

The background of the cover is a painting. It depicts a gnarled, brown tree with several branches extending towards the right, adorned with numerous bright pink blossoms. The tree stands on a rocky, uneven shore. In the background, a vibrant blue body of water stretches across the horizon, with distant, hazy mountains visible under a sky filled with large, white, billowing clouds. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

The Glory
of the
New Covenant

Reza Safa



THE GLORY
OF THE
NEW COVENANT



THE GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT

by Reza F. Safa

REZA SAFA MINISTRIES

The Glory of the New Covenant

Copyright © 2018 by Reza Safa

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrievable system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except by the inclusion of brief quotations in a review, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptures noted KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible, King James Version*.

Reza Safa Ministries
P.O. Box 18555
Irvine, CA 92623
Tel. 714-880-8670
www.rezasafa.com

Cover and interior design by
NEJATTV

Manufactured in the United States of America

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	9
<i>Introduction</i>	13
<i>Disregarding Redemption</i>	
<i>Chapter One</i>	23
<i>God's Plan for Creation</i>	
<i>Chapter Two</i>	33
<i>God's Glorious Plan of Redemption</i>	
<i>Chapter Three</i>	41
<i>Understanding Bible Covenants</i>	
<i>Chapter Four</i>	49
<i>Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant</i>	
<i>Chapter Five</i>	59
<i>The Mosaic Covenant</i>	
<i>Chapter Six</i>	75
<i>Righteousness Through the Law</i>	
<i>Chapter Seven</i>	87
<i>The Book of Galatians</i>	
<i>Chapter Eight</i>	99
<i>Works of the Law Versus Works of Faith</i>	
<i>Chapter Nine</i>	105
<i>The Importance of Identity</i>	

Dedicated
to
All the
Hungry
Souls of
Men and Women
Who Love
God, His
Truth, and
Are
Tired of Religion



FOREWORD

Nearly two thousand years have passed since God's Prince, Jesus Christ, was crucified, buried, and raised on the third day. Redemption for all of humanity became a glorious reality as a result of what Jesus accomplished through these three acts.

Today it seems that a great awakening is occurring in the universal Body of Christ concerning this redemptive work of Jesus. Increasingly, people across the earth are receiving revelation from God on this very important matter.

However, in order for us to understand the fullness of the redemption of Jesus, we must also have a clear understanding of the New Covenant — the eternal agreement that God established for humanity through the finished work of His Son Jesus.

This book is an attempt to unveil the foundational truths of this divine legal agreement. I am convinced that understanding what Jesus has done through the New Covenant will revolutionize our lives as believers, creating an awareness of who we are as sons of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Without a doubt the New Covenant is the most substantive legal document in all human history and in the halls of heaven. It could be nothing less, since it is

an irrevocable contract involving the God and Creator of the universe and His glorious Son for the absolute benefit of all humanity.

Through this eternal legal agreement God has established every provision for every individual to become His legal heirs and members of His household. Without the New Covenant man is condemned in eternal darkness and lost forever. But through this Covenant every person who embraces faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ immediately steps into the realm of His glorious light and life, and stands before God with the same righteousness and sonship as Jesus Himself.

The glory of this New Covenant is beyond description. It is like the treasure of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 13:52. It is such an amazing and far-reaching work of grace that if it were not for the help of the Holy Spirit, no one would be able to grasp it.

In short, the New Covenant far surpasses our lowly knowledge and wisdom.

However, through the revelation power of His Holy Spirit God gives us the ability to understand and embrace this New Covenant – because without such an understanding we really cannot know the God of the Bible! Nor can we love God without the proper knowledge and understanding of this New Covenant.

True love is based on fully knowing someone. How can we claim that we love God without knowing who

He is? And all our efforts to know God will be in vain without understanding what He has done in and through Jesus' redemptive work!

This is the great divide that exists between Christianity as a mere religion and Christianity as a life-giving relationship with almighty God. And this is precisely where many Bible scholars fall short. They teach Greek and Hebrew biblical text in the academic institutions, yet their hearts are light years away from God. And why is that? It is because they lack the true knowledge and understanding of who God is and what He has accomplished through the redemptive work of His glorious Prince.

Oh, how heaven craves for humanity to know Father God through the revelation power of His New Covenant!

My deepest prayer is that the knowledge you gain from this little book will draw you close to the Father, and that through it you will fully take your position as His son.

Pastor Reza Safa



INTRODUCTION

DISREGARDING REDEMPTION

One of the greatest failures of modern Christianity has been the lack of true understanding among believers concerning the redemption provided by Jesus – what God actually accomplished through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

If there is one human fault that breaks the heart of heaven, it is that believers know so little about what Jesus has accomplished for them through His redemption.

Yes, many have some knowledge concerning the works He did while He walked here on the earth. But in general the Church lacks revelation knowledge concerning the doctrines of Jesus' completed work of redemption.

In fact, if you listen carefully you will discover that the majority of sermons and teachings predominant throughout the Church today seem to be stuck in the future tense. Particularly in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles one phrase that is common among preachers and teachers is, "God is going to . . ." or "God will . . ." –

“God is going to bless you.”
“God is going to open a door for you.”
“God is going to use you.”
“God will cancel your debts.”
“God will bring you out.”
“God will give you a breakthrough.”

Often these phrases come with a condition, an “if” -

“ . . . if you tithe.”
“ . . . if you fast and pray.”
“ . . . if you persevere in faith.”

By contrasts the perfect tense — “has done” — is a rarity in today’s sermons and teachings.

The First Book of the New Covenant

It is a common assumption today that the four Gospels are the first books of the New Covenant or New Testament. But if you read carefully you will realize that the majority of the accounts in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John occur under the structures of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses.

In reality the New Testament — the New Covenant — began with the death of Jesus, when the veil of the temple was “rent in twain” (Matt 27: 51, KJV). We will discuss this matter in greater details in the pages ahead.

So what is the real first book of the New Covenant? It is Paul's epistle to the Romans, which gloriously unveils the truth about our redemption that was accomplished through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Of course, I may be a little biased, but I believe that Romans is the greatest book ever written in all human history, because within it is contained a virtual treasure-trove of the knowledge of God, unobtainable through man's wisdom!

When I read and meditate upon the book of Romans, I feel as if I am swimming in a measureless ocean of God's great mercy and love for humanity. It is His endless divine masterpiece. Yet, what can most Christians quote, from memory, out of the book of Romans? A few of the most obvious nuggets of golden truth, perhaps, but there is much that has been left unmined and unclaimed by the majority of believers.

Martin Luther, the pre-eminent theologian of the Great Reformation, described the book of Romans as "the most important piece in the New Testament," and went on to exhort:

*It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word, but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.*¹

Paul's epistle to the Romans defines the New Covenant. Without an extensive knowledge and understanding of this little book, believers will remain in obscure darkness concerning the redemption they have in Jesus Christ.

In regards to the knowledge of God, the book of Romans may be considered the very first book of the Bible, the Constitution of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. Mastering the book of Romans will open the door of understanding for you to the rest of Scripture.

Romans closes the gigantic theological gap between the Old and the New Covenant. In fact, Romans provides a bridge between these two covenants. The gap that existed was between the Law and Grace – man's work versus God's finished work!

The doctrinal problems that exist within the modern Church today are based solely on this one issue: The lack of understanding Christians have concerning the vast differences that exist between these two covenants!

It is crucial for us to understand that there exists no union whatsoever between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Their differences are irreconcilable!

Without an accurate understanding of the book of Romans, believers will simply refurbish and reuse the Old Covenant Law. The apostle Paul understood this well when he warned the Galatians: "You have become

estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). The bottom line is this: We cannot abide by the Old Covenant Law and experience the grace of God at the same time!

Pauline Revelation

While they were all front-row witnesses to Jesus' short earthly ministry — as He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the multitudes, declared the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4:17), suffered, died, arose, and ascended to the right hand of the Father — none of Christ's original apostles were given the grace to fully unveil what Jesus accomplished through His redemptive work.

That singular commission was given to Paul, a zealous and law-bound Hebrew Pharisee, who unmercifully persecuted the early Church until, one day, on the road to Damascus he was personally confronted by the risen and glorified Christ (Acts 9).

I have often wondered how this man, who had lived so much of his life in the thick of religious piety, absolutely enchained by the Law, could, so undoubtedly, cross over and embrace the grace of God through Jesus Christ!

It is a fundamental reality that we can only fully receive what we understand. Just as one cannot pour

five gallons of water into a one-gallon container, in spiritual terms we can never fully understand and embrace Christ's completed work of redemption on our behalf until our finite understanding is supernaturally expanded by the revelation power of God's Holy Spirit.

How could Saul-become-Paul, steeped for his entire life in the Law of Moses and orthodox Jewish tradition, receive the most glorious revelation ever known to mankind? The answer is both simple and profound: God alone gave him supernatural understanding!

Only God, through His Holy Spirit, could reveal to Paul the fullness of the gospel — all that was accomplished for humanity through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection!

In truth, before Paul and his fellow New Testament apostles, the gospel was unknown and obscured to the world. While the Old Testament prophets certainly had glimpses of Who was to come and His divine purpose, even they were mostly in the dark. In fact, Paul goes as far as to say that to him the “mystery” of God's grace through Jesus was especially revealed (Ephesians 3:3), a mystery *“which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”* (v. 5).

In this passage the Greek word for “mystery,” *musterion*, means something that is closed or shut, a hidden truth! What Paul is saying here is that the full truth of the gospel — that Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and rose again for all humanity, both Jew and

Gentile – was entirely unknown and unheard of prior to the revelation God gave to him.

While the other apostles certainly understood the impact of Jesus' death and resurrection for the Jew alone, the apostle Paul was the first to understand that this saving grace was for all humanity. This is why Paul so emphatically withstood Peter at Antioch (see Galatians 2:11-16).

God through the apostle Paul laid the foundation of the New Covenant as revealed throughout the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15), and every interpretation of the rest of Scripture, both Old Testament and New, has to match this foundation, otherwise the Bible will be a book of contradictions!

The belabored preaching and teaching of so many of God's ministers today actually result in a refutation of the finished work of Christ and the foundation of the New Covenant, and these teachings, done in ignorance, must be withstood in the same way Paul withstood the wrong teaching of Peter.

In his book *The Pauline Revelations and Their Old Testament Connections*, Gary Dykes explains:

In Ephesians 3:9, one should be aware that the participle which is rendered "... has been hidden" (NASB), is a perfect tense, passive voice, genitive case.... Paul is beyond question inspired, and his use of the perfect tense participle is not accidental; it contrasts with the preceding aorist infinitive, 'to illuminate', and the following aorist participle

“created.” The contrast indicates that the “mystery” (of Ephesians 3:9), was prior hidden, and that it remains as such – until one inspects Paul’s writings. The action is not punctiliar! ... In other words, the “dispensation of the mystery” remains a shrouded mystery UNTIL one utilizes Paul’s insights. Even today it remains veiled the uninitiated or unenlightened. Hence, the perfect tense is nicely employed.”ⁱⁱ

Sadly, I believe Mr. Dykes is accurate in his analysis: The Pauline revelations, so foundational to understanding the New Covenant, are still a mystery to millions of Christians worldwide.

Paul’s fourteen epistles (I consider the book of Hebrews a letter of Paul) are the keys that unlock the New Covenant and the redemptive work of Jesus. Absent an extensive revelation knowledge of these key writings, believers stand in constant danger of mixing the Old Covenant with the New Covenant – with the disastrous result being a hodge-podge collection of mismatched doctrine.

I believe that this is where large demographics of the Church stand today, and this dangerous spiritual deficiency, evident in many church organizations and denominations, is due to this one singular factor: a lack of knowledge and understanding of the New Covenant.

Far too often, what belongs to the Old Covenant is taught and practiced under the principles of the New

Covenant, leaving much of the Church in a confused state of spiritual immaturity.

As a matter of fact, one could argue that there is a greater glory manifested by God's servants under the Old Covenant than we see today under the New Covenant by God's redeemed sons.

Under the Old Covenant faithful people were passionately committed to their covenant. After all, there was no other covenant with which they would mingle! However, today many believers are dangerously mixing the two covenants, confusing what belongs to the old with what is only applicable under the new! How can this be?

The time is now for the Church as a whole to return to the foundational and un-compromised truths of the New Covenant, unencumbered by the Law-bound precepts of the Old.

Chapter One



GOD'S PLAN FOR CREATION

What is the reason that God created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1)?

The answer can be found in one word: Love.

The complicated order that subsists in the creation indicates that love is behind it all. Love plans, organizes, and orders because love cares.

The entire universe, from the smallest living cell to the greatest planet and star, carries an unfathomable organization.

Chaos cannot create order.

Nothingness cannot create organization.

Chaos and disorder are indications of an absence of love.

The so-called “Big Bang” theory is a term in contradiction, an oxymoron. How can something that explodes into destruction and disorder create life and order? How could something with an unflawed and impeccable order be born out of destruction and disorder?

(I like to call this " The Law of Order!")

The creation demonstrates the existence and involvement of a loving and a caring Creator. Creation tells us of the Creator. The flowers in the field, the manifold plants, vegetation, and trees; the mountains, rivers, and valleys; the vastness of the oceans and all the living creatures in them reveal the nature of the Creator to us: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead..." (Romans 1:20, KJV).

The creation shows us that the One who created all this glory, beauty, and order must be someone of absolute love, purity, power, and majesty. A tyrant cannot generate love and purity. A cruel and oppressive ruler could never have the capacity or the ability to create peace and order.

History has demonstrated many times over that where a tyrant is in power, oppression, corruption, death, and chaos are the results. A ruler can only implement what his character dictates. Agnosticism is irrevocably flawed, for an uncaring God would not have been capable of a creation so detailed and precise.

The Creator of this universe must be a loving and a caring homemaker.

Man, the Crown of Creation

Of all God's creation, man is the supreme being whom God has ordained to rule over all other created beings.

There are, obviously, immense differences between man and all other living creatures, such as those in the animal world. Man is the only one in God's creation with three distinctive faculties: spirit, soul, and body. Only two can be discerned within animals: a body and some sort of soul or instinct. As a result of this distinction, man is a superior being with the intelligence and power to exert dominion over all other created beings.

It is clear both from Scripture and from simple observation that man has a unique role in God's creation.

He has been made to rule over all other created beings on the earth. It is therefore safe to conclude that man is the crown and the reason for the creation of our visible world.

We see this truth clearly in the first book of the Bible:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

Here we see that God's plan for man was lordship over all other created beings on the earth. David stresses this truth in his declaration:

What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.... (Psalm 8: 4-6)

And the book of Hebrews confirms that *"God has put all things in subjection under his [man's] feet"* (Hebrews 2:8)

However, we see that early on God's plan for man was derailed through rebellion and sin.

The Great Fall

God's desire was for man to have dominion over all the works of His hand on the earth, including all spirit beings (fallen angels). And Adam started off right by dominating the physical world, sorting and naming all of the animal creation (Genesis 2:19, 20). Adam, however, failed on the spiritual part. When it came to dominating the spiritual beings on the earth, he disobeyed, and instead of subjugating these fallen spirits (angels) he became subject to them.

Eve was tempted by Satan (who came in the form of a serpent) to disobey the command of God. Adam, on the other hand, was not deceived, nor was he tempted. He chose to disobey God all by himself (see 1 Timothy 2:14).

While he was influenced by Eve, Adam committed a profoundly more far-reaching sin in that he rebelled against God's command and obeyed God's enemy.

In doing so, Adam – and because of him all humanity – became subject to Satan's authority. Scripture declares, *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"* (Romans 6:16)

Because the seed of all humanity was placed in Adam, when Adam sinned, all humanity automatically became sinful, as the apostle Paul explains: *"... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men ..."* (Romans 5:12).

Sin separated Adam from God, and united him with Satan, God's enemy! Because of this sinful nature, Adam could no longer remain in fellowship with the Holy God. Consequently, an enormous chasm formed between God and Adam – and all Adam's descendants throughout history.

Death became the inheritance of all humanity because of Adam's fall.

Spiritual Death

In Romans 5:12 we observe three distinct elements at work in death:

- a. the spiritual,
- b. the physical, and
- c. the eternal.

Spiritual death encompasses a complete separation of man from God, and the consequences of this separation are both physical death and, ultimately, eternal death or damnation.

In order for us to fully understand God's plan for the salvation of humanity, we must pay careful attention to the concept of spiritual death, which has two parts: 1) separation from God, and 2) spiritual unification with Satan. In rebelling against God, Adam not only obeyed Satan, but he actually united with him, becoming one in nature with Satan.

A person who is spiritually dead has no common ground with God. His spirit is dead, which means that he is unable to commune with God. Notice what Jesus says to the leaders of His people:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is

no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

Similarly, the apostle Paul tells the Ephesians: *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...” (Ephesians 2:1-2).*

And the apostle John declares: *“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19).*

As you can see, no one is excluded: The whole world lies under the sway of satan. That includes the good, the bad, the religious, the impious, Jews, Gentiles, the educated, the unversed, the rich, the poor — the entire world — just as Paul declares: *“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...” (Romans 3:23).*

Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were “once darkness” (Ephesians 5:8). Notice that Paul does not tell them that they were “in the darkness,” but that, because of sin and the absolute influence of the devil, they were darkness — its very embodiment! You see, as much as light is the nature of God, darkness is the nature of satan, and because of Adam's sin all humanity became partakers of the satanic nature through Adam's sin.

Just as darkness cannot be transformed into the likeness of the light, man's nature cannot be rehabilitated, reformed, or upgraded. It can only be

replaced! Romans 5:17 offer this stunning picture of man's condition, and his only option for change:

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)

The Contemporary English Version reads, "Death ruled like a king because Adam had sinned." You see, death, satan's nature, took the reign over man's being. satan's nature is death and darkness, the opposite of life and light, just like hatred is the opposite of love.

The apostle John tells us: "*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death*" (1 John 3:14).

Do you see the connection between hatred and death, satan's nature? Pay close attention to what John says next: "*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*" (1 John 3:15).

You cannot call yourself a Christian if you have hate in your heart. It is impossible, because hate and love cannot mix!

Now look at what the apostle Paul says in the book of Galatians concerning the carnal man and his behavior:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred,

contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

These scriptures are accurate depiction of the natural man who is spiritually dead. Religions of men have worked tirelessly to devise rules, laws, and ordinances in an effort to lead man out of his wretched, hopeless condition and reunite him with God – and all have utterly failed! That is because man has no legal right to approach a holy God. He is an outcast, and by nature he is a son of the devil (see John 8:44).

Separation from the Spiritual Realm

Not only did man lose his relation with the God of all spirits, but he also lost his connection with the spiritual world. He fell from the spiritual realm into a physical realm. This fall resulted in the greatest disadvantage to the human makeup. You see, man was created by the Father of all spirits, made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27).

But the fall reduced man to a physical being in rank with other physical beings. He could no longer walk in the realm of all possibilities as God had created him (Matthew 19:26). He became confined to his physical properties and five senses: hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch. These senses became the means of

communication between his soul and the world around him, the physical realm.

All the information that the natural man can obtain is accessible only through his five senses. Man has never been able to rise above his senses, because his spirit is no longer the dominating force in his life. If he cannot see it, touch it, hear it, taste it, or smell it, it doesn't exist to him.

The only remedy to reunite man with God is to remove Adam's satanic nature from him. And there is only one way for that to happen: Substitution.

Chapter Two



GOD'S GLORIOUS PLAN OF REDEMPTION

God, being all knowing, understood that man would miss the mark and consequently walk a dangerous path. So God made a provision — a miraculous provision of love.

God's love always makes a provision. His love can never fail. It pays a price, but never loses. God's love is always victorious.

And His love made a way for mankind — an amazing way. The apostle Paul laid out the full glorious plan as follows:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which

He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him. (Ephesians 1:3-10)

God chose us before the foundation of the world for sonship. That is His purpose for each and every individual who puts his trust in Jesus and His finished work of redemption.

Some people insist that God created us to serve Him, but that doesn't fit the character of a loving Father. How many parents would have children because they needed servants?

Recall that Adam was not called the servant of God, but “the son of God” (Luke 3:38). In reality, God is not lacking for servants fully equipped to carry out His will at a moment's notice. He has millions of them – they are called Angels! (see Matthew 26:53, Hebrews 1:14)

The notion that we were created to be God's “servants” is borne out of a lack of understanding of the New Covenant!

Remember that Paul writes: “*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many **sons** to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*” (Hebrews 2:10, *emphasis added*).

You see, through the New Covenant God took us, his enemies, and turned us into sons, making us joint heirs of all things with His Eternal Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17).

Jesus, Our Substitute

However, in order to bring us into the position of sonship, Jesus had to become the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

Our sin nature — or better said, satan's nature — had to be eliminated from our lives. Divine love made a sacrificial provision, a substitute. Jesus offered Himself before the Father as the great substitute for our sinful, satanic nature. God's Prince took on our mantle, our nature. God made Jesus to become what we were — sin — just as the apostle Paul states:

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

Jesus took on our nature, sin, and in its place we have taken on His Nature, righteousness. Jesus was the perfect — and only — substitute for us. His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane indicates that the Father had no other means for our salvation other than the sacrifice of His Beloved Prince. He became the Lamb led to slaughter for our sake (Isaiah 53:4-5).

God drew a perfect plan and executed it perfectly. The timing had to be right. Paul relates that *“when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...”* (Galatians 4:4).

But redemption is more than a mere plan for man’s deliverance from the camp of the enemy. Man had to learn and experience the process of this glorious Redemption so that He would not lose it once obtained. To mature and brew the salvation in the heart of man through Grace, God had to show the awfulness of the sinful nature.

Grace would be meaningless without understanding the hideous nature of sin. Just as a crime is measured by its punishment, God had to show man, through a judicial system, the awfulness of sin.

From Adam to Moses

For a period of about 3,500 years death was a supreme leader among sons of men. Paul declares:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned – For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of

Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Romans 5:12-14)

Notice verse 14, "... death reigned from Adam to Moses..." Here Paul is referring to physical death. Although the Law had not yet been given, and sin was not imputed unto people prior to the Law, yet death through sin did its work in the lives of men anyway.

When the Law came through Moses, it awoke a God-consciousness in the hearts of the covenant people of God.

The Law revealed the holiness of God and the filthiness of man's nature. It brought an awareness of God's presence. In a sense, it revived man's soul to God. As a result of the Law, man became conscious of a true God.

The Purpose of the Law

The Law had a dual purpose. First and foremost, it was meant to bring the knowledge of sin to man and to show sin's hideous nature (Romans 3:20 and Galatians 3:19). While sin was certainly in operation before the Law, there was little knowledge or understanding of it.

For instance, people who coveted were not aware of the nature of their sin. When the Law came and

commanded us not to covet, people realized that they were guilty of covetousness.

The Law actually revived sin and its consciousness in man, and that consciousness brought an awareness of God's holiness and man's separation from God.

The Law didn't bring people any closer to God, but rather it revealed the vast gulf that existed between God and man, making man painfully aware of his guilt before God. Paul writes:

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. (Romans 7:9-11)

The second purpose of the Law was to keep God's people for the faith that was to come through Christ (see Galatians 3:23). Once the Law revealed the nature of sin, the souls of men, hungry for God, began an endless quest to attain God's righteousness. The longing in the hearts of God's covenant people, the Jews, to have fellowship with Him became so intense that they added more laws as they interpreted the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). These interpretations are all collected in what is known as the *Talmud*, an exhaustive record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish laws and traditions.

God gave the Law to create a hunger for righteousness in the hearts of His covenant people – a hunger that would, in turn, bring them to Christ. The Law was a guardian, a tutor (Galatians 3:24) meant to carry the people of God to Christ so that through Christ they would be satisfied with God's righteousness.

Sadly, so many of God's chosen people got stuck in the Law and missed this unique and glorious blessing. While God intended the Law as an introduction of His people to their Messiah, they were blinded and rejected Christ (John 1:11).

We will discuss this more in a later chapter. Let us now take a close look at the formation of God's redemptive plan.

Chapter Three



UNDERSTANDING BIBLE COVENANTS

In order for us to fully embrace God's redemptive plan of salvation, we must understand Bible covenants, which are the foundation for all of God's interaction with humanity.

A covenant is, in essence, a treaty through which God deals with mankind. Without such a treaty, there can be no positive interaction between God and man on this earth.

Under the Mosaic covenant, for instance, God had no dealings with any other nations on the earth besides Israel. While there were times when God spoke to and about other nations through the Old Testament prophets — such as Egypt, Assyria, and Persia — it was only in the context of their dealings with Israel. God had made no covenant with these nations, and they could expect no favorable interaction with Him.

The Apostle Paul's admonition to the young pastor Timothy to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15) applies to us today, as well. The lack of a comprehensive understanding of Bible covenants on the part of pastors and Christian leaders, as well as rank-and-file believers, has led to an abundance of

faulty teaching and erroneous doctrine across the body of Christ.

It is, therefore, of utmost importance for us to gain an understanding of Bible covenants; to do so will give us full understanding of our authority and inheritance as those who have been purchased through the blood of Jesus.

Most theologians identify six major covenants established by God throughout Scripture:

The Adamic Covenant (Genesis 1-2)

The Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9)

The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12)

The Mosaic or Old Covenant (Exodus 19)

The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7)

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31)

While all of these covenants are worthy of our attention and study, for the purposes of the present discussion, we will confine ourselves to three: the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic or Old Covenant, and the New Covenant. In brief:

- The Abrahamic Covenant is the covenant that God established with Abraham (Genesis 12) in regards to the formation of the nation of Israel, the establishment of the land of Israel, and the call of Israel to bring forth the Messiah.
- The Mosaic Covenant is the covenant that God established with the descendants of Abraham, the

Jewish people, on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20-25) concerning their relationship with Him.

- The New Covenant is the covenant that God established with Jesus for the salvation of humanity.

Each of these three covenants form a vital part of God's plan for mankind. Once we understand these three covenants, we gain a clear picture of God, His character of justice and mercy, and His plans for each of us.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Through the sin of Adam mankind became, by nature, an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). Through Adam's sin, satan's nature entered into man, and man became a fallen being, alienated from the life and the glory of God (Ephesians 2:14, Romans 3:21). Thus, man was condemned to live in darkness and apart from God.

But God had a plan before the foundation of the world – redemption through Jesus Christ.

In order to save us from our sin nature, Jesus had to become a flesh-and-blood man. And in order for that to occur God needed a group of people through whom Jesus, the Messiah, would enter the human realm. God needed a generation of righteous people – righteous

as in having a right standing with God, a people who would accept God's ways. But where would He find such a people?

The First Righteous Man

It is important to understand that both God and satan are spirit beings, and for them to operate in the physical world they use humans. The first man God chose to use after the fall of Adam was Abel, whom Scripture identifies as a righteous man (Hebrews 11:4). By contrast, satan chose Cain, Abel's brother. While Abel loved God, Cain did not.

His heart being evil, Cain was a prime target for satan, and because of that he rose up and killed his righteous brother Abel. With that one evil act, God lost His first righteous man, and so he turned to Adam and Eve to produce a child who would carry on that mantle of righteousness. That man was Seth, of whom Scripture records: *"And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew"* (Genesis 4:25).

As Seth grew, he responded to the call of God, and six generations after his seed was still carrying that mantle of righteousness that had begun with Abel. I believe that deep down in their spirits, God had placed a desire for them to bring forth the Messiah, who would be the salvation of all mankind.

The seventh generation after Adam, through Seth, was the renowned Enoch, the first man after the fall whom Scripture tells us “walked with God” (Genesis 5:24) and “pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

Genesis 5 records that Enoch walked with God for 300 years (Genesis 5:22), at the end of which time “God took him” (v. 24) – meaning Enoch did not die but went straight into the presence of God. The only other man in all of human history who experienced that same blessing was Elijah (2 Kings 2:11).

Enoch was 365 years old when God took him - meaning he did not walk with God the first 65 years of his life. It is never too late to walk with God!

The only way for satan to stop this incredible proliferation of righteous individuals across the earth was to corrupt them – to taint their hearts for God and for His plan of salvation through the Messiah. And this is what we see in Genesis 6:1-2:

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

“Sons of God” is a reference to the sons of Seth, the righteous line, while the “daughters of men” refers to the daughters of Cain. While some have tried to interpret “sons of God” as referring to angels, Scripture is clear that angels cannot be sons of God, but serve

only as His servants, just as Hebrews 1:14 tells us: *“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”*

Plus, a spirit being cannot turn into flesh and blood. If it were possible, then Jesus would not have been born through the Virgin Mary. The immaculate birth would have been pointless! Additionally, satan might also have turned himself into a human being, with the potential of doing even more damage to humanity.

While we see in the Old Testament that angels can appear in human form, Scripture is also clear that they are not flesh and blood. They cannot interact intimately with mankind, as would have been the case if they were the “sons of God” referred to in Genesis 6.

It was, instead, the sons of Seth who took the daughters of Cain as their wives. Ultimately, the hatred that was in Cain's heart towards God's redemptive plan took root in the hearts of all men – except one: Noah (Genesis 6:5-8). Scripture tells us that of all humanity on earth at the time, “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (v. 8).

At the same time, the corruption resident in mankind's fallen nature (which is satan's nature) grew in the hearts of men almost to the point of bringing about the extinction of humanity. The earth was filled with violence (Genesis 6:11), and in order to protect succeeding generations, God brought judgment on those living at the time. But before He did, He gave people a chance to repent, even as He directed Noah to

build an Ark of safety in which He and His family would escape.

It took Noah about one hundred years to build the Ark (See Genesis 5:32; 7:6), allowing plenty of time for everyone to hear the message of God's Redemption, believe in it, and turn from their wickedness. But ultimately only eight people believed.

In order to protect humanity from violence and annihilation following the flood, God instituted statutes and parameters to guide human conduct (Genesis 9:6).

God also addressed the need for a people through whom the Messiah would come forth to bring humanity the redemption it so sorely needed. A righteous line was the key, a righteous man who would follow God's plan of Redemption for mankind – someone who would walk by faith.

Scripture tells us that the man was Abram, from the tribe of Eber, a son of Shem. Note the following key scripture concerning God's testimony about Abram (whose name God would later change to Abraham):

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him. (Genesis 18:19)

Keep this verse front and center, because it is key to the Abrahamic covenant.

Chapter Four



UNDERSTANDING THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Abrahamic covenant is the beginning of God's formation of a people who would bring forth the Messiah and fulfill God's plan for the salvation of mankind.

It took God some two thousand years to find and position such a man of faith, who would follow Him unreservedly and believe in His Redemptive plan. This man Abraham is key to our faith in Christ, and we need to take the time to study him carefully and learn of the spirit that was in him. He is as Scripture declares, the father of our faith (Romans 4:16).

The Call of Abraham

The call to the man who would later be named Abraham was monumental in God's plan for humanity:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

Notice that Scripture specifies God “had said” to Abram — a past-tense emphasis, meaning that God had already spoken to Abram prior to the preceding verse in the city of Haran (See Genesis 11:31). Stephen, in his testimony before the Jewish council, reveals that Abram had already been called in Ur of Chaldeans:

And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. (Acts 7: 2-4)

While it does not appear that Abram was quick to move, we see that he obeyed God after the death of his father. A bit of historical background on the time of Abraham is in order here so that we are not quick in any sort of conclusion on his behalf.

At that time there were no written scripts concerning God. The knowledge of God was passed on from generation to generation orally. But it seems clear that Abram would not have known about God through his family, because his father's household worshipped idols (see Joshua 24:2).

We do know that Noah was still present during Abram's life, and died when Abram was 58 years old. Shem, Noah's son and Abram's great grandfather, was still alive when Abram died. What we do not know is

whether Abram knew Noah and Shem. If he did, and if his father did, then how could they be idol worshippers?

Whatever knowledge of God that was available to Abram that possibly led him to obey God, we do not know. But we do know that God appeared to Abram and that by itself may have been impressive enough to get Abram to obey God. As Stephen relates in his testimony (Acts 7:2), this appearance is the very pre-incarnation of the Lord Jesus as He appeared as an Angel of the Lord to many in the Old Testament (see, for example, Genesis 18:1).

The act of leaving his father's house was Abram's first step of faith. He left not knowing where he was going, trusting God completely (Hebrews 11:8). Such an act of absolute faith on Abram's part was crucial to God's plan of redemption for all humanity. For, you see, redemption must be in its entirety a work of God without human involvement. Redemption is based on Grace, and Grace is entirely God's work (Romans 11:6).

If man had somehow intruded into the redemptive plan of God, man's Adamic nature would have derailed that redemption from the start. Therefore, the redemptive plan of God is exclusive of man's efforts. All man can do is to follow God's prepared plan. We see this clearly in the Abrahamic covenant.

In Genesis 15, we witness God cutting this amazing redemptive covenant with Abram. Finally, God had

found a man through whom Messiah would enter onto the human stage. After two thousand years, redemption was becoming a reality. Naturally speaking, connecting with Abram in this manner must have been joyous for almighty God. After all, Abram was to become the father of faith, through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed!

Concerning this Abrahamic covenant there are a number of important issues that we need to consider:

- God's covenant with Abraham was a blood covenant.
- God's covenant with Abraham was a unilateral and unconditional covenant.
- God's covenant with Abraham was — and is — eternal.

The Blood Covenant

A blood covenant is a treaty between two parties, sealed with the blood of a sacrifice — meaning a life of an innocent animal has been given so that the covenant may be established.

There are serious consequences for breaking a blood covenant. The phrase “cut off from his people” is often used in the Old Testament to refer to those who dishonored God's blood covenant. In the New Testament we read:

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29)

In Genesis 15 we observe as God cuts a blood covenant with Abram. Five different animals are killed, and four of them are cut in two, down the middle, with each piece placed opposite of the other (Genesis 15:10).

Traditionally in such a situation, after the animals were sacrificed the two parties cutting the covenant would walk between the sacrifices as a way of acknowledging the seriousness of their covenant. If one party were to break the covenant the other would do to him what was done to the animals.

In the case with Abram we see that God puts Abram to sleep (V. 12), showing that God is cutting an unconditional, unilateral covenant with Abram — meaning that God alone will carry the responsibility of the covenant. Abram cannot break it!

In a bilateral covenant both parties are responsible for the keeping of the agreement, but in a unilateral, unconditional covenant the responsible party is the one who seals it and bears the responsibility.

While the covenant God cut with the children of Israel on Mount Sinai was bilateral, the Abrahamic covenant was unilateral in order to protect the coming of the Messiah. For, you see, had that covenant depended on

Israel's obedience, Messiah would have never been born!

Thus, God put Abram to sleep and He Himself walks through the parted animals and cut the covenant with Abram. Actually, in truth God cut this covenant with Himself, and made Abram and his descendants the benefactors. With mankind taken out of the process, there could be no possibility of a broken covenant.

Framework of the Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant has four major purposes:

- The formation of a people through Abraham – the Jews.
- A secure land in which this people would dwell – Israel.
- The bringing forth, through this people, of the Messiah – Jesus.
- The establishment of the Messiah's physical kingdom.

Each of these points includes a pre-appointed time. For example, the birth of Isaac, through which Messiah was to be born, had an appointed time, as we read in Genesis:

And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Genesis 18:10)

For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. (Genesis 21:2)

We also see that the giving of the land to Israel had an appointed time:

But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (Genesis 15:16)

To be precise, it was 430 years after they had migrated to Egypt (Exodus 12:40-41).

Then again, the birth of Jesus had an appointed time:

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. . . . (Galatians 4:4)

So also will be Christ's return to the earth to establish His physical kingdom, as Jesus Himself said:

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (Matthew 24:36)

Purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant

While the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional, by contrast the Mosaic covenant was conditional. In a conditional covenant, the parties involved are bound to a set of rules and conditions. If either party fails to meet those conditions, the covenant is broken and no longer in effect.

The Abrahamic covenant was established for the formation of the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Israel has, for the most part, possessed the land, even though they have, time and time again, disobeyed the God of their covenant.

The significance of possessing a land lies not only in the ownership, but also in the identity of its people. For, you see, a people without their own land and borders lack a social and the cultural identity.

One modern example of this lack is the Assyrian people. They are an ancient people group, which once possessed a great land and kingdom, and were, in fact, a threat to many kingdoms in the ancient world.

Today, however, there are some four million Assyrians scattered throughout the world. They are not recognized as a nation because they lack a land of their own where they can practice their own culture, language, and customs as a people group.

Similarly, without its own land, Israel could not have been a guide to other nations. Who would have known the ways and practices of their religious laws? Who would have paid heed to their reports, their prophetic declarations, their history, and etc.?

Possessing their own land was so central to the God's purpose for Israel that He kept repeating the promise He gave to Abraham and his descendants. The entire Old Testament is filled with promises of God concerning the land of Israel, past, present, and future! (See, for example, Genesis 13:14-18; 21:12; 26:3-4; 28:14-15; Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Ezekiel 20:33-37, 40-42; 36:1-37:28; Zechariah 12:10-14.)

And in Romans 11:25-27, the apostle Paul makes clear God's intention to save and maintain Israel as a nation.

To seal His covenant with Abraham, God gave him the sign of circumcision, whereby Abraham, his household, his servants, and whoever joined with Abraham were to be circumcised as a seal of the covenant in the flesh of every Hebrew man and proselyte. This was a significant act, indicating that once one enters into such a covenant, there is no breaking away. It is a type of our new birth through Jesus Christ under the New Covenant.

Circumcision in the flesh of the male Hebrews separated them from all other nations and people groups on the earth. God marked them in their flesh – first, in order for them to know that they belong to

Jehovah God, that they were in covenant with Him; and second, for them to be separated, set apart, sanctified, from all other nations of the earth who worshipped other gods.

Chapter Five



THE MOSAIC COVENANT

As we discussed in the last chapter, God established two covenants with Israel: the unconditional, unilateral Abrahamic covenant, and the second, conditional Mosaic covenant. The first covenant God cut with Abraham, the patriarch, in order to establish the nation of Israel and their land. The second, Mosaic covenant, the covenant of the Law, God cut directly with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

Unlike the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant was a conditional, or bilateral covenant, dependent upon the obedience of the children of Israel (see Deuteronomy 28).

As the Old Testament record shows, while they promised God that they would keep the laws laid out in the Mosaic covenant, time and time again they broke that promise. Ultimately their disobedience prompted God to deliver His people Israel into the hands of their enemies.

To understand the Law of Moses better, some scholars have divided it into three different divisions:

- **The Commandments.** Also known as the Ten Commandments, these laws were given to govern the moral life of Israel (See Exodus 20:1-17).
- **The Ordinances.** Known also as the Ceremonial Law, these ordinances were given to govern the religious rites, ceremonies, and orders of Israel. The Ordinances deal largely with the daily activity and responsibilities of the Levitical priesthood (see Exodus 25-31).
- **The Judgments.** This portion of the Law was the social code for Israel, governing all aspects of the day-to-day issues the children of Israel faced. This is laid out through the entire book of Leviticus.

Purpose of the Mosaic Law

As we look into Scripture, we see two main purposes for the Law of Moses:

- To reveal the reality of sin.
- To guard God's covenant people - Israel - for the faith that was to be revealed through the coming of the Messiah.

First and foremost, the purpose of the Mosaic Law was to bring the knowledge of sin and to show its hideous nature (Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:19). As mentioned earlier, the Mosaic Law revealed the standard of God's righteousness:

For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Leviticus 11:44-45)

Man's sinful nature is exposed the moment God's holiness is revealed. Before the Law came, sin was in the world, yet there was no knowledge of it.

For instance, people who coveted were not aware of the nature of their sin. But when the Law came with its commandment not to covet, people realized that they were guilty of covetousness. The Law actually revived the consciousness of sin in the hearts of God's people, the Jews (see Romans 7:7-8).

While the Law didn't bring the Jews any closer to God, it clearly showed how far they were separated from God. Paul declares:

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring

death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. (Romans 7:9-11)

The Guardianship of the Law

The second purpose of the Mosaic Law was to keep and guard God's people for the faith that was to come (Galatians 3:23).

The Law brought exhaustion in regard to righteousness. Once the Law revealed the nature of sin, God's people, desperate to be in right standing with Him, began an endless quest to attain righteousness.

The longing in the hearts of God's covenant people to have fellowship with God became so intense that they devised more and more laws as they strove to interpret the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). These interpretations are collected in what is known as the *Talmud*, an endless record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish laws and traditions.

The Law created a hunger for righteousness in the hearts of God's people — a hunger that was meant to turn their hearts to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The Law was a guardian, a tutor (Galatians 3:24). Its mission was to steer the people of God to Christ so that through Christ they would be satisfied with

God's righteousness – a righteousness they could never attain on their own.

Sadly, so many of God's chosen people have missed this life-changing truth, and have become hopelessly entangled in the very Law that was meant to lead them to Christ. They took the Law as the remedy for sin and attempted to achieve the righteousness by keeping the Law that only Christ can bring.

Sadly, this is a natural behavior for a people who are anxious to please God.

Keeping the Law gives one a religious status, a sense that one is pious, above others. This is called self-righteousness, and God hates it. One becomes arrogant in the belief that he or she has a bargaining tool with God: "I have done this for You, God, so now You can do this for me!" or, "God, I will do this if You do that for me."

With such bargaining and self-righteousness, ultimately the Law is no longer the means to an end – bringing man to Christ. Instead, it becomes the end itself.

It is no longer about pleasing God, but about the Law itself. And so, you see, the Law took the place of the Messiah, Jesus, the One to which the Law was meant to lead them. Instead, they became blinded and rejected Him (John 1:11).

A Shadow of Things to Come

The author of the book of Hebrews (most likely the apostle Paul) declares: *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect”* (Hebrews 10:1).

You see, while the Law pointed to Christ and to His redemptive work, it could not replace Christ. For example, the Ten Commandments portrayed the holiness and the character of God, but no one can come to the Father except through Jesus (John 14:6).

Likewise, ceremonial laws and ordinances represented the means by which God dealt with sin and the sin nature, but without the shedding of the blood Jesus, whom John called the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), there could be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

And finally, the judgment or the social laws pointed to the righteousness of God, but only Jesus could bring true righteousness for humanity (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Exclusiveness of the Law

One of the most important keys to understanding the doctrines of our New Testament faith is to fully grasp the exclusivity of the Law. Without that understanding we open ourselves up to misusing and abusing the Law and its purpose.

By exclusivity I mean that the Law of Moses was given specifically – and exclusively – to the children of Israel (see Romans 2:12-14, Deuteronomy 4:8). No other nations on earth were called to keep these laws, because no other nations or people were in covenant with God!

Ignorantly, there are those who believe that some portions of the Mosaic Law, such as the Ten Commandments are still a must rule of life for Christians. While they believe that the ceremonial portion of the Mosaic Law was fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice, when it comes to the Ten Commandments, they somehow seem to be blind to the victory that Christ gives us over the bondage to moral failure represented through the Commandments.

Further, the Law was one unit. Although we may divide it for a better understanding, as we have divided the Bible into chapters and verses, in reality the Mosaic Law was to be obeyed all together as one Law (see James 2:10).

Recall that the apostle Paul wrote: *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’”(Galatians 3:10).*

So this idea of just keeping some but not all of the Law is not a biblical principle, but rather a human ideology! Pay careful attention to what Paul writes later in Galatians: *“And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law” (Galatians 5:3).*

Thus, if you touch any one of the 613 laws included in the Law of Moses, you are obliged to keep them all. For example, those who emphasize the importance of tithing and use such Scriptures as Malachi 3:10, are obligated keep all the rest of the Law of Moses!

Also, those who emphasize on keeping the Ten Commandments do not realize that keeping Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments! Do they keep Sabbath?

You see, the Law is not a buffet table of theology that allows you to pick and choose what suits you! God has not given us the liberty to take the Law and customize it for our own circumstances. For example, by and large those who teach on tithing today know nothing about the law of tithing. (Please read my book, *Blessings in the Light of Our*

Redemption, to gain scriptural understanding on this subject.)

The Righteous Demand of the Law

Bible teachers and preachers who use the Law in a pick-and-choose manner do not realize that the righteous requirement of the Law was fulfilled in us through Christ (Romans 8:4) and that as believers we are not under any portion of the Law of Moses (Romans 6:14).

Paul makes this clear when he declares that he died to the Law that he might live to God (Galatians 2:19). He does not say that he died to a portion of the Law — but to all of it!

If keeping the Ten Commandments could not make the Israelites morally right before God, they cannot do that for us, either. Keep in mind that while the Law is perfect, it does not have the power to convert someone into anything, morally good or bad (Romans 8:3). Only by being born again and Spirit-led are we empowered to live a life that is righteous and moral.

It is nothing less than an insult to the Spirit of God for people to use any portion of the Law of Moses to foster or augment the new creation, which God has made us through the sacrifice of Christ.

In reality, they are implying that God did not write His Law on our hearts and in our spirits, as He promised, and that sanctification by the Spirit of God alone is not possible. (See Jeremiah 31:33, Hebrews 8:10.)

Let's take a look at two relevant scriptures:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2)

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.... (Titus 2:11-12)

These passages offer clear proof that God's grace has brought salvation through His Son, and the Spirit of life in Christ frees us forever from the bondage of the law and empowers us to shun worldly lusts and embrace a lifestyle of godliness. Obeying the Ten Commandments cannot make us free from sin. Only salvation through the blood of His dear Son!

The Inability of the Law

Paul, called the Apostle of Grace, declares that the Law in and of itself is holy, righteous, good, and spiritual (Romans 7:12-14). So you see, there is no lack in the Law. But the Law alone had no authority

or power to impart holiness, righteousness, and goodness. Our weakness and sinful nature left a huge chasm that kept us from God. Only Jesus could fill the gap:

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.... (Romans 8:3)

Here is a short list of what the Law cannot do for us:

- The Law cannot give us life. (Galatians 3:21)
- The Law cannot justify us. (Galatians 2:16)
- The Law cannot take away sin. (Hebrews 10:4)
- The Law cannot make us perfect. (Hebrews 7:19)
- The Law cannot make us righteous. (Romans 3:21-23)
- The Law cannot sanctify us. (Romans 8:3)
- The Law cannot give us the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 3:2)

In fact, the Law of Moses only had a purpose for a limited period of a time. Jesus said, *"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it"* (Luke 16:16).

The apostle Paul affirms this truth in several of his letters (see 2 Corinthians 3:6-13, Galatians 3:23-24, Romans 10:4).

When Jesus suffered, died, and rose again, the purpose of the Law of Moses was completed, just as Paul writes: *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”* (Romans 10:4).

The moment Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, meaning the glory of God departed from the temple (Matthew 27:51).

Thus, with Jesus' death, followed by His glorious resurrection, there was no longer any need for the Mosaic Law! Its purpose served, its task fulfilled, a new dispensation began (and continues) with Christ.

No Going Back!

One of the gravest errors occurring throughout the body of Christ today is the incorporation of the Law into the life of a believer — whether it concerns tithing, the Ten Commandments, keeping of the feasts, or any other element of the Law.

To use the Law as a means to reach a spiritual goal is to repudiate the redemptive work of Jesus. This is a very serious matter!

Let us look at tithing as an example. It is a common practice in most churches today to use the law of tithing to persuade Christians to give ten percent of their income.

However, while most pastors conveniently cite Malachi 3:8-10 to re-enforce the need for Christians to tithe, in reality, the Old Testament law of tithing included a number of applications, none of which are taught or enforced in churches today.

The subject is so inclusive that we do not have time or space to delve into the law of tithing in these pages. However, in my book *Blessings in the Light of Our Redemption*, I lay out the biblical truths concerning tithes, gifts, sowing and reaping, etc.

Suffice it to say here that there are many practices and teachings in the church today – tithing being one – that are not based on the entire counsel of God, but rather on people’s experiences.

When we confront people on this issue, the usual answer is that tithing existed before the Law! But it really didn’t, because there was no Law before Moses! What they mean is that Abraham tithed to Melchizedek.

Abraham did not tithe on his income, but on the spoils of the war and he did it only one time! And there was no Law or commandments from God to Abraham to do so! He did it out of the custom of his day, honoring the Priest of the Most High God.

No other Patriarchs did that! So it couldn’t be a common practice. So, when preachers force or encourage their people to tithe regularly, they are

using the Law of Moses. And if they use the Law, even a small commandment of the Law, they are obliged to keep all the 613 Laws. *“And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.” Galatians 5:3*

Paul explains it all this way:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” (Galatians 3:10-12)

Thus, if you think that God will bless you because of your tithing, you are under the curse according to the Scripture! Why? Because you reject what Jesus did. And what is it that Christ did? Paul writes: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

But when you turn to tithing instead of the finished work of Christ, you are declaring, in effect, that you are not blessed through His completed work, but through what you do.

Notice, also, Paul's words: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with*

every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..."
(Ephesians 1:3).

When, precisely, did He bless us with all spiritual blessings? When we were faithful to tithe? When we gave an offering? Absolutely not! His blessings upon us were already a completed fact before we happened, before we were even born.

Do you see it? The Law makes you the center of all your doings, while Grace makes Jesus the center of everything God has done!

Chapter Six



RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH THE LAW

When we talk about righteousness, what we really mean is the “rightness” of God – that which is proper or fully and completely acceptable in His sight. Righteous is what God is in every way, His very character, nature, and makeup.

For us to be righteous means that we fully comply with that which God says and God thinks. In Biblical terms, righteousness means attaining to a right relationship – or a right standing – with God.

Righteousness is the only place and position through which we can commune with God.

When Adam was created by God, he was righteous from the beginning. There was no sin in him, no sense of guilt, fear, lack, or condemnation, so he could stand before God and commune with Him. There was, as it were, an open door between God and Adam.

Then sin entered the picture, and everything changed. When sin and guilt entered Adam, he was

no longer in a condition to stand before God. Righteous no longer, he became afraid of God and hid himself from His presence (Genesis 3:8).

From that time forward, mankind's condition of sin and guilt, begun with Adam and Eve, remained. Man was unable to approach God or stand in His presence.

For four thousand years, from Adam to Christ, mankind remained in a state of sinful, unrighteous separation from God (Ephesians 2:1-2). Then Jesus came and everything changed.

Now, before Jesus the Law brought a false sense of rightness before God. The reason for that, as we discussed previously, was the exclusiveness of the Law. The law was given exclusively to the nation of Israel, and the Jews were the sole possessors of the Law, traditions, feasts, covenants, blessings, and the prophets. They were called God's chosen, special people, His elect.

As we have already established, there was no fault with the Law itself. Its sole purpose was to reveal man's sinfulness and make the way for the only remedy — Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God.

But the keepers of the Law took it and turned it into a means of obtaining righteousness — a false righteousness.

They felt that keeping the Law placed them in right standing with God. Paul witnesses about the Jews in this regard when he writes:

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3).

It is important to note that for the children of Israel, the Law had righteous merit, as Paul mentions in several scriptures, such as Romans 10:4-5 and Philippians 3:6. Among the blessing they enjoyed were the following:

- Israel was in a relation with God – no other nation was.
- God dwelt in the midst of the camp of Israel during their wilderness sojourn.
- God blessed the children of Israel as they kept His Law.
- God protected them as they obeyed His commandments.

But all of these blessings were limited. When they failed, sinned, or disobeyed, there was a severe price to pay:

- God’s presence was removed from their camp.
- God’s blessings were lifted.
- God’s protection ceased.

This is what Paul is referring to in Romans 10:5 “For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘the man who does those things shall live by them’.”

The Righteousness of God

It should be clear to all that the righteousness of God is completely separate from, and unattainable by, man on his own merits.

For humanity the centerpiece of God's righteousness is Christ and His redemptive work, apart from our own efforts. Through the working of God's Grace, Christ's death and resurrection eliminate that which hinders us from approaching God: our sinful nature. The righteousness of the Law clearly shows us our sinful nature, while the Grace of God, working through His righteousness, removes it.

The Law could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:1-4), and as long as the sin nature lives in us, fellowship with God is impossible.

No one can obtain God's righteousness through keeping the Law. It is impossible for us, in our fallen nature, to become one with a holy God.

God's righteousness is more than a religious status. It is first a nature, then a position. Righteousness is oneness with God in nature, in mind, in purpose, and in spirit, but it cannot come through keeping the Law, just as Paul writes: *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight..."* (Romans 3:20).

Let's take tithing and giving of offerings, for instance. No one by tithing can become a generous giver. Israel practiced the tithe from the time of Moses, yet after nearly 800 years of following the law of tithing, the Jewish people still had problems with giving tithes in the time of Nehemiah. Prophets such as Malachi, Haggai, and Nehemiah rebuked them for their greediness.

There was no problem with the Law itself, for the Law is perfect and was given by a holy God. But the Law had no power to give life to people, nor did it have the capacity to give them God's nature.

Observant Jews, as well as many Christians fascinated with Judaism, see the Law in its many facets as a supreme thing, as an answer to spiritual renewal and the need for revival. They consider the Law as a spiritual force by itself, not as that which points them to Christ.

For example, many honor the Sabbath as a spiritual work by itself, not realizing that the Sabbath only served as a shadow of the rest that would later be manifested in Christ and His redemptive work (read

Hebrews 4). They do the same thing with other ordinances of the Law, such as keeping the feasts, holidays, etc. But note what the author of Hebrews says:

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. (Hebrews 10:1)

It is clear that the purpose of the Law was to point to Christ. Apart from Him and His perfect redemptive work, the Law is nothing more than a set of religious rules like any other, achieving absolutely nothing. It has absolutely no power in regards to making people righteous.

Keeping the feasts, offering sacrifices, and upholding the ordinances of the Law cannot make a worshipper righteous before a Holy God, as the writer of Hebrews emphasizes: *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).*

No Revival Through the Law

Writing of the Jewish people who kept the Law, the apostle Paul declares:

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant

of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:2-4)

Similarly, in the Church today there are many Christians who have a zeal for God, and who desire to see spiritual revival come to their cities and nations. But they are ignorant of God's Word.

For instance, there are well-intentioned people who fight diligently for the right to display the Ten Commandments in courthouses, schools, and public squares throughout America. But in all their efforts they never seem to grasp that un-regenerated individuals cannot be subject to the Law of God, no matter how often he is confronted by these commandments. That is because, as Scripture points out, *"the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be"* (Romans 8:7).

That is not to denigrate the efforts of many honest people who are trying to bring about an awareness of the need for a godly influence in our society. The Law, however, is not the answer. It has never been the answer and will never be.

Those who try to establish godliness through the Law miss the work of the cross. They miss the grace of God.

The Law of Moses was meant only for the Jews, and not for the people outside of God's covenant with Abraham. A Gentile was not required to be under the Law of Moses, because he or she was not in covenant with God. It would be like me, as a father of my house, enforcing a set of rules over my neighbor's children that I have set over my own family! How is that possible?

The apostle Paul puts it this way: *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God"* (Romans 3:19).

How could God demand His Law and ordinances be followed by a people who are not called and sanctified by Him?

Judgment of Nations

God has no covenant with the heathen nations. He cannot demand any sort of behavior or deeds from them. This is where many Christians err. They think God is judging America or Iran or other nations for their ungodliness. God has no dealings with any nation.

If you take a close look at the nations God judged in the Old Testament, or those to whom He spoke blessing, it is clear they were nations that had

directly dealings with the children of Israel, God's covenant people. The nations that are mentioned, including Persia, Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Lebanon, and others, were all in direct contact with God's covenant people.

God's judgment and blessings on these nations were under the Old Covenant, under principles that do not apply today. The idea that God is judging or blessing nations that either mistreat or embrace Israel is not a New Covenant concept. Take Germany, for example. Under its Nazi regime, Germany killed six million Jews during WWII, and yet today Germany is one of the most financially prosperous nations in Europe and the world.

Why did God not judge the German people as He did those nations and people who cursed and came against His people Israel in Old Testament times?

Today, the government of Iran is a sworn enemy of the state of Israel. In 2016 alone the Iranian government gave \$2.5 billion to Hamas terror organization. How come God is not judging them? In reality, God is pouring out great blessing across Iran, as it is on fire with revival. In fact, it is my firm belief that currently more people are coming to faith in Christ throughout Iran than in any other nation in the world.

Please do not misunderstand me. I believe that people, nations, and governments will pay a steep

price for sin and iniquity. There are consequences and payoffs.

If you sow evil, you will reap evil. If you shed innocent blood, your blood will also be shed. But if God judges people and condemns them today, what did Jesus do for them? Didn't He pay the price for their sins? Wasn't He judged?

Of course, there is coming a time when all the ungodly – those who reject the truth of God's Word – will stand before His throne, when the dispensation of His Grace comes to an end. Then God will judge the ungodly, and His judgment will be based entirely upon their rejection of Jesus and the redemptive work He did on their behalf. Then they will be condemned eternally to the Lake of Fire, as the apostle Peter writes:

But the present heavens and the present earth are, by the command of the same God, kept stored up, reserved for fire in preparation for a day of judgment and of destruction for the ungodly. (2 Peter 3:7, Weymouth)

But that time is not yet. God is still reaching out to the ungodly, calling them to repentance, because He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

Peter confirms this truth when he writes that God “is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that

any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

One of the greatest errors in today's modern Church comes from a lack of clear understanding and conviction that the dispensation of the Law is no more. It was finished and put away the moment Jesus died on the cross and the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).

Read carefully the following important scripture passage:

But, as a matter of fact, the ministry which Christ has obtained is all the nobler a ministry, in that He is at the same time the negotiator of a sublimer covenant, based upon sublimer promises. For if that first Covenant had been free from imperfection, there would have been no attempt to introduce another. For, being dissatisfied with His people, God says, "'There are days coming,' says the Lord, 'when I will establish with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new Covenant – a Covenant unlike the one which I made with their forefathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out from the land of Egypt; for they would not remain faithful to that. So I turned from them,' says the Lord. 'But this is the Covenant that I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days,' says the Lord: 'I will put My laws into their minds and will write them upon their hearts. And I will indeed be their God and they shall be My People. And there shall be no need for them to teach each one his fellow citizen and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For all will know Me from the least of them to the greatest;

because I will be merciful to their wrongdoings, and their sins I will remember no longer.'” By using the words, “a new Covenant,” He has made the first one obsolete; but whatever is decaying and showing signs of old age is not far from disappearing altogether. (Hebrews 8:6-13, Weymouth)

It is crucial for us to study and understand Hebrews 8. Notice particularly verse 13: “By using the words, 'a new Covenant,' He has made the first one obsolete; but whatever is decaying and showing signs of old age is not far from disappearing altogether.”

So, you see, the first covenant is obsolete. The blood sacrifice, keeping of the Sabbath, the first fruits, tithe, and feasts — all of these elements are done away. And that is because we now have a better covenant, based on better promises and a better sacrifice

Chapter Seven



THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

Paul's epistle to the church at Galatia is, at its very core, a defense of the Gospel of Christ versus the practices of the Law of Moses by many in that community of early Christians.

But the book of Galatians remains a very important epistle to the body of Christ today, because the modern church is struggling with the same issue with which Paul had to deal with the Galatian church.

The book of Galatians has often been called the *Magna Carta of Christian Liberty*, after the *Magna Carta Libertatum* (the Great Charter of the Liberties), the ancient English charter that helped to guarantee religious and civil liberties in 13th-century Britain — and which was the inspiration for the creation of the U.S. Constitution by America's Founding Fathers.

It is no wonder that Galatians has received such an impressive label. It was through studying the book of Galatians that Martin Luther was convinced that salvation for sinners came through the justification

by faith alone — a conviction that led to the birth of the Protestant Reformation.

As we read and study Galatians, it is like a perfect mirror that reflects back all the fallacies that we in the modern church have struggled and flirted with concerning the Law of Moses. This bold letter of Paul completely disregards any and all human accomplishments, denominational status, and doctrinal supremacy. It is an unrelenting, God-inspired confrontation of religious hypocrisy — of those who preach a message of grace, yet insist that we must also follow the Law. It exposes the ignorance and foolishness of Christians who are not fully aware and convinced of their own faith.

It is interesting to note that Galatians is the only New Testament letter from Paul in which he offers no introductory commendation to those he is addressing! It means that the message which God, through Paul, is bringing is one that requires great sobriety on the part of the hearers.

It is unquestionably a serious matter for the church to mix faith in Christ with the works of the Law.

Grace and the Law do not mix.

Galatians is a message to the churches of mixed messages

No Room for Mixture

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a warning to the Church against mixed messages. As he begins the letter he emphasizes the singularity of the Gospel, and the fact that the Galatians have strayed from the simple truth of God's grace through Christ:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-7)

What is this “other gospel” to which Paul is referring? Study the book of Galatians and you will clearly see that Paul is talking about the “gospel of works.”

Paul is confronting head-on a false doctrine that had been introduced to the churches of Galatia that their salvation was not complete unless they were circumcised. The implication was that Jesus cross was insufficient by itself, and that the Law of Moses was needed for them to complete their salvation.

I believe that the core issue Paul is addressing in the book of Galatians is a crucial problem that has been plaguing the Church for centuries – and continues to dog believers today.

It's not difficult to recognize that a great portion of the teachings and preachings in today's Church is based on a gospel of works rather than the Gospel of Grace.

Putting it in clearer terms, the majority of church folk today are stuck under the Old Covenant. While living in the New Covenant of God's Grace through the finished work of Christ, they are unconsciously operating under the Old Covenant. And as a result, much of the Church today is tragically missing out on the full Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fullness of His redemption.

An "If ... Then" Mentality

Too many believers today lack a true identity in Christ, a state of compromise that is rendering much of the Church powerless. Common teachings rampant in congregations across the earth are based on our works rather than Christ's already finished work. They are convincing Christians to believe such unbiblical notions as:

- "If I give, I will be blessed."
- "If I believe, I will be healed!"
- "If I listen to many sermons, I will have the faith I need for my healings!"
- "If I go through ten or twenty counseling steps, I will be delivered!"

- “If I pray for others, God will hear my prayers!”
- “If I make a donation, my children will be saved!”
- “If I give tithes, God will open the windows of heaven for me!”

But the question is: If I need all of these “ifs,” then what did Jesus do for me? What is included in His redemptive work?

I have often wondered why the modern Church uses the Law as a means of growth, blessings, maturity, and spirituality. It is simply because the Law is an external force. It is visible and tangible.

It is easier to use it than to embrace an internal force that is invisible. That is why, to a carnal mind, the Law is easier than Grace, work is easier than faith, and force is easier than trust.

To trust in Grace, an internal work of the Spirit of God, and move by faith is very difficult and at times incomprehensible to a carnal mind. Kenneth Wuest, a noted Christian New Testament Greek scholar of the mid-Twentieth century, in his *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, writes:

The Galatian letter reveals the fact that the Galatian saints were being deprived of the ministry of the Spirit by the teaching of the Judaizers to the effect that growth in the Christian life was to be had by obedience to the legal enactments of the Mosaic law (Gal 4:19), and thus coming under the Mosaic economy in which there was no

provision for an indwelling Spirit whose ministry it was to sanctify the believer, they substituted self-effort for their former dependence upon the Spirit.

Once I stood before our congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma and announced firmly that unless people attended our weekly Friday night prayer services I did not consider them members of the church. I used the law of condemnation to foster them to a spiritual position, which only God, by the power of His Spirit, can truly accomplish!

Of course, I was in error and, thankfully, our church members were aware of the fact and did not respond to my tactics or my “gospel of works.”

Paul chided the Galatians for turning away from the Grace that is in Christ to follow a different gospel, an alternative that was diametrically opposed to the redemptive work of the cross of Christ! It was a gospel devoid of joy and the “glad tidings” that brought them to Christ in the first place.

So how do we recognize if and when we are being fed a “different gospel” It is really simple: If it is based on my works rather than the work of Christ, it is a different gospel. If what I receive from God is based on my doings, then it is a different gospel, a gospel of works.

You see, the Gospel of Grace is based entirely on Jesus’ work, as Paul tells the Ephesians: “*For by grace*

you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

So simply, when someone insists that you must do this or that in order to get a blessing from God, know that you are being given another gospel.

I call it the "Jesus-Plus Plan" — Jesus' work plus our efforts equal God's abundant blessings. That, my friend is "different gospel."

Be on the lookout for phrases such as:

- "God is going to . . ."
- ". . . so that God may . . ."
- "In order to . . ."

Phrases that place conditions upon you — often accompanied by a big "IF" — are red flags for a "different gospel."

For example, how many times have we heard a pastor, preacher, or teacher, declare authoritatively, "Give this amount of money, and God WILL BLESS YOU"?

What he is really saying is that receiving a blessing from God depends upon our giving, and not on Jesus' work! But this directly contradicts 2 Corinthians 8:9

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

So which is it: through your giving or through His poverty? You can't have it both way!

By Works or By Grace?

Seeking to obtain justification, sanctification, and blessings by means of works nullifies the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and puts a believer under the curse of the Law.

It actually renders a believer powerless of his or her right as a blood-bought child of God! It makes a believer who carries the life and the nature of God dependent instead upon the self-made “superstars” of the Church.

It makes a beggar out of a son.

It transforms God's New Creation into a mere religious person barely making it through life.

I am so saddened to say that the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement — of which I am proudly a part — has produced more spiritual invalids and confused believers than many of its eminent leaders past and present will ever realize. I have dealt with more inconsistent and immature Christians within

Pentecostal and Charismatic churches than in any other place.

Why is that? What are the teachings that produce such instability and confusion? Who is responsible? It certainly is not God, for He gives birth to the New Creation who carry His very image, just as Paul declares: *“For He who is in Christ is a new creation”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The new creation is born of God (John 1:13).

He or she is made in the same likeness as the Son of God (Hebrews 2:11). Scripture is emphatic that we are of Him (1 John 4:4).

Yet today too many of these new creations are defeated in body, soul, and spirit. And it is largely because of the faulty teachings they receive — a “different gospel.”

In reality, a majority of the sermons and teachings we hear are merely re-packaged, re-hashed concepts. For example, nearly fifty years ago a prominent Pentecostal-Charismatic teacher came up with the idea of “seed faith,” and since then untold thousands of preachers, pastors, and teachers have been repeating, in some form or fashion, this entirely “different gospel” concept.

It is as though the revelation knowledge of which Paul spoke in Ephesians 1:16-19 is missing. As a

result, what A.W. Kenyon called “sense knowledge” is abounding.

In other words, believers are embracing a “knowledge” that appeals to their senses, but is, ultimately, untethered to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So instead of knowing God through His word and His Spirit, too many believers only know what their minds and senses tell them – or what someone else has convinced them is the truth of God's Word.

It is similar to the knowledge the disciples had during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus. They only believed in what they saw, and their knowledge of God's Son was based on what they saw Him doing.

The apostle John writes of Jesus: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life...”* (1 John 1:1).

The knowledge that John and the other eleven disciples had of Jesus was based on their hearing, seeing, and touching Jesus. Of course, this was necessary because there had to be eyewitnesses of all that Jesus said and did.

Later, John (and the other disciples) received the true revelation of who Jesus was, which we read in

his epistles. But during the time the disciples walked with Jesus, all they knew about Him was what they saw, heard, touched, and felt.

Today, while we are blessed with God's Word and the revelation given through His Holy Spirit, too many Christians base their knowledge of Christ and His work on what they feel at any given moment, what they are told by any number of today's popular preachers and teachers, or what the particular denomination with which they align tells them to believe.

But it doesn't have to be this way. For those who are hungry for the true riches, the true bread from heaven, the Holy Spirit is still present to guide us into all the truth through God's unchanging Word (John 16:13).

Chapter Eight



WORKS OF THE LAW VERSUS WORKS OF FAITH

Scripture is clear about the distinct differences between the works of the Law versus the works – or acts – of faith. Sadly, many confuse the two, not understanding that to do so leads to compromise in the truth of Christ's redemptive work.

In Galatians we read Paul's strong admonition: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, *"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them"* (Galatians 3:10).

The phrase "works of the law" refers to the demands the Law places on those under its workings. The Amplified version of this verse reads: "For all who depend on the Law [seeking justification and salvation by obedience to the Law and the observance of rituals] are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed (condemned to destruction) is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, so as to practice them.'"

And the New Living Translation reads: "But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law.'"

The works of the Law are those things a person seeks to accomplish in order to have a right standing with God, or to receive blessings from God. By contrast, the works of faith come as the result of a right relationship with God. The one is the preceding act, and the other is the aftermath!

Now, when we talk about faith, we do not mean something that is idle or passive. In reality, faith precedes great works because of its value. It is the faith of God – and God's faith works (John 5:17).

Peter tells us about this faith when he writes: *"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ..."* (2 Peter 1:1-2).

You see, first of all faith is by the righteousness of Jesus, and not based on any of our own good merits. We have done absolutely nothing to earn it.

Many pastors and teachers confuse the meaning of Romans 10:17, leading people to believe that we can receive more faith by reading the Bible! But read Romans 10 carefully and you will realize that Paul is

writing about the faith of an unbeliever. Hearing the Word of God – the message of the gospel – over and over is how an unbeliever comes to the saving faith of Christ, as Paul emphasizes in verse 17: *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* The Wuest translation puts it this way: *“So then, faith is out of the source of that which is heard, and that which is heard [the message] is through the agency of the Word concerning Christ.”*

So Romans 10:17 is not a formula for a greater faith, because there are no limits to the faith of the New Covenant in the first place!

The confusion over the meaning here exists because of believers not correctly dividing the Word of Truth. Instead, they mix the words of Jesus speaking to Jews under the Law with the teachings of the New Covenant.

If it were possible for Christians to gain greater faith by reading more Scripture, that in itself would become a source of pride and boasting, because it is something they accomplished through their own efforts. But it would contradict the very essence of Ephesians 2:8-9: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

Let's be clear: under the bylaws of the New Covenant, you can emphatically do nothing to earn anything from God. We must have a clear understanding of this basic concept of faith, just as

Paul declares: *"But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Galatians 3:25).*

How did faith come? The answer is simple: through the righteousness of Jesus (2 Peter 1:2).

If believers were to grasp this profound truth, they would cease seeking for healing or answered prayers through the efforts of healing evangelists or other "anointed" men and women of God.

The unbiblical teachings on faith, anointing, and gifts of the Holy Spirit that have permeated the ranks of Charismatic-Pentecostal Christianity have kept many well-intentioned believers in confusion and immaturity for far too long. And it is because they are not being fed the meat of God's Word!

Yes, all believers have faith (2 Corinthians 4:13). If you believe in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have faith. And what type of a faith is it? It is the type Jesus had.

Pay attention carefully to the following verse: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20 KJV).*

By whose faith do we now live? The faith of the Son of God! And as we saw earlier, God's faith works, because God works (John 5:17).

Notice what the apostle James writes in James 2:1: *“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.”* Whose faith? *“...the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ....”*

Can you recall the moment you became a born again believer the great changes that began deep inside? You began to forgive others who wronged you. You became generous, you started giving offerings, and gifts, you began praying for others, and so on. You see, the faith of God had begun to operate in you.

But then, most likely, you got involved with a church that kept pounding on your giving, tithing, and other things you were required to do as a believer. And that bondage to the Law killed the joy God's own faith had given you.

The Law hindered your faith.

Let's be clear: the faith of God that is in us from the moment of our new birth in Christ is generous, forgiving, loving, going, acting, and giving. We just need to embrace what is ours as believers and understand how to consistently walk in the truth.

Here are just a few of those truths:

- We are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- We have His Life (1 John 5:12).
- We have His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17).

- We have His Mind (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- We have His Name (Mark 16:17).
- We have His Faith (2 Peter 1:2).
- We have His Nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- We have His Word (John 15:5).

Purpose on a daily basis to identify with these truths, and before you know it you will have His works operating in you on a consistent basis (Ephesians 2:10).

Chapter Nine

THE IMPORTANCE
OF IDENTITY

Since the fall of Adam, humanity has been desperate to find its true identity. “Who am I?” most of us ask at some point in our lives. “What is my significance?” “Why was I created?” These are age-old questions, which the psalmist frames this way: *“What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?”* (Psalm 8:4)

Popularity over the past several years in DNA studies and ancestry has prompted many people — including myself — to search for their family roots. For each of us there is a real sense of identification in discovering something about where our forebears came from, their place, purpose, values, and motivation. An individual may derive great pride in discovering their ancestral roots in Europe, Asia, Africa, or elsewhere. After all, it is a little dull and mundane to identify only with where we grew up or where we live out our daily lives. Each of us wants something special with which to identify.

The Conflict of Identity

Increasingly in our fragmented world, lack of identity has afflicted people with a sense of rootlessness and loss. Many individuals feel as if they are traveling a road with no clear purpose or destination. For each and every person, identity brings purpose – although sometimes that identity can come with great conflict.

For example, think about the early Church, as Gentiles became joint heirs with the Jewish people through the New Covenant. Gentiles, by faith in Christ, were now the people of God, just like the Jews (Ephesians 2:12-22). This was a revolutionary concept, to say the least!

Think, also, about how difficult it must have been for the Jews who had become Christians to identify as such!

For over 1,500 years the Jews had been separated from the world through the Law of Moses – the Law through which God sanctified and accepted them. But now, suddenly, Jews who embraced Christ as the Messiah were called to identify themselves with a new faith – a faith which would replace the Law of Moses!

Their salvation and acceptance before God were based on an individual who was both man and God! And they were called upon to embrace the gentile as bothers who identified with this strange new faith!

With that in mind, it is not difficult to understand the apostle Peter's deep struggle with this issue of Gentiles being joint heirs with him and the Jewish people (see Acts 10 and Galatians 2).

The truth of this joint-heir relationship was to come through another Jew, the apostle Paul. None of the other apostles of the Lord had full understanding concerning salvation for all humanity, Jew and Gentile. But Paul, who was not one of the original twelve apostles, understood it by revelation. Paul's spirit had to be ready. Revelations cannot be given to those who do not understand the deep things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). This is why God separated Paul from the other apostles when He called him. Otherwise, it is likely that they would have influenced him and hindered the revelation of the New Testament (Galatians 2:1-5).

Recall that Peter's message to the Jews on the day of Pentecost centered on their new identification with Christ:

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

Some people have taken this verse and turned it into a major theological argument regarding the formula for baptizing believers. But they are missing the point. This is not a formula for the baptism, but a declaration that Jews were now to identify themselves with the

Name and Person of Jesus Christ. That was a costly proposition that Peter offered to the Jews of Jerusalem!

There Is No Hyphenated Faith

This revolutionary, new identification goes to the very heart of the Gospel. Whether Jew or Gentile, as Christians we identify with Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of God, not with the Old Testament people of God.

Have you ever wondered why some Christians identify themselves as Messianic-Jews? It is because they think they derive some special benefit from being both Jewish and Christian. But nothing could be further from the truth. People speak of the Christian faith having its roots in the Jewish faith, but the truth is that the very foundation and roots of the Jewish faith is in Christ, not vice versa.

Abraham, the Patriarchs, Moses, the Jewish laws and traditions, and even the Jewish race itself would not exist without Jesus.

Read the first three verses of the Gospel of John and you will understand this:

In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning

with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

Recall, also from John's Gospel, how Jesus challenged the Jews: *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).*

I have also heard some insist that in order to understand the New Testament, we have to first understand the Old Testament. On the contrary, one cannot understand the Old Testament without first understanding the New Testament. That is one reason for so much confusion in the church today! Preachers cherry-pick all sorts of teaching from the Old Testament, offering them as principles of the New Testament, not understanding the distinction between God's covenants.

Too many pastors and teachers today do not sufficiently understand the Law, the prophets, and the formation of the plan of God for salvation. They do not understand God's purpose in the formation of the nation of Israel! Instead, they teach what appeals to their natural senses.

Foundational Doctrines

As a Christian, one cannot fully understand the Old Testament without first having a solid foundation in the book of Romans. This glorious book is the key to

understanding the Bible, period. Sadly, however, an emphasis on sense knowledge – emotion and experience – throughout many congregations, particularly among Pentecostals and Charismatics, has hindered believers in their understanding and in the full manifestation of the abundant life God has for them.

How about you? Do you know the Scriptures? Do you identify with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection? Or do you find your identification in a race of people, a denomination, a doctrine, or maybe a particular teacher or well-known pastor? Do you identify as a Messianic-Jew, a Baptist, a Charismatic or Pentecostal, or some other hybrid Christian label?

And finally, whose are you?

“It Is Finished”

When Jesus cried out on the cross “It is finished” (John 19:30), He was not talking about our redemption or salvation, as some believe. In reality, He had just started the process. His spirit still had to go to Hades, and there in that dark pit He had to receive the wrath of God against our sins (see Psalms 88).

Then after three days, He had to be raised physically and after that to ascend on high to present His blood of

the New Covenant before the Father and seal our eternal Redemption (Hebrews 9:27).

So what did Jesus mean when He said, "It is finished?" Since we do not have a direct leading on this Scripture, we might interpret it according to the context in which He uttered these words. He spoke them right before He died, and His spirit left His body on the cross.

In His Gospel account Matthew relates what happened:

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.... (Matthew 27:50-51)

The supernatural significance of this singular event cannot be overstated! God is communicating an important message to us here. The veil was an important part of the temple, because it separated man from God's presence. No person could go beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies except the high priest, and he only once a year. The high priest had to carry the blood of atonement and sprinkle it seven times on the Mercy Seat for the sins he and his people had committed.

The torn veil signifies that all these orders and restrictions of the Old Covenant were done away with through the death of God's only Son Jesus. It meant that God's glory no longer abode in a building. It meant that, with the death of the "*Lamb of God who takes*

away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), the Old Covenant era was over and was being replaced by the New Covenant.

Jesus is actually the only Jew who ever fulfilled the Law of God. No one prior to Him, no matter how great a Bible character he might have been, had the ability to fulfill the Law of God.

Oh, Jesus, this Blessed Nazarene! He should be the pride of every Jewish man on this planet. Yet millions of Jews are ashamed of Him. How it breaks my heart when Jewish believers hold on to the Law in order to identify themselves with the Jewish customs and traditions.

How little they really understand of their Prince. I love how Paul explains His feelings for Jesus: *"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).*

When Paul visited the church in Corinth, he didn't go there with lessons from the Old Testament or the Law. Notice what he tells them:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:1-2)

In today's Church it seems that preachers preach and teachers teach just about everything except Christ crucified and the blessed result of that crucifixion! I have heard more messages on Joshua, Daniel, David, and other Bible characters, and then on Jesus Christ, for whom all these Bible characters lived! And I have heard more from the pulpit on the Proverbs of Solomon than about the One whose wisdom is greater than Solomon himself!

There will come a day when untold millions of Jews and Christians alike will stand ashamed before His Judgment Seat, tragically recognizing all they missed here on the earth!

Friend, do not miss Him and all the riches of His finished redemptive work. Find out who He is and what He has completed for you through His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection!

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor Reza Safa was born into a Shi'ite Muslim family in the Middle East. He was a devout, practicing Shi'ite

Muslim, observing the laws of Islam. He fasted during the month of Ramadan and prayed five times a day.

After his graduation from high school, Safa felt an emptiness nagging at him. The search for truth led him to leave his homeland and reside in the West. Safa finally settled as a student in Sweden, where he heard the message of the gospel for the first time in his life. Reading the Bible in his native language and experiencing the love of God through Christian friends, Safa decided to give Jesus a chance. After months of struggle and doubt, he finally gave his life to Jesus.

In 1990 Pastor Reza Safa founded The Harvesters World Outreach, a worldwide evangelistic and healing ministry. Since then he has held crusades and pastors conferences in over 50 countries. People from all religions, especially those from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds have turned to Christ in his crusades.

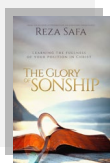
After a vision from the Lord and several years of prayer, Nejat TV was born and began airing Christian TV programming into the Middle East. (Nejat means

salvation in the Farsi language.) In March 2003, regular broadcasts began four hours a week on a secular Persian television network based in California. A partnership with Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) was formed in 2006 and TBN Nejat TV, a full time satellite television network in the Farsi language was launched. The response was overwhelming. According to some research, three to five million Iranian Muslims have come to Christ as a result of these Christian broadcasts. Over ninety underground churches have been established in Iran. Satellite television is being aired in areas of the Middle East where no person has the means or possibility of reaching with the gospel of

Jesus Christ. A door has been opened by God to preach the Gospel and no government or religious organization can close this door.

We would greatly appreciate your support and your prayers for this great outreach to Iran and the Middle East. If you would like to receive more information on TBN Nejat TV, please visit our website, www.nejattv.org, or call our office at (714) 880-8670.

ALSO BY REZA SAFA



THE GLORY OF SONSHIP

In this life-changing book, you will learn who you are in Christ – a son of God. Sonship is not gender specific, but it is the position you have with God because of Jesus Christ.

\$14.00



BLESSINGS IN THE LIGHT OF OUR REDEMPTION

The Church is in desperate need of a true reformation. Many of the practices and teachings in today's churches must go. They contradict the truth of God's Word and are harmful. It does not matter who initiated these teachings and practices or how beneficial they have been. If they do not equate with the truth of the Gospel, they must be shunned.

\$12.00



REDEMPTION

Redemption is the most important subject of the Bible. It is the entire work of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Without a proper understanding of the Redemption of Jesus Christ, the church remains bound by the yoke of the law, human philosophy, and the doctrines of men.

\$10.00



BLOOD OF THE SOWRD, BLOOD OF THE CROSS

Biography. Here is true story of the hunger and thirst of a fanatical Muslim for God. Reza Safa's search for the truth took him across three continents. His belief in Islam remained unshakable until the day he heard the truth about Jesus Christ and began to experience His love.

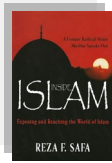
\$10.00



THE COMING FALL OF ISLAM IN IRAN

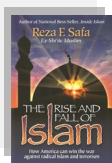
In *The Coming Fall of Islam in Iran*, former Shi'ite Muslim Reza Safa brings an awareness and knowledge about the mind-set of the enemy. He also explains how in spite of religious persecution – indeed, at times, because of it – Iranians are coming to the Lord in droves.

\$15.00



INSIDE ISLAM

Author Reza Safa, a former Shi'ite Muslim, exposes the spirit of Islam from an insider's point of view. Safa is well versed in the laws and history of Islam. **\$12.00**



THE RISE AND FALL OF ISLAM

From inside Islam comes a prophetic message for America and how she must respond to terrorism and its radical religion. The Church must wake up to the spiritual time we are in and reach out for God's answers to the expanding force of Islam. **\$13.00**

For more information on Reza Safa Ministries, please visit our website at: www.rezasafa.com or contact our office.

REZA SAFA MINISTRIES
P.O. BOX 18555
IRVINE, CA 92623

PHONE: (714) 880-8670
WWW.REZASAFA.COM

ⁱ ("Vorrede auff die Epistel S. Paul: an die Romer" in *D. Martin Luther: Die ganze Heilige Schrift Deusch 1545 aufs new zurericht*, ed. Hans Volz and Heinz Blanke. Munich: Roger & Bernhard. 1972, vol. 2, pp. 2254-2268.)

ⁱⁱ (http://www.biblical-data.org/BOX/Pauls_REV.pdf. Pg. 18)