

## The Two Covenants

This morning I'd like to discuss a subject that has caused a lot of confusion within Christianity for many centuries and continues to be a hotly debated issue even today. By far, there are a majority of Christians who take their stand on one side of this issue and a minority who take the other side, and how often has the majority been right? Hardly ever. Well, today we're going to find out which side is the right side, because there are eternal consequences for choosing the wrong side.

The Bible speaks of an old and a new covenant: one that failed, and therefore became obsolete; and one that succeeded and continues to succeed and is therefore eternal. But before we get very deep into this subject, we need to define just what a covenant is. There are many types of covenants, but basically a covenant is an agreement between two parties based upon mutual promises. When two people enter a marriage covenant, for instance, they both pledge their solemn vows before God and witnesses that they will forsake all others and be true to one another until death do they part, and they sign a license to prove it! But what if one decides that the grass looks greener on the other side, what happens to their covenant? It's broken, isn't it? and the innocent party now has Biblical grounds to divorce and make a new covenant with someone else if they so choose. So a covenant is binding only as long as it's not violated by either of the two parties, and this principle is basic to all covenants.

Now, do you have any idea when the very first covenant was made regarding this planet? Was it made with Adam and Eve, or was it made sometime before that? Well, we're going to find out that the very first covenant was made in heaven before the first human being was ever created. Let's take a look at a couple Bible texts, and by the way, we're going to be looking at a lot of Bible texts today, so I hope you have your sword ready to unsheathe and cut you way through all the lies that have surrounded this subject for a long time, but before we do, let's pray.

In the first **10 verses of Revelation 13** it speaks of a beast power, which is the papacy, and how it would speak blasphemies against God and persecute the church through the centuries and right on through to these last days, but I want you to notice something important in **verse 8**, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from (**when?**) the foundation of the world."

Now here we're given a clue as to when the first covenant was made regarding this world. The Lamb of course we know is Jesus, and it speaks of His death before the time of creation. In other words, this was a plan that was laid long before God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and he became a living soul. By the way, this verse tells us that God

knew in advance every name that would be written in the book of life. That means that He knows every individual and whether or not their names would be written there before the fact. And so, He knew each one before they were born. When looking at it that way, I think many people are going to have to give an answer as to why they supported abortion, don't you think? But we'll leave that subject right there for now. I just threw it out there for you to think about. But if Jesus knew He was going to sacrifice His life before life was created on this planet, then there must have been some kind of agreement, some kind of covenant between the members of the Godhead, and that's why there has to be an eternal covenant, because those who made it are eternal.

Now let's look at a few more verses in **1 Peter 1:18-20**, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained (**that is determined beforehand, when?**) before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." And so, it was predetermined in advance that Jesus was going to be the Saviour of the world, because God knew ahead of time that Adam and Eve would blow it and make it necessary for the gospel to come into play in order to give mankind another chance. By the way, that's why the apostle John says, "God is love," amen? God is love.

These verses refer to a covenant between the Father and the Son, and of course **John 3:16** shows the Father's involvement, doesn't it? It says He gave! It wasn't just the decision of Jesus alone, but the Father was in agreement that their plan to save mankind by God offering Himself to die the death of the sinner was the only way it could be accomplished. So we have the two parties that formed this covenant. Sometime in eternity past, Jesus offered Himself and agreed to become the atoning sacrifice to redeem mankind should they choose to sin, and the terms of that covenant have never been changed or superseded or broken and is therefore eternal. Neither Jesus nor the Father have violated their agreement, and because of that it's still in force. Because they are eternal beings and have never violated their agreement and never will, it's a covenant that needs no replacement. The simple provision of salvation through faith in the Lamb of God has remained in effect through all ages, and for all mankind.

Now, please permit me to read three inspired statements from God's last day prophet that will establish the fact that the very first covenant was made between the Father and Son before the creation of mankind, and in a few minutes you'll understand why this is so important.

***The Faith I Live By, page 76***, "As the divine Sufferer hung upon the cross, angels gathered about Him, and as they looked upon Him, and heard His cry, they asked, with intense

emotion, ‘Will not the Lord Jehovah save Him?’ . . . Then were the words spoken: ‘The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent. Father and Son are pledged to fulfill the terms of the everlasting covenant. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Christ was not alone in making His great sacrifice. It was the fulfillment of the covenant made between Him and His Father before the foundation of the world was laid. With clasped hands they had entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan’s sophistry.

“The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. [By the way, that’s why there’s an everlasting gospel as it says in **Revelation 14:6**] So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity.”

***Signs of the Times, December 23, 1897,*** “The great plan of redemption was laid before the foundation of the world. And Christ, our Substitute and Surety, did not stand alone in the wondrous undertaking of the ransom of man. In the plan to save a lost world, the counsel was between them both; the covenant of peace was between the Father and the Son.”

***Signs of the Times, August 22, 1900,*** “The Saviour could have avoided the suffering and death which He endured. Had He so chosen, He might have left the human race to the consequences of their apostasy. But in counsel with the Father He pledged Himself to secure the salvation of every human being. An irrevocable covenant was made between the Father and the Son. Christ must go forward and finish the work which He had undertaken, or all the world would perish.”

***Manuscript 16, 1890, pp. 25, 26,*** “A compact entered into by the Father and the Son to save the world through Christ, who would give Himself that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. No human power or angelic power could make such a covenant. The rainbow above the Throne is a token that God through Christ binds Himself to save all who believe on Him. The covenant is as sure as the throne.”

In **Deuteronomy 19:15** it says, “At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established,” and I’ve given you more than that, so it’s an undisputed fact that there was a covenant between the Father and the Son, and this covenant was and is everlasting and irrevocable. It’s something that’s ever been, ever will be and incapable of being recalled. So that much we’ve established beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Now, in **Genesis 3:15** this covenant, between Father and Son, was made known to Adam and Eve when God said to Satan: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, (**which is a fatal blow**) and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Jesus would recover from His wounds, but the serpent would not. Our Lord will ever retain the scars of His suffering for all eternity as a witness to what He was willing to bear in order to save those who will someday inhabit the earth made new, and this same covenant that was revealed in Eden was renewed in **Genesis 22:18** to Abraham. Notice what it says there, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast (**what?**) obeyed my voice.” The obedience of Abraham and the approval given him by God indicates that there was an agreement, or a covenant, and it had to be the same as the one given previously, because remember, that one had never been broken, and it never will be, and this next text says as much. In **Genesis 17:7** God said to Abraham, “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and (**now listen carefully**) and thy seed after thee in their generations for (**what kind of covenant?**) an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” And so, this everlasting covenant was also established with the Jewish nation as Abraham’s descendants, but something happened down the road, and we’ll get to that in a few minutes. But notice, Paul tells us in **Galatians 3:29** that if we belong to Christ, then by faith we are part of Abraham’s family and the promise of the everlasting covenant belongs to us as well. Praise the Lord!

In **Patriarchs and Prophets**, pages **370, 371** it says the following: “Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified (**or given final approval**) until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant. (**And so here, 4000 years after creation, the covenant made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world is called a new covenant. Do you see that? It wasn’t called a new covenant because it just came into existence, but because it was finalized when Jesus said, “it is finished”, and gave up the ghost.**) The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law. Another compact—called in Scripture the ‘old’ covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice (**an animal sacrifice**). The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the ‘second,’ or ‘new,’ covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant (**or the covenant made with Israel at Sinai**). That the new covenant (**that is, the first covenant made before the foundation of the world**) was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God, the ‘two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.’ But if the Abrahamic covenant contained

the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai? (**Good question, and here's why**) In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him."

And so, this covenant made with Israel was supposed to be a renewal of the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son and not something totally different. But a problem developed with this covenant, because Israel failed to understand something about the agreement they made with God at Mount Sinai, which is called the old covenant, not called old because it came before the new covenant, but because it was ratified by animal blood before the original covenant between the Father and the Son was ratified by the blood of Christ. Do you see now why this is a confusing subject? Well, let's see if we can clear this up. Let's go to **Hebrews 8** and read the whole chapter, there's only **13 verses**, because Paul's description here leaves absolutely no room for doubt about the fate of the "old covenant" that wasn't as old as the new covenant.

**Hebrews chapter 8**, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum (**or the main point**): we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man (**Christ**) have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of (**what?**) a better covenant, which was established upon better promises (**why? Because they were the promises of God without human input when it was made**). For if that first covenant (**with Israel**) had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second (**or the original**). For finding fault with them (**notice: the fault wasn't with the covenant, but with them**), For finding fault with them, he saith, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant (**with the same principles of the original one between the Father and the Son; the one that was foreordained before the foundation of the world and made known to Adam and Eve after they sinned and then to Abraham and to his descendants, and by faith to us**) I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days (**or sometime later on when they can**

**better understand), saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts (that's what God did for Adam and Eve when they were first created, and I'll read that to you in just a minute):** and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me (**all those that understand the everlasting covenant that is**), from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first (**with Israel**) old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

Now let me read you the statement I mentioned a moment ago about God putting His law in Adam and Eve's heart and mind when they were first created, or we could say, when God instilled His everlasting covenant in their heart and mind. **Patriarchs and Prophets, page 363**, "Adam and Eve, at their creation (**not after they sinned**), had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts."

Now this statement is quite interesting when you think about it, because it proves the once saved always saved theory false. How's that? Well, Adam and Eve were saved in the beginning, weren't they? Yes, but they lost their salvation when they disobeyed God. Even though God wrote His law upon their hearts, just as He does when one accepts Christ and experiences conversion now, they lost their eternal life. That's why the Father and the Son made an everlasting covenant between themselves to save sinners; that's the purpose of the eternal covenant and the reason for the cross. The good news is, Adam and Eve repented of their sin and eternal life was given back to them, but they still had to suffer the consequences by being cast out of the Garden, which made life much more difficult for themselves and for us, but at least they were given the opportunity, or another chance, for the Garden to be restored to them when the earth is made new, and to us as well "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

And by the way, there's a significant difference between eternal life and immortality. Most people don't think about this, but it's important. Eternal life can be taken away if we sin, just like what happened to Adam and Eve, but when we are given immortality at the return of Christ, we will always have it, it's something that can never be taken away, but no one has it now, and Adam and Eve didn't have it. Like us, they were placed upon probation to see if they would be obedient or not. According to **1 Corinthians 15:51-55** this mortal doesn't put on immortality until the second coming. We can have eternal life now only because the one who is eternal dwells within, but if we chose not to abide in Christ, then we forfeit that eternal life. We are not immortal souls until we are "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump", and it's important that we

understand this. Just like Adam and Eve, we have a probationary time during this life to make our calling and election sure, and if not, we will not be given immortality when Jesus comes. When Jesus steps out of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, the irrevocable decision will have been made for each individual and we will be stuck in a saved or lost condition forever, and it will never change.

So, the covenant God made with Israel, which is called the old, was set aside for a new covenant, which was older than the old, because it had better promises, and even though it's important for us to know all about the "new covenant", we also need to understand the nature of the covenant which was to "vanish away." Why? Because nearly all Christians today have been taught that the "old covenant" that was to pass away is the Ten Commandment law. They boast of being delivered from the law and claim to walk in a glorious freedom from the Old Testament covenant of obedience, but is this a Biblical position to take? That's the question we want to answer this morning.

First of all we're going to look at three absolute proofs that the "old covenant" that "vanished away" was not the Ten Commandments. Notice once again what it says in **Hebrews 8:6**, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Now tell me, has anyone ever been able to point out any poor promises with the Ten Commandments? Not that I'm aware of. In fact, there's a very positive promise in the Ten Commandments, which promises long life to those who obey their parents, and certainly that one hasn't vanished away, although many children today act like it has.

Let's look at what the apostle Paul says about it in **Ephesians 6:1-3**. "Children, obey (or be subordinate to) your parents in the Lord: for this is right. (Notice the words "in the Lord", that's important, because there's no command to do what your parents or anyone else tells you to do if they're telling you to do something that would violate the Scriptures, that's why the apostles told the chief priests, "we ought to obey God rather than men") Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise); that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." If the "old covenant" that was to vanish away was the Ten Commandments, then this promise would mean nothing today, but it's very definitely still in force, as well as the other nine, because **James 2:10** says if you break one, you're guilty of breaking them all.

Go also to **Revelation 22:14**, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." This is a promise made during New Testament times, or after the covenant made between Father and Son was ratified by the blood of Christ, and so the Ten Commandments as a whole could not possibly be done away with. If they were, then we would have no way to have access to the tree of life and enter in through the gates into the city.

And one more in **Matthew 19:17**. This is Jesus speaking to a rich young man, “And he said unto him, why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life (**do what?**), keep the commandments”, not do away with them. What we don’t want to do is have the same misunderstanding of the everlasting covenant as ancient Israel and think we can obey the law without allowing Jesus to write it in our hearts and minds.

According to all these verses, and many others like them, the “old covenant”, whatever else it might be, could never be the Ten Commandments. The old covenant had to do with the commandments, in fact they both did, but the commandments themselves were not at fault, it was the people and their faulty understanding who was at fault. We read just a minute ago that the old covenant was “faulty”, but let me ask you: has anyone ever been able to find fault with what God wrote with His own finger? I don’t think so. Israel had a do it yourself religion, and that’s basically what the old covenant was all about and why it failed, but the new covenant is established upon better promises, because it’s based upon divinity and humanity combined, and that’s why it is much better. The old covenant was humanity alone and the new is humanity cooperating with the divine. One is certain to fail and the other is certain to succeed. The choice is ours to try to go it alone or to rely upon the One who has all the power to keep us from falling.

Let’s take a quick look now at what the Bible says about God’s law. **Psalm 19:7**, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” **Psalm 119:142**, “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.” **Romans 7:12**, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”

So it’s obvious that the law cannot be perfect and sure and truth and holy and good and be faulty at the same time. So again, it’s impossible for the “old covenant” to be the Ten Commandments. It’s true that both the old and new covenants are based upon the law, but it’s our understanding of how we keep it that matters.

The Bible says the “old covenant” was to be abolished, that’s what we read in **Hebrews 8:13**. The question is, was the great moral law of Ten Commandments abolished? Let’s take a look at that as well.

**Matthew 5:17,18**. Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil (**and He did fulfill it perfectly, but that does not mean it was destroyed or done away with**). For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Last I checked heaven and earth are still here. Not the crossing of a “t” or the dotting of an “I” would pass away from the law until this current heaven and earth are no

more, and that won't happen till after the Lord returns, in fact it won't be until after the thousand years spoken of in **Revelation 21**. So the idea that Jesus fulfilling the law is the same as destroying it is a faulty understanding.

Go also to **Romans 3:31**. Paul says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." You can't establish something and abolish it at the same time, it's impossible. So, if the "old covenant" that was to vanish away was not the ten-commandment law, then what was it? Well, to identify it specifically we need to go back to **Exodus 19**. As we read you'll notice here that God called Moses up into the mountain before He actually gave the law and made a proposal between Himself and the children of Israel. **Exodus 19:3-6**, "And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, (**which involved obedience to the commandments**), then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

In the verses we just read we have all the elements of a true covenant, with conditions and promises on both sides. If the children of Israel accepted God's proposal, a covenant would then be established. And how did they respond to God's offer?

**Verses 7, 8**, "And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, 'All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.' And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD."

Just as soon as their answer went back to God, the basis for the old covenant was set up when all the people said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." However, the people didn't realize the sinfulness of their own hearts at that point, and that without divine power it was impossible for them to keep the law. How do we know? Because before Moses came down from the mount with the two tables of stone, they were dancing around the golden calf. They broke the covenant before Moses could even come back down off the mountain. Are you beginning to see what the poor promises are in the old covenant? It was on the part of the people.

Now let's go back to **Hebrews 8** and we'll begin to see this whole thing unfold. **Hebrews 8:8, 9**, "For finding fault with them (**with who? With them**), he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: (**again, this new covenant was the same as the original covenant**

**made in Eden. New to the Israelites, but not new in terms of when it was first established)** Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord."

We see here how the blame was placed squarely upon the human side of the mutual agreement, and by putting all these things together we can see why a new covenant was necessary. But why were the "new covenant" promises better than the old? Because God made them without consulting fallen flesh! In **Hebrews 8:10** God says: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." What a contrast to the weak promises of the flesh! Instead of "we will do," it is "God working in us both to will and to do." It's no longer human effort apart from divine power, but humanity and divinity combined, just like it was in Eden before sin entered this world.

It's quite clear that the "new covenant" is based on a new heart, because of what it says in **Romans 8:3, 4**, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (**or the sinful nature**), God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

It's important for us to understand that the "new covenant" law written on the heart is exactly the same law that was written on stone. The difference is not in the law but in the way we understand its function. When they are written only in stone, they can only condemn us to death, because we can't keep them, but when they're received into the heart that has been made spiritual by the converting grace of Christ, the same law becomes a delight to keep and a pleasure to obey, and if you haven't figured it out by now, that's the only way it can be done. Heart obedience is the only way it can change our character to reflect the character of Jesus, and we read earlier that that's what it takes to bring us back into harmony with the divine will, placing us where we can obey God's law.

Notice what it says in ***The Desire of Ages*, page 668**, "All true obedience comes from (**where?**) the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us." Just as it was hateful to Christ I might add.

You see, the new covenant is not us making promises we can't keep, like Israel did, it's us

consenting, or giving God permission to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In **Psalm 40:8** David says, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is (**where?**) within my heart.” Here we see that David understood the new covenant before it was ratified by the blood of Christ, and this is just another evidence that the new covenant existed before the old.

**1 John 5:3**, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” The primary meaning in the Greek for the word grievous here is “weighty” or “heavy.” The Ten Commandments are too heavy for us to keep in our own strength, we need divine help. That’s what Jesus meant when he said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” If we come unto Him, as He says, then through the Holy Spirit He can work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. That’s the new covenant, and that’s what Israel didn’t understand when they said, “all that the Lord has said we will do and be obedient.”

In **Galatians chapter four**, Paul speaks of Ishmael and Isaac as representing two covenants, and many people are puzzled as to what Paul meant by this allegory, so let’s take a look at it. **Galatians 4:22-31**, “For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Now, how do these sons by two different women represent two covenants? Well, to begin with let’s rehearse the story for a minute. God promised Abraham a son by his wife Sarah, but because she was 90 years old, neither of them believed it could happen. Sarah knew she was long past the age for childbearing, so she suggested that they rescue God from an impossible promise by Abraham having a child with Hagar her handmaid, and unfortunately that’s what Abraham did. This part of the story is a good example of the “we will do” syndrome. Abraham tried to work things out through human effort, but the works of the flesh failed just as the “old covenant” promises of Israel failed. And because there was no dependence on divine power, God never recognized Ishmael as the

promised seed. The birth of Isaac, on the other hand, was a miracle! God actually created a new life out of a biologically dead womb, and that reminds me of what it says about us in **Ephesians 2:1**, “And you hath he quickened (**or made alive**), who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Just as Sarah was totally incapable of producing fruit from a dead womb, so the carnal mind of the sinner cannot bring forth the fruit of obedience from the heart! Before that can happen we need a new heart, which God promises to give if we consent. Only spiritual beings can obey a spiritual law. That’s what Paul said in **Romans 7:14**. When God used His power to create new life within Sarah, the impossible happened and she bore a son. And when God uses His power to create new life in the soul, the impossible happens again, and a human being begins keeping the law because it’s in his heart; he actually wants to obey, and if you want to you can, it’s just that simple.

When we understand this allegory correctly, it is the “new covenant” Christian who is truly a commandment keeper, and the “old covenant” Christian who is a commandment breaker, even when on the outside it looks like they are both the same. The truth is, the teaching of the two covenants establishes beyond any doubt that the Ten Commandment law is just as important under the new covenant as under the old, but instead of being graven on stone, it’s written on the heart; instead of being fulfilled by us, it’s fulfilled by Jesus in us; instead of keeping the law in order to gain eternal life, we keep it because we have eternal life, and that makes all the difference in the world.

The same works of obedience are there in both covenants, but they are there for different reasons and from different motives. No merit system is to clog the free channels of faith, love, and God’s grace. In its proper position obedience to the law is important and necessary, but it must always be in its proper place, following grace and faith and accompanied by love.

Let me remind you of what Paul said in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (**that faith**) not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto (**or for the purpose of**) good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

And so, it’s very plain here that the new creation comes first and then good works follow, and obedience to the law will follow. Once we become new creatures in Christ Jesus, as it says in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, good works will be the natural result. Jesus said the tree is known by its fruit, and the Christian tree will always produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Let me read something to you that explains it much better than I can. ***The Desire of Ages, page 175***, “There are thousands today who need to learn the same truth that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God

to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, ‘How can these things be?’ Like Nicodemus, we must be willing to enter into life in the same way as the chief of sinners. Then Christ, ‘there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God. . . Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon. How, then, are we to be saved? ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,’ so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live. ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O my God.’”

And so as I said, The same works of obedience are there in both covenants, but they are there for different reasons and from different motives. We need to have the new covenant experience of having the law written in our heart and mind. And guess what? essentially this is the same as the third angel’s message that we’re commissioned to take to the world. Because it’s only through the “new covenant” experience that we are able to keep the commandments of God, and we can only do that because we first have the faith of Jesus. The wonderful thing about the “new covenant” is that we can enter into this agreement with God today, right now! If we so choose, we can divorce the “old covenant” husband and be married to another. We can leave the “old man of sin” who has a “do-it-yourself” religion that doesn’t work, and be joined to One who has already conquered, if we will but accept His hand in marriage.

I’d like to close with **Romans 6:6-8**, because I think this explains the steps we need to take if we would be saved at last. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” And that doesn’t just mean when we get to heaven! If we plan on living with Jesus in the world to come, we must first live with Him here, and the best way to get to know Him is to live with Him, and the longer we live with Him the more we become like Him, and when He has a people who have become like Him, He will come.

In ***Christ’s Object Lessons***, page 69 we’re told that, “Christ is waiting with longing desire

for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be one of those who are holding things up. You may have never thought about this before, but someone is going to be the last one to perfectly reproduce the character of Christ before He comes, and I don't want it to be me, do you? I don't want to have the distinction of being the last one when I have a knowledge of the truth now, today. I want to perfectly reproduce the character of Christ as soon as possible and help others to do the same so that day will be hastened and not delayed. Let's kneel together and talk to God about it.