

CHURCHLIGHT

PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

COVENANTS

of

GOD



Published by

Church Of God

CHURCHLIGHT PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 9901

Colorado Springs, CO 80932

COVENANTS OF GOD

This booklet is paid for by the freewill offerings and is not to be sold. It is printed by the CHURCHLIGHT PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION for the purpose of educating and evangelizing. It may be used by locally independent churches or individuals who wish to distribute the good news of God's Word to their neighbors.

Our prayer and hope is that those who receive it will be inspired to study their Bibles with greater zeal and to walk as Jesus walked.

Distributed by

© 1987

Second printing 1991

CHURCHLIGHT PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

CHAPTER I WHAT IS A COVENANT?

There seems to be general confusion in the minds of most Christians regarding the new covenant. Some believe we are still under the old covenant. Indeed, others think the new covenant has not yet been established—that we are somehow between the old covenant and the new. Further, some proclaim we are under the new covenant, but are unable to say just what this covenant demands of them as Christians.

Before discussing the old and new covenants, we will be examining the various covenants God has had with His people down through the ages past; but, first we need to know what a covenant is. The dictionary

defines a covenant as "a binding and solemn agreement made by two or more parties to do or keep from doing specified things...an agreement...a contract."

The Hebrew word for *covenant* is *beriyth* and is sometimes translated *league*. The Greek word *diatheke*, of course, is used in the New Testament and is translated both as *covenant* and *testament* and according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance means *contract*.

A contract has at least four things: (1) parties—those among whom the agreement is made; (2) mutual agreement—if it is a bilateral (conditional) agreement; (3) consideration or terms—the thing that is required of the parties; and (4) the token—usually signatures by which the contract is ratified.

Perhaps more should be said here about the *token* of a covenant. This can be any action recognized by the parties as a binding commitment. For example, a simple handshake is good enough in some cultures to bind an agreement between persons. When the parties "shake on it," the matter is confirmed. For more substantial contracts, the parties' signatures are required in the modern world. However, in the past different methods of ratification were used.

Laban and Jacob used a pile of stones upon which they ate a meal together as a token of their agreement (Genesis 31:44-55). At one time a covenant was ratified by cutting an animal in two and the

parties of the agreement passing between the pieces (Genesis 15:9-18). Thus, the term "cutting a contract" or "cutting a deal" is still heard today. When Boaz and Ruth's nearest kinsman made a deal, they confirmed it by exchanging a shoe (Ruth 4:7-11). In the days of Daniel, Darius the king used a signet ring pressed into wax to seal his agreement (Daniel 6). These examples of ratifying contracts are given to alert us to look for unusual ways of enacting agreements of the past.

Armed with this much background information on what a covenant is, let's look into various contracts God has made with men.

NOACHIN COVENANT

We find details of this covenant in Genesis 9. Although this covenant was made with Noah, it included all living things of the earth.

"And I [God], behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth" (Genesis 9:9,10)

So the first thing we notice is that the parties to the contract are God on one side and all living things

on the other.

The second thing we look for is mutual agreement. We notice something here which is different than most contracts. It requires no ratification from the receiving parties. This is what we call a unilateral covenant. It is an agreement wherein God has bound Himself never again to destroy the living things of the earth by water as He had done with the great deluge. Of course, the living things of the earth certainly would have assented to this agreement had they been given the opportunity, but it was not necessary.

Third, we examine the consideration or terms. What is required of the parties?

“And I [God] will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:11)

God freely agrees not to use water to destroy all life on earth again, but man again is left out of the contract when consideration is required. Thus, the recipients will receive this blessing without doing anything to hold God to His agreement.

Another important thing we find in the terms of this contract is the time limit.

4

“that I may remember the everlasting covenant...” (Genesis 9:16)

The Hebrew word for everlasting is *olam* and means “time out of mind”—it is to be in effect for all generations of living creatures without end.

Fourth, we will find the token of the parties. Since the living creatures including man had nothing to say about the terms nor assent of the parties, it is of no surprise to find nothing by which it is ratified except by its maker, God.

The token is so outstanding that the covenant has often been called by the name “rainbow covenant.”

“This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you...I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Genesis 9:12,13)

Thus, we have identified the four conditions found in all contracts: the parties, agreement, terms, and token of those responsible to carry out the terms.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Abraham was a man who walked uprightly and obediently before God. When he was told to leave the country of his father and go to a land which God

5

would show him, he did so. His reward for such obedience was to become a great nation.

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed...” (Genesis 12:2-4)

In spite of what must have seemed like a long delay in beginning to fulfill His promises, Abram still believed God.

“And he believed in the Lord: and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6)

It was twenty-four years after Abram departed from Haran, his father's country, before God made His covenant with him. Job was not the only man of Biblical fame who had to learn patience.

In identifying the parties to this covenant, we find that it is made between God and Abram, but is to be extended to his heirs throughout succeeding generations; and finally, the whole of mankind is to reap the benefit of the covenant.

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their

generations...” (Genesis 17:7)

Later, when Abraham had proven his faithfulness by his willingness to offer up his son, Isaac, in death, God said,

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18)

Like most contracts today, mutual agreement was proven by the token. For example, when we purchase any large item it is normal to sign documents of agreement as to how we will pay for them. Such a contract to pay would be useless without our ratifying signature, our token. Similarly, it is quite normal for married couples to exchange rings as a token of their vows (marriage contract), as a constant reminder to the parties. This is one of the visible evidences of the marriage covenant.

In the Abrahamic covenant, circumcision was to be the token.

“And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Genesis 17:11)

Abraham proved himself agreeable to the contract by going through with this ritual.

"And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh..." (Genesis 17:24)

Finally, we come to the consideration, the terms of the covenant. This covenant was to so change this man's relationship and character qualities that he is given a new name. That would seem most peculiar today; but in the culture of that day, a person's name indicated their outstanding qualities. In Hebrew, the name Abram means "high father," but this was to change because of God's blessing through this covenant. So God changed his name to match his future quality. Abraham means "father of a multitude."

"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Genesis 17:5)

Abraham at ninety-nine years of age and his wife, Sarah, being ninety, seemed unlikely candidates to be new parents. Humanly speaking, it was impossible. Supernaturally speaking, with God all things are possible.

"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed

8

after him" (Genesis 17:19)

Although there are many other terms of the Abrahamic covenant such as, the land of inheritance, blessings for the Abrahamic family, etc., the most important of all the terms was the promise that the seed of Abraham would be the blessing of all nations. This was and is being accomplished through Jesus Christ.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16)

What terms or considerations were required of Abraham for his part of the contract? The Bible speaks of two important qualities of Abraham—faith and obedience. As we have already pointed out, the Old Testament says, "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." He had faith in God. The New Testament is in agreement.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8)

Did you catch the second quality of Abraham

9

mentioned in this verse? Obedience!

Isn't popular in many Christian circles today to remind men they should obey God. And we could justifiably ask, why is it important? The very evidence of faith is obedience.

James wrote it this way,

"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works...Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (James 2:18-22)

Saving faith has works of obedience as proof that the faith exists in the believer's heart. What a difference it would make if today every professing Christian were more like Abraham as described in the Bible,

"Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5)

Faith in God and obedience to His laws then were Abraham's part of the covenant, exercised for

twenty-five years before Isaac was born. God, knowing Abraham would remain faithful, made the covenant unconditional to his heirs because of Abraham's faith. Thus, Jesus, the seed of Abraham came to bless mankind from among all nations, in spite of unfaithfulness by some of Abraham's offspring.

Now we would like to take up the subject of the old and new covenant.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD COVENANT

Occasionally, we hear people speak of the Ten Commandments as being the old covenant. Often we think of these two terms as synonymous. Even sadder is the fact that some ministers teach this to be true. Let's see how one could easily make this mistake and then explore whether or not it could be the full truth.

Less than thirty days before he died, Moses was giving some of his final exhortations to the people of Israel. He reminded them of the commitment they had made to obey God's voice heard at Mount Sinai,

“And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deuteronomy 4:12,13)

If this were the only text to be considered, we

12

might easily believe the covenant consisted only of the Ten Commandments.

However, there is an immediate problem. Remember the four parts of a covenant or contract are to include: the parties, agreement of the parties, the terms, and the token. The Ten Commandments contain only some terms to be kept and the parties are not specified. Neither is there agreement by the parties if we allow they are implied to be Israel. And, finally, there is no token of the agreement. Honesty forces us to conclude that while the Ten Commandments are a portion of the covenant, they certainly are not the whole covenant.

The next problem is the often quoted phrase “He added no more” from Deuteronomy 5:22. The earlier portion of chapter five is relating the Ten Commandments, then suddenly it says “He added no more” and this is offered to prove that only the Ten Commandments are the laws of God—all other laws to Israel being considered the law of Moses. But let's explore these words carefully before hanging on to such a doctrinal conclusion.

First, we will read the whole verse putting the phrase into context.

“These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and He added no more. And He

13

wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me" (Deuteronomy 5:22)

The word translated *added* in this verse comes from the Hebrew word *yasaph*. By looking up this word in the Hebrew dictionary in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3254, we find it means "to continue to do a thing." The Hebrew word preceding *yasaph* is *lo* and is translated into English as the negative *no* or in this verse as *no more*. In other words, God was doing something that He was going to continue to do no more. By the surrounding text in this chapter, we ask what was it that He discontinued doing? The answer is quite clear—He discontinued speaking so that *all the assembly could hear*.

Because of their fear at hearing His great voice, He spoke only to Moses from then on and Moses related His further commands to the people.

"Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die" (verse 25)

Incidentally, the words *any more* are translated from the Hebrew word *yasaph* in this verse.

The simple fact is that God did add more after He had spoken the Ten Commandments. He added to them statutes and judgments and the Bible plainly

affirms this in the same chapter.

"But as for thee, [Moses] stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them..." (Deuteronomy 5:31)

If the Ten Commandments are only a part of the old covenant, what does the full covenant contain?

CONTENTS OF THE OLD COVENANT

The old covenant is given in full, in its original form, at the time of its reception by Israel. The whole covenant is found in Exodus, beginning with chapter 20, and does not end until the 24th chapter. Let's see what all is in this covenant. We urge each reader to take their Bibles and follow through these verses. First of all, it lists the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. Then, it tells of the fear which the people felt and their request for Moses to hear God's laws and then to tell them instead of listening directly to God's voice (verses 18-23).

The last three verses of this chapter speak of an altar. This has led many to believe that the original covenant included the sacrificial system that really did not come until later. How can we know this altar was not referring to part of the temple services

instituted later? The altar here mentioned is to be made of *earth*. It is quite specific in verse 24. Unlike this altar, the altar in the tabernacle was to be made of wood and overlaid with brass.

“And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood...thou shalt overlay it with brass” (Exodus 27:1,2)

This command was no part of the original covenant, as we will show later.

However, we should find out what this earthen altar was to be used for. The Bible does not leave us uninformed. It was the altar upon which a sacrifice would be made to ratify this old covenant. After Moses wrote all the words of the covenant in the book of the covenant and the people had agreed to do them, they built an altar of twelve pillars (stone, earth) and ratified the covenant with the sprinkling of the blood on the book and people. The whole procedure is written in Exodus 24:3-8.

THE JUDGMENTS

Before going into other aspects of the old covenant, we want to make it clear that the Ten Commandments are the foundation or essence of the whole covenant. Much of the additional material is an enlargement or a “how to” in applying them. Thus,

the covenant now takes up the treatment of servants, beginning with the words “Now these are the *judgments*...” (Exodus 21:1).

After giving information on the relationship of masters and servants in the first eleven verses, the covenant takes up what action should occur when the commandments are violated—if a man is killed in verses 12-14; if one fails to honor his father or mother in verse 15; if a person steals in verse 16, etc. We won't take the space to list all the judgments, but we encourage you to read them from the Scriptures.

Restitution is almost unheard of in today's society. The lawbreaker is usually set free after a slap on the wrist by our judicial system, or may even have to spend some time in confinement, but it is really news-worthy when they have to make restitution to the injured party. In God's covenant with Israel, restitution had to be made to the person who was victimized. If a man was caught after stealing and selling an ox, he had to pay back five oxen; if it was a sheep, he paid back four. The first thirteen verses of chapter 22 deals with animal and field crops that were damaged by an errant citizen. The balance of this chapter deals with borrowing and lending, treatment of women, beastiality, witches, widows and orphans, etc.

Among the other things itemized in chapter 23, we find the feast days of God.

"There times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year...feast of unleavened bread...feast of harvest, [or the first-fruits]...feast of ingathering...three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exodus 23:14-17)

The next verse has proven to be difficult for some. Because it mentions a sacrifice, they erroneously presume the feast days were instituted with sacrifices.

"Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning" (Exodus 23:18)

The true meaning of this verse can be quickly understood by anyone who is familiar with the Passover service which had been started back in Egypt before the covenant was given. The covenant here incorporates the Passover observance along with the other statutes.

When speaking to the enslaved Israelites down in Egypt regarding the Passover animal, God said,

"And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning..." (Exodus 12:10)

18

We repeat, there is nothing in the original old covenant that is referring to the ceremonial sacrificial system. These were introduced *after* the covenant was made and ratified. This was emphasized much later in Jewish history.

"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and I walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you" (Jeremiah 7:22,23)

Thus far in the contract, we have only seen the terms that are to be carried out by the Israelite people. What about the other party to the contract? What about the terms God is to fulfill? They are all listed and are conditional upon Israel's obedience to their part of the contract.

"But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies...He shall bless thy bread, and thy water...I will take sickness away...there shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren..." (Exodus 23:22-26)

19

He further promised to drive out the inhabitants of the promised land and warned Israel not to make covenants with them.

So far, we have covered several essentials to the covenant. First, the parties—God on one side and the Israelites, which He brought out of the land of Egypt, on the other (Exodus 20:1,2). Second, all the conditions or terms—what God expected of the Israelites and what He promised to do for them. Third, the token that ratified the covenant (sprinkling of blood) and placed it into effect. This token would not be valid unless the Israelites agreed to keep the covenant.

So, we find the following.

“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord...And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:3-7)

It was only after this agreement by the people that the covenant was ratified by sprinkling the book of the covenant and the people with the “blood of the covenant.”

20

Indeed, the Ten Commandments are a part of the old covenant, but certainly not all of it. As we've seen in this writing, all the parts (the parties, the terms, the agreement, and the token) are found in Exodus Chapters 20 through 24. It is shocking to some folks to find out that the gift of the Ten Commandments, etched in stone by God's hand, was not received by Moses until after the covenant containing them was written and ratified. See Exodus 24:12 and note the future tense of the verbs.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written...”

Another important thing for us to remember is that the original covenant contained nothing about the tabernacle services. All these instructions came in Exodus Chapter 25ff. Why were they given? This is the law (of sacrifices) that was added because of transgression, which Paul wrote about in Galatians 3:19. God foreknew that the people would not keep His covenant perfectly, so He made provisions to repair the “breach of contract” that He knew would occur. This made it possible to keep the covenant active until the new covenant was established through the blood of a greater sacrifice—Jesus Christ.

21

CHAPTER III

THE NEW COVENANT

As we have stated in our previous two chapters on God's covenants, a covenant is a contract and contains four essential elements: the parties, mutual agreement of the parties, the terms (requirements of the parties), and the token (sign of agreement to validate the contract). Now we want to identify these separate parts of the new covenant in order to better understand just what our covenant relationship with God includes.

Has the new covenant been established already or is it something yet future? This may seem like a strange question, but some Christians are confused on the issue and are not sure whether we are still under the old covenant or perhaps between the old and new. Others claim that the new covenant is only for physical Israel and is not yet in effect.

The Bible speaks unmistakably of the new covenant as already in force.

"But now hath He [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6)

22

The present tense of the verb *is* in this verse indicates Christ is presently the mediator of the New Covenant. How could He be the mediator of something that does not exist? Further, the text clearly affirms that it *was established*. This is past tense and proves beyond any doubt that the new covenant is now in force to those who accept it.

THE TOKEN OF THE NEW COVENANT

What are the differences between the old covenant, which God had with Israel, and the new covenant? From the above quoted scripture, we know it was established upon better promises. What were some of those promises?

First, the old covenant was initiated by the blood of animals (Exodus 24:4-8). The new covenant was instituted by a superior sacrifice, the blood of Christ, as He prescribed in His last passover meal with His disciples. After taking the cup, He said,

"For this is my blood of the new testament..." (Matthew 26:28)

It was by the pouring out of His blood, becoming the mediator, that validated the new covenant and brought redemption to all those who had violated or transgressed the laws of obedience of the old covenant.

23

“And for this cause He [Christ] is the mediator of the new testament [covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15)

This sinless High Priest was the perfect sacrifice to redeem all mankind who would willingly become a part of this covenant. He is the bridge that spans the great gulf between sinful man and his sinless God. But what makes man sinful? Not only is he born a sinner from Adam, he also transgresses God's love of obedience in the old covenant.

“Sin is the transgression of the law...” (1 John 3:4)

Although the new covenant establishes the better promise of eternal life, it does not remove the obligation for Christians to obey the will of God. When they fail, Christ intervenes as their sacrifice. Unlike the repetitious animal sacrifices which pictured Him, His one-time death was all sufficient.

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28)

24

Thus, one major difference in these two covenants is the perfect sacrifice of Christ as the token of the new covenant.

PARTIES AND MUTUAL AGREEMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT

The old covenant was exclusively binding with Israel—the new covenant makes people of any nation, who respond to the call of God, spiritual Israelites and parties to the covenant.

The requirement for you and me to enter into this contractual relationship with God is to accept the blood of Christ for our transgressions.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19)

The call from God goes to all mankind to become parties of the new covenant. Jesus said,

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32)

The invitation to be a party to the new covenant is universal.

“Whosoever believeth in Him should not

25

perish, but have everlasting life..." (John 3:16)

Over 600 years before Christ came to earth as a man, God foretold the time when He would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

The writer to the Hebrews quotes from Jeremiah when he discusses the superiority of the new covenant in Hebrews 8:8-12.

Two important points need to be emphasized regarding the above quoted passage. First that the new covenant was to be with Israel and Judah. In spite of the Jew's unfaithfulness to the old covenant, God offered the terms of the new covenant to them first, then later to the Gentiles. Paul makes this clear in his writings.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentiles]" (Romans 1:16)

So, while the Gentiles are not excluded from the

new covenant, it was first offered exclusively to the Jews. Jesus came not to the Gentile world at large, but only to the house of Israel.

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)

Paul wrote to Gentile Christians that had become the seed of Abraham by their faith in Christ as the Messiah.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29)

Hence, both Jews and Gentiles become parties of the new covenant by their individual agreement to accept Christ as their personal Savior, becoming spiritual Jews by the circumcision of the heart.

TERMS OF THE NEW COVENANT

The next point that needs to be emphasized from Jeremiah's writings is that the laws of God were not abolished with the new covenant.

"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts..." (Jeremiah 31:33)

Too many Christians think the new covenant has no laws for them to obey—no absolute standard for their lives. They readily recognize their right as a party to the new covenant; their mutual agreement by accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior, and that Christ's blood was the validating token of the covenant. However, they only see God's obligation in the terms of the contract. The other part of the terms is writing of His laws upon our hearts if we are truly parties of the new covenant. What laws? What laws would Jeremiah have thought about when he heard from God about this new covenant? Of course, it would be the laws of obedience given in the old covenant. This would include God's sabbath and holy days.

Jesus said He did not come to destroy the law. He even said those breaking them and teaching others to do so, would be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19). Further, he said,

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God..." (Matthew 4:4)

The only part of the covenant that was deleted then was the sacrificial law which was added because of the transgression of the law of obedience. These sacrificial pronouncements were not a part of the original book of the covenant spoken of in Exodus 24:4-8. They were given later, beginning in Exodus

25. These sacrificial laws were superseded by the better sacrifice—Jesus Christ.

Paul speaks of this added portion to the old covenant when writing to the Galatians, showing its purpose was to prove the need for the Messiah which it had pictured.

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come..." (Galatians 3:19)

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ..." (Galatians 3:24)

The sacrificial law was added temporarily only "till the seed [Christ] should come." This was to magnify the necessity of a better sacrifice—the Messiah.

Jesus, the basis of our salvation and the foundation of the new covenant, said,

"If ye love me, keep my commandments... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:15, 21)

Thus, the terms of the new covenant are not a one-way street. True, God has promised eternal life

to believers. They are in a unique relationship with Him through the new covenant. However, they too are bound by this covenant's terms of obedience. Not just to letter-keeping, but to having them written in their hearts. From our deepest emotional being, we Christians should desire to obey God as evidence of our love and gratitude for God's greatest gift to us, salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, who makes the new covenant available to us.

For many Christians, the terms of obedience have been the forgotten part of the new covenant. Love for God will bid us to reclaim this long ignored portion of our relationship with Him. May He richly bless all those who obey Him.