by the love declared in His death, He attaches to Himself and thus maintains them as quickened in responsive affection in the blessing and truth of covenant relations with God. All this known and enjoyed gives character to the worship of God and of Christ when the saints come together in assembly.

In 1 Corinthians we see how the New Covenant at the present time stands in relation to the church or assembly of God. The Apostle, in dealing with questions of church order (chap. xi, 17 to chap. xiv), shows how the way of love (chap. xiii) which is brought before us so powerfully in the Lord's Supper is to regulate us when together in assembly, so that the exercise of gifts may result in edification.

In the weekly remembrance of Him in the Supper the Lord Jesus teaches us more and more of the depths of the love of God, and maintains it in freshness and power in our hearts. As we appreciate divine love in this way, the Supper becomes spiritual food by which we are sustained in mind and spirit in accord with the Mediator, taking character from Him so that we may be here not only when together in assembly, but in our daily lives a people in whom God can take pleasure as being morally in accord with Him.

The love which found full expression in the death of the Mediator still remains in all its greatness, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. It is now radiant in His face, and as we look upon the glory of the Lord we are increasingly formed in divine love—transformed according to the same image, from glory to glory, as we shall see in considering 2 Cor. iii.

While the Lord's Supper stands in direct relation to the New Covenant, bringing afresh to our minds and hearts the way in which the Mediator made the love of God known to us by His death, it also

prepares the way for our being led into another sphere of spiritual blessing and relationship. As the Lord teaches us the infinite depths of the love which reached us in His death, the Supper also becomes the entrance for us into the full height of the spiritual sphere of assembly blessing and privilege where Christ as Son and Head can lead us into the wonderful extent of the thoughts and purposes of divine love (the good pleasure of God's will, Eph. i, 3-6), which He came to bring into actuality and which find full expression in Himself as the risen and glorified Man. The great Priest over the house of God, by whom we approach God in the holiest, as we have seen in the epistle to the Hebrews, is also the Son by whom God has been declared and by whom the Father's name has been made known. He brings to the Father those who, being spiritually quickened, are such as He sought, true worshippers who can worship Him in spirit and in truth (John iv, 23); and who, being in the full light of the revelation made by the Son, and in present living association with Him, can answer to the Father's love in responsive affection and in the conscious knowledge by the Spirit of the relationship of sons (John xx, 17; Gal. iv, 6). The Son has His own special place of pre-eminence in this circle of divine affections. If the Father has a company of "many sons," Christ is Himself the firstborn amongst "many brethren."

THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW COVENANT IN THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

The present application of the New Covenant as seen in 2 Cor. iii, introduces some additional features, and has special reference to the circumstances connected with the second giving of the law as recorded in Exodus xxxiv.

The attempts made by judaising teachers to disparage the Apostle Paul, and to undermine his work by bringing the Gentile believers into bondage to the legal system, gave occasion for him to explain the true character of his ministry. The Corinthians themselves were the undeniable proof of his apostleship. They were his letter of commendation written in his heart, for they were his beloved children. As being Christians, they were manifestly a living epistle of Christ, who had used the Apostle's ministry by the Spirit of the living God, to write Himself upon the fleshy tables of their heart, in contrast to the stone tables upon which the law was written. Paul's New Covenant ministry was in the power of the Spirit who quickens or makes to live, in contrast to the law which was characterised by "the letter" that kills.

Ezekiel, who saw the glory of the Lord depart from His house at Jerusalem consequent on the iniquity of Israel (chaps. ix to xi), prophesied of the everlasting covenant that God will make with His people in a coming day, when He will take away their stony heart and give them a new heart and a new spirit (chap. xxxvi). The nation will then be revived out of its apparently hopeless condition of death as seen in the vision of dry bones, and will be made to live in response to God (chap. xxxvii). Their hearts will thus be divinely prepared for the writing in them of the terms of the New Covenant of which Jeremiah prophesied in chap. xxxi. We can see how the spirit of these Old Testament prophecies has received a present fulfilment in Christianity.

The living character of the Apostle's ministry is developed in 2 Cor. iii by way of contrast to Exodus xxxiv. When the tables of the law were brought down from Sinai the second time, the face of Moses shone. He had been in the presence of God who had made His name of Jehovah known in a new

way as a "God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting iniquity . . . upon the third and upon the fourth generation."

The glory connected with this proclamation of Jehovah's name was reflected in the face of Moses. The children of Israel could not look upon the glory of his face, for while it spoke of God's mercy in sparing them and forgiving their unfaithfulness, it left the principle of their responsibility and of God's ways in government unchanged notwithstanding His longsuffering forbearance. The long-continued and persistent rebellion of the people, in spite of all God's patient dealings as recounted in 2 Chron. xxxvi, and confessed by Daniel (chap. ix) and by the returned remnant in Nehemiah ix, ended finally in the nation's rejection of Christ, and "wrath has come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. ii, 15, 16).

The law promised life on the ground of obedience and threatened a curse on disobedience (Gal. iii, 10-12); therefore, although it was introduced with temporary glory in the face of the mediator, it became a ministry of death and of condemnation, for it came making a demand for righteousness from sinful men. The long probation of man "in the flesh" under divine culture in Israel, ended thus in a full demonstration that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be, and they that are in flesh cannot please God" (Rom. vii, 5; viii, 7, 8).

There is a remarkable scene at the end of Exodus xxxii after Israel's sin, when Moses went up to God to plead for them, saying to the people, "perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin." This, however it was not possible for him to accomplish. It

had to wait until Christ came as Mediator of the New Covenant, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God" (Heb. ix); "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter ii). What the law could not do was effected when God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh sacrificially in the Person of the sinless One (Rom. viii). In the cross, where God's righteous judgment against sin was vindicated, there was also the full declaration of His love. This is the abiding and surpassing glory of which Paul speaks in 2 Cor. iii. It shines now in the face of the Mediator, and gives character to the ministry of the New Covenant. Instead of death and condemnation, there is now a ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness in virtue of the redemption work of Christ. It was when Jesus was glorified that the Spirit was given to be received by those who believe on Him (John vii, 39). The Mediator thus secures a people for the will of God, who know Him and live to Him by the Spirit in response to His love.

Israel is still in the dark with the veil on their heart when the Old Covenant is read. They have not yet been able to see the end in view in the typical system connected with the law, which, having had its fulfilment in Christ, is now done away. When their heart turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. Psalm cxviii looks on to the day when Israel, with a deep sense of divine mercy, will confess that Jehovah's right hand of power has brought in salvation. They will then give Christ His true place as the headstone of the corner, saying "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah" (Matt. xxi, 42; xxiii, 29). In Psalm cxix there is a very full and remarkable expression of the exercises through which they will pass in connection with the writing of the law in their hearts. It is striking to see the deep-felt need for divine quickening (verse 88, etc.),

prayer for which occurs many times in the Psalm. How different is this from the spirit of self-confidence with which the people undertook to obey in Exodus xix!

The Lord is the quickening or life-giving spirit of the Covenant (verse 17, referring back to verse 6), and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the law of love and of liberty for God being known in His love, His service is perfect freedom. The Apostle preached Christ Jesus as *Lord* (chap. iv, 5), and it is remarkable how the authority of Christ is emphasised in the last three verses of chap. iii. The service of the Mediator becomes effective by the quickening power of the Spirit in those who recognise and submit to His supreme authority as Lord.

The present end in view as the result of the Apostle's ministry is seen in the last verse of the chapter. The glory which shines in the face of the Lord Jesus is the glory of redemption. He came to do the will of God and accomplished it in his death, by which God's righteousness was established and His love fully declared. The answer to this is seen in Christ's present position of exaltation. The glory of Christ, who is the image of God, cannot be separated from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which now shines out in the Gospel (2 Cor. iv, 3-6). There is no veil either on the face of the Mediator or on the heart of the believer. Those who stand in the righteousness He has accomplished, and who have received the Spirit are able to look upon the glory of the Lord, and are thus morally transformed according to the same image. This is well illustrated in the case of Stephen at the end of Acts vii. Being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus, and while his enemies stoned him to death, he prayed that the Lord would not lay the

sin to their charge, thus manifesting the spirit of Christ under the most testing circumstances.

As believers continue learning more and more of the glory of divine love they become increasingly conformed to the image of the Mediator, like the Lord and like one another, all taking character from Him, being thus perfected from glory to glory, answering to the mind and pleasure of God. Such a people have full liberty of approach to God by the Spirit in the light in which He has been made known by the Mediator.

THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW COVENANT

The New Testament Scriptures we have considered show plainly how the New Covenant is fulfilled in its spirit and essential character in Christianity. The question of sin and sins having been dealt with by Christ as Mediator, He has attached to Himself a people according to the value of His redemption work, and has brought them into the light of the knowledge of God, whose love has been declared in the death of the Mediator. They are delivered from lawlessness by the power of divine love made operative in their hearts by the Spirit, and are thus recovered for God's will, taking character from Christ, whose delight it was to do the will of God.

Whilst the New Covenant is final and abiding, having been established by the Mediator on the immutable basis of His sacrificial death, our present enjoyment of the blessings secured by the covenant, depends on the maintenance of the conditions which the Mediator has brought in, viz., righteousness, obedience and love. As we abide in Christ we are maintained in moral correspondence with Him.

Besides those New Testament Scriptures in which the New Covenant is mentioned by name, there are

also many others where its principles and spirit are developed, a few of which may be briefly referred to. The consideration of the various Scriptures, though involving a little repetition in so far as they cover somewhat similar ground, may help to a fuller understanding of the true character and present bearing of the New Covenant.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans, written to establish believers in the truth and power of the Gospel, deals with the position and normal experiences of those who have come to the knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus. By the sacrificial death and the resurrection of Christ, God is known in His righteousness and power in redemption, with the result that, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also access into the present favour of God and rejoice in hope of His glory.

Even in the endurance of actual conditions of tribulation we have full assurance of hope, for the love of God manifested in the death of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. In coming thus under divine teaching, the love of God is known and enjoyed as a present reality producing a living response in His people (chap. v).

By His death and resurrection Christ has brought in righteousness and life for men. In attachment to Him as the new Head we are identified with Him both in His death and in His life, and are entitled to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We are thus enabled to yield ourselves to God as alive from among the dead, and our members instruments of righteousness to God.

Having got our freedom from the dominion of sin, we have become bondmen to righteousness, and as bondmen to God we have our fruit unto holiness and the end eternal life (chap. vi).

By the death of Christ we are entitled to be free from bondage to the legal system of the Old Covenant, so that as joined to Him who has been raised up from among the dead, we might bear fruit to God, serving in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter. The willing service of God under the New Covenant springs from response to divine love (chap. vii).

The power which makes good the realisation of our title to be free from bondage to indwelling sin, lies in the Spirit. The people of God are looked upon as being in the wilderness, according to the analogy of Israel in Num. xxi, after their failure under the law had been met by the provision of the brazen serpent. This typifies the condemnation of sin in the flesh (lawlessness thus being judged in its root principle) in the person of the sinless One, the Son of God, who was made sin for us. This was followed by the song of Israel to the springing well, typifying the Spirit as power to live according to God. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus the new Head, sets free from the law of sin and death, so that righteousness may be fulfilled in those who walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit (chap. viii).

The unfolding of the Gospel in the preceding chapters forms the basis for the Apostle's exhortation in chapter xii to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God which is our intelligent service, and instead of being conformed to this world to be transformed by the renewing of our mind that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

A leading feature of the epistle is the establishment of the kingdom of God at the present time in

the Lord Jesus. Instead of the reign of sin and death, there is opened up to faith the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. His administration of grace brings believers under the moral sway of God, and in the confession of Christ as Lord, present salvation, and the power of the kingdom is realised in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. As thus subdued by grace, we become receptive of divine teaching, and the Mediator by the Spirit can lead us into the depths of the love of God. As attached to Christ and taking character from Him, we are formed for the will of God in the spirit of the New Covenant. The presentation of the Gospel as set forth in this epistle shows the connection between the kingdom of God and the New Covenant relations established with His people.

The way is thus prepared for the apprehension and enjoyment of family relationships and affections as children and sons of God, known consciously by the Spirit, and for entering into the purpose of God which comes into view in chapter viii. The sons of God are being led by the Spirit through the trials and sufferings of the present time, awaiting the redemption of the body and the day when the whole creation will be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.

The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, addresses Christians from among the Jews, who had been going astray as sheep but had returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. They had been born again by the living and abiding word of God, and had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Knowing this, he can address them as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedi-

ence and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (chap. i). This is an allusion to the inauguration of the first Covenant as we have seen in Exodus xxiv, when the children of Israel as set apart for God nationally, were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices and committed to the obedience of the law.

Christians are now recovered to God as set apart by the Spirit in all the value of the blood of Christ, in view of a new kind of obedience, that of Christ Himself, who lived by every word of God and whose delight it was to do His will. This is developed in the epistle in connection with the suffering involved in the path of righteousness to which Christians are called. Christ has left us a model that we should follow in His steps (chap. ii, 21). As Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, we are called on to arm ourselves with the same mind, so that we may live the rest of our time in the flesh to God's will (chap. iv, 1, 2). Here we see that the Mediator of the New Covenant is also the example, and He leads us in His own path of obedience.

The present end in view has a double aspect; first, in relation to service Godward, believers coming to Christ as a living stone, despised indeed by men but chosen of God and precious, are also as living stones built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; and, secondly, in testimony to men, we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession in covenant relation with God, to set forth the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness to His wonderful light (chap. ii).

If the people of God are called on to suffer as Christians, for well doing or for righteousness sake, we are to accept it as being according to the will of God, and as sharing in the sufferings of Christ, with the day of glory in view, having the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon us (chaps. iii and iv).

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

The first epistle of John was written to confirm believers in the living character of the truth as seen in Christ, in view of the deceptive character of the world-system, and the presence of Antichrist and false prophets. He writes to those "who believe on the name of the Son of God," by whom the truth about God has been fully declared, so that it can now be said that God is "in the light" (chap. i, 7).

What is emphasised in the epistle is that "God is love"—that which He is in His nature. This found full expression in the sending of His Son, not only as the propitiation for our sins, but also that we might live through Him. "Hereby we have known love because He has laid down His life for us." God's love has thus been perfected with us in that which it has wrought for us. Divine love has taken account of the whole of our responsible life and has dealt with everything so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, for we have been cleared of all that would have been a cause of fear in that day. "Even as he is we also are in this world." "Perfect love casts out fear." "We love because he has first loved us." The proof that we know God is that we love Him; the proof that we love Him is that we keep His commandments; and this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another. "He that loves not has not known God, for God is love." "If we love one another God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (chaps. iii and iv).

In this we see the spirit of the New Covenant. The Son of God was manifested that He might take away our sins, and as we abide in Him we are delivered from sin or lawlessness, and we practice righteousness as He is righteous. Divine love

reached us in the death of Christ, and it is as knowing that we have been loved by God that we come under the obligation to love. As we give heed to the teaching of the epistle, and are true to the Covenant relations established by Christ, recognising the obligation in the grace and strength supplied by Him, to walk as He walked in a pathway characterised by obedience, righteousness and love, conditions will be maintained for the present realisation of fulness of joy in the conscious knowledge of the possession of eternal life.

Along with the light of God known to faith, there is also developed in the epistle the thought of the work of God seen in His children—those who have been born of God. These two lines, though distinct, are closely linked together in the teaching of the epistle. Righteousness and love are the practical features by which the children of God are made manifest. That which was seen in its perfection in Christ when on earth is now being reproduced in us by the Spirit in answer to the new commandment. That which “is true in him and in you” (chap ii, 8).

THE SAMARITAN IN LUKE X AS THE TRUE NEIGHBOUR.

In the parable of the Samaritan (Luke x) the Lord Jesus gives an instructive illustration of the spirit of the New Covenant. In reply to the lawyer's enquiry as to what he should do to inherit eternal life, the Lord asks him how he read the law, meeting him thus on his own ground according to the principle laid down, that the one who has done the things required by the law shall live by them (Rom. x, 5). The lawyer replies by giving a summary of the law:

Man must love God with his whole being, and his neighbour as himself. This the Lord accepts as a right answer, but the lawyer seeks to justify himself by raising a question as to who is his neighbour.

The man in the parable who was going down to Jericho and was robbed, wounded and left half-dead, was in deep need of a neighbour. He represents man's true condition of utter weakness as fallen. The priest and the Levite are official representatives of the Old Covenant. They see the man but pass on not recognising any obligation upon them to act a neighbour's part. The law taken merely in the letter as a system of demand, had given a character to the religious officials and leaders of that day which was displeasing to God. They were ready to lay heavy burdens upon men, and were exact in minute details of religious observances, but left aside the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith (Matt. xxiii). They had not learned the meaning of God's word through the prophet Hosea: "I will have (that is, I desire) mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. ix, 13). In the absence of suitable moral conditions, God has no satisfaction in a mere routine of sacrifices and religious ritual (Isaiah i, 10-17).

It may be remarked here that, as Christians, we need to be on our guard against this danger of legality which is natural to religious flesh, and which yields neither mercy for men, nor pleasure to God. One may use even a knowledge of Christianity by way of exacting requirement and demand on others, instead of being morally affected by the grace seen in Christ, in such a way as to commend it to others by being an exemplification of it in oneself.

The Samaritan, who was outside the legal system of Israel, came to the man and raised no question as to whether he was a neighbour, but seeing his help-

less condition, was moved with compassion, came up to him, met his immediate needs and, having put him on his own beast, brought him to the inn and took care of him. He left him in the hands of the innkeeper with provision for his further needs and a charge to continue the care, and a promise that whatever he spent more he would repay him when he returned. The Lord then calls on the lawyer to answer his own question as to who was the neighbour. He has to reply: "He that showed him mercy." "And Jesus said to him go and do thou likewise."

The Jews refusing the truth presented by Christ said that He was a Samaritan (John viii, 48), and He did not refuse the name of reproach. Though He had "come under law" (Gal. iv, 5), He was morally outside the religious official circles of the day. He was the Stone which the builders rejected, but He was man's true Neighbour and moved by love He has met our need, for the law of God was within His heart. He teaches the New Covenant effectively for we see it practically carried out by Him. The end in view for those who have experienced His gracious activities in care and healing and have thus come under the teaching of divine love, is that they should be established in the grace and power of the Mediator and taking character from Him be enabled in the power of love to go and do likewise. We may see the full answer to the lawyer's first question, in that the moral conditions for inheriting eternal life are brought about in those who have been enabled to walk in the path of the will of God, as having come under the blessed hand of the Mediator of the New Covenant. The innkeeper of whom the Lord speaks in the parable, clearly represents His people, to whom, in view of His absence, the Lord commits the case of need with a charge to continue His care.

THE LORD JESUS HIMSELF THE COVENANT

In Isaiah, chap. xlii, Jehovah called attention prophetically to His Servant, "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," and He promised to give Him for a Covenant of the people (verses 1 to 6). This is further developed in chap. xlix. Israel, who should have been God's servant, had utterly failed, and when the true Servant of God came to bring in glory and blessing, He was despised and rejected by the nation. Consequent on this, Israel has not yet been "gathered" for the promised earthly blessings of the Covenant, but the way has thus been opened to wider and higher purposes of blessing at the present time, for Jehovah says to His Servant in answer to Israel's rejection, "I have even given thee for a light of the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. xlix, 5, 6; Acts xiii, 46, 47). Isaiah liii shows how, by His sacrificial death, Christ would establish the basis of the Covenant in righteousness for the pleasure of Jehovah.

The New Testament Scriptures we have considered show how this has been fulfilled, and is to be known and enjoyed by believers during the present church period. The Lord Jesus is Himself the Covenant. We have seen in Him One great enough in His Person to make God known in the fulness of His love, and also One who, as Man, perfectly responded to the love which He knew and revealed. Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking a servant's form in the body prepared for Him so that, obedient even unto death, He might accomplish the will of God in redemption. He makes us to live in response to the love of God declared in His death, and He attaches us to Himself, leading us in the path of righteousness which

has been brought to light in all its moral perfection in His own life of devoted obedience.

As being thus secured by Christ for God in the bond of the New Covenant and answering to it in mind and heart in our responsible life of obedience in the path of righteousness, a people for the will and pleasure of God, there are also opened up to us, as we have seen, the assembly privileges connected with the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which constitutes the saints a spiritual house, the dwelling place of God, where divine service is now carried on after a spiritual order; also the present enjoyment of the blessing of eternal life, and the heavenly position and relationship with the Father of sons in association with the ascended Christ, the beloved Son, the Firstborn amongst many brethren.