

COVENANTS



*Explaining the Old and New
Covenants from the Scriptures*

A series by David Legge

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Covenants - Chapter 1

"The Abrahamic Covenant"

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Well, good evening to you all. Tonight we're beginning to look at the subject of 'Covenants'. Now, this is a vast subject, and so all I hope to do tonight is to give you a general introduction to the subject of Covenants, and then narrow it in specifically to 'The Abrahamic Covenant' in Genesis 12, Genesis 13 and Genesis 15. Next week, God willing, we will look at 'The Old Covenant', which is the Mosaic covenant, and then the final week we will look at 'The New Covenant' - and hopefully we will glean something not just for your head, but for your heart, as we study this vast subject.

Now, if you want a portion of Scripture to turn to initially, though we will not be reading it just now, it would be Genesis chapter 12 - so you might like to turn to that. Let us pray just before we begin: Abba Father, we thank You for Your holy word, and Lord there is so much vastness and depth to it that we at times shake before it. We feel like the little child that is just dipping his toe into the shore, and there lies before us vast depths that we have never, nor will ever plumb. Yet, Father, we thank You that You have told us through the Lord Jesus that the Holy Spirit would come and would lead us into all truth. We just claim that now, and ask for minds that - as Paul prayed for us - would be opened and enlightened to receive Your truth; not just minds open, but hearts open. Lord, we long for a divine encounter, we long to meet God. So, Lord, hear us; and I commit myself to You now, Lord, in weakness, and I ask for Your grace and Your help now in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now, I know that there are a great deal of experts in Scrabo on this subject of covenants, you've been studying it in the last number of months - or maybe it's years now, I don't know - but particularly among the ladies. But you will know, if you have been doing such, that there are eight covenants, main covenants, in the Bible. Very simply put, a covenant is just an agreement or contract. It's rather crude to call it that, but that's basically what it is. There are eight covenants, agreements, contracts, in the Bible, and they start in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis chapter 2 we have what is called 'The Edenic Covenant'. Really that related to how God told man to populate the Earth, be fruitful and multiply. He was also there - and this is interesting in the light of our study this morning, and I was saying this to someone after the meeting - that from the very beginning, the inception of creation, God begins to devolve His sovereignty and dominion in measure. He gives man dominion, basically makes him a manager over creation, and he names the animals and so on. But man failed on his side of the agreement in this Edenic Covenant, and the story - I'm sure you know - is that he disobeyed God in Eden with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the consequence of breaking that Edenic Covenant was that death came upon all creation.

So man failed in his side of the agreement in the Edenic Covenant, and so that necessitated that another covenant come to the surface. So God brings what we know as 'The Adamic Covenant' in Genesis chapter 3. After the fall now, and in this Adamic Covenant Satan, the cause of a great deal of the trouble in the universe, is cursed. You know he is cursed, the serpent was cursed to writhe upon the ground, and then also with the curse of Satan, a Saviour is promised - and in Genesis chapter 3 we have the first promise of Messiah. Then man is told that he must work the ground to bear fruit from it and to live off it, and he is also told that, having spent his whole life working the ground, when he died as a consequence of

sin he would return to it as dust.

Now, humanity got so corrupt, even after the Adamic Covenant, that God repented - that's what the Bible says - that He had made man, and He sent a flood to destroy every living creature. After Noah and his family settled on the new Earth, so to speak, 'The Noahic Covenant' was formed between God and Noah and mankind in general, Genesis chapter 9. Now, basically the Noahic Covenant is a reassertion of the Adamic Covenant - everything that that was - but it may well have been that Noah and his family thought that the flood and the judgement of God had in some way changed the agreement that God had initially made with Adam. But that was not the case, and so the Noahic Covenant is essentially the Adamic Covenant with a few differences - one being the need for human government to subdue sin, the need for man himself to get a rein on society. Also within the Noahic Covenant was the promise that God said He would never judge the world again with a flood - and, of course, the sign and symbol of that covenant was the rainbow in the sky.

Now those are the first three covenants that we read of in the Bible: the Edenic Covenant in Eden, the Adamic Covenant with Adam, and the Noahic Covenant with Noah. The first three of the eight covenants of the Bible are what we know as 'universal covenants', that means they are generally made between God and the whole of mankind. Now that's important, because thereafter we enter into a different type of covenant that God starts making, we would call them 'theocratic covenants'. Now, you know what 'democratic' is, it's the rule of the people - well, 'theocratic' is the rule of God. Not only does man need to get a grip on society, but God in His heart intends to get an influence upon the population of humankind. So theocratic covenants pertain to the rule of God on the Earth. The first one that we will look at a little bit later is 'The Abrahamic Covenant', made with Abraham. The next is 'The Mosaic Covenant' that God made with Moses on Mount Sinai. Then there is what has been known as 'The Palestinian Covenant', or better 'The Land Covenant', where God's people are promised the land of Canaan. Then there is 'The Davidic Covenant', which relates to the throne, the kingly throne, the monarchy in Jerusalem - and then there is 'The New Covenant' in Jeremiah, and we'll be looking at some of those, as I've already said. But all the theocratic covenants - this is important - that relate to God's rule among men, every single one of them was made with the nation of Israel.

Now, I shared some vital rules of interpretation this morning as we looked at Romans 9, and I'm glad that some of you came back after that this morning! One that I didn't mention is that, in all scriptures that we interpret, we must ascertain who is being addressed, who someone is speaking to, and particularly when it is God doing the speaking - and especially when it's got to do with promises that God is making, that is, covenants. It's vital to understand who the two participants are. Now, we can be assured God is one, but who is the other? Who is being addressed? Who are the participants? Now listen carefully: there are eight covenants in the Bible, and five of the eight were made with Israel, and the other three - the first three that were mentioned - were made with all mankind.

Now that's important, but generally speaking the understanding of covenants in the Bible is vital for at least three reasons. First of all, generally speaking, the eight covenants of the Bible give us a framework for understanding the whole message of Scripture. You could say that the story of Scripture is divided into covenants. Paul told Timothy to rightly divide the word of truth, and in a sense covenants are a way of doing that. But specifically, covenants also give us a key to interpreting many disputed prophetic Scriptures. When I speak of that, I'm touching really on who the addressees of these covenants are - and there's a great deal of confusion when we come to prophetic Scripture, Scripture about the future, as to who these

apply to. When we understand the covenants correctly, we have a key, if you like, to opening up many prophetic Scriptures. But not only is there a general application and a specific, in relation to prophetic Scripture, there is also - and may I say this is the most important - a personal application of covenant truth, because the whole doctrine of covenant reveals something intrinsic to the character of God. Let me repeat that: covenants reveal something intrinsic to the character of God - that is, His faithfulness, His utter and complete faithfulness to His promises.

Now, the reason why this is the most important aspect to covenant in application is that this is a revelation of the heart of God. Let it be said that Genesis through to Revelation, the whole Bible, is a revelation of the heart of God. Often the trouble that we have in evangelicalism, particularly conservative evangelicalism, is that we miss the wood for the trees. We get so taken up with the doctrines and the scriptures, and putting the pieces of the jigsaw together, that we miss the fact - as the hymn writer put it: 'Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee Lord'. All truth and all doctrine is meant to lead us to God, and help us to get to know our God more. If we get to know our Bible more, and we get to know covenant more, and we don't get to know God more - can I say: we have wasted our time, utterly!

So, whilst we will not be bypassing our minds these weeks, I do hope that you will not have a heart bypass in this sense, that you miss what covenant has to say about God. Now, let's look at covenants in more detail. There are two types of covenant, as I'm sure some of you will know, in these eight. There are conditional covenants and there are unconditional covenants. Let me explain those: the conditional covenant is what we call a 'bilateral covenant', that simply means that there is a responsibility on the two parties in the covenant to do something so that the covenant is fulfilled bilaterally. In the Bible that is characterised by a formula where God proposes to man: 'If you will, then I will'. In other words, 'If you fulfil your side of the bargain', if you like, 'I will fulfil mine'. So the blessing in a conditional covenant is secured by obedience, a fulfilment. Before God will meet His conditions, man first must meet his.

Now, two out of the eight covenants of the Bible are conditional: the Edenic Covenant, way back in the beginning, that man broke and sin came upon all the Earth, and we're still in the consequences of that; and the second conditional covenant where man had to fulfil something before God did something is what we will look at next week, the Mosaic Covenant, the covenant of the law, the old covenant - and man broke it, and the Jews certainly, and I suppose all the world in a sense, have lived under the consequences of it.

Those are the two conditional covenants, and then there are six unconditional covenants - the rest of them are unconditional. If a conditional covenant is bilateral, an unconditional covenant is unilateral - that means that there is only one party in the agreement who has the responsibility to fulfil the covenant. So, as far as God is concerned, this unconditional unilateral covenant is a sovereign act of God that is characterised not by the formula 'If you will, then I will', but is characterised with the formula, 'I will'. When you read the scriptures concerning these unconditional covenants, that's what keeps coming across. You even saw around the Table this morning in relation to the New Covenant: 'I will' is the formula. Blessings are secured on man's part not by obedience, like the conditional covenant, but by grace, the grace of God alone. God is fulfilling His side, and it's only His side needs to be fulfilled. Now, there may be conditions which God requests that the covenant one fulfil out of simple gratitude for what God is doing for them, but they are not themselves the basis of God fulfilling His promise. The basis of God fulfilling His promise is pure grace.

Now, six out of the eight covenants are unconditional: the Adamic Covenant, the Noahic

Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant. There is only one of the five covenants that were made with Israel that is conditional, that is the Mosaic, that means the other four are unconditional - and that means that they will be fulfilled. Now, I hope I'm making this plain to you. Dr Arnold Fruchtenbaum, who is a Messianic Jew, points out four things to note relating to the unconditional covenants made with Israel. One: they are literal covenants, therefore they must be fulfilled literally - hardly rocket science, is it? Secondly: they are eternal covenants, so they are not restricted or altered by time. It doesn't matter how much time passes before these are fulfilled, they will be fulfilled because they are unconditional. Thirdly: they are unconditional, therefore they are not annulled or nullified because of Israel's disobedience. They are not bilateral, they are unilateral - all that matters is God's responsibility to fulfil what He has promised. They are unconditional, Israel's disobedience doesn't matter. Fourthly and finally: these unconditional covenants with Israel were made with a specific choice-covenant people. Let me remind you of what we read in Romans 9 this morning, verse 4: 'The Israelites; to whom pertain adoption, the glory, the covenants', plural, 'the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises'. Paul says the same in Ephesians 2, this time speaking of Gentile Christians and describing them who one time were: 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world'. Gentiles are strangers from the covenants.

Now, that is vital, because there is a strain of theology - many who espouse it I greatly regard, and yet I believe it is erroneous. It's called 'Replacement Theology', and basically what it does is it takes these promises and covenants that were made by God to the nation of Israel, a covenant people, and it applies them to the church, the New Testament believing people. It is wrong because it disregards these principles of sound interpretation, and it confounds biblical prophecy so that we cannot really understand clearly what Bible prophecy says - but ultimately it makes a mockery of the whole issue of covenants, because you start to not understand who a covenant was made to and how it will be fulfilled. Would you go into an agreement like that? I think not.

The Abrahamic Covenant is the one we're looking at tonight, and it is again an unconditional covenant, and that was indicated by the declaration of God: 'I will'. Now, let it be said that this is the first of the theocratic covenants, this is the first where God is bringing His rule upon Earth, and all the other theocratic covenants that will come out of it actually evolve out of this Abrahamic Covenant. So you have, if you like, a nucleus of all the other covenants that are about to come in this one covenant made with Abraham. You could describe it like this: in this covenant is the one purpose of God for humans into which all of God's programs work and fit. That's a big statement: right at the beginning of the Bible we have a covenant that enshrines all the purposes of God for all human beings, Jew and Gentile, regarding God's programme and the works that He will do. Essentially - maybe this is a bigger statement - it explains whatever God has done in history, what He is doing now, and what He will continue to do until the consummation of all things that we read about in the book of Revelation. That's staggering! Yet it's here in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Now, it's first announced here in Genesis chapter 12, let's look at it - verse 1: "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. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'". Now that is, in chapter 12, a broad outline of the annunciation of the Abrahamic Covenant, a broad outline of what God was going to do. Now, look at it: first of all there is a national aspect to the

covenant. God says to Abraham: 'I will make of you a great nation'. Now, we know that Abraham, father Abraham we call him, was the father of the great nation of Israel. He will possess, one day, in nation, all the promised land. There is a national promise for him to be the father of a great nation, Israel. But there is also a personal promise - God says, look at it: 'I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing', there is a personal blessing.

God was going to make Abraham great - do you know that the Jews are not the only nation that came from Abraham? Other nations, including Arab states, would descend from Abraham. His descendants would be Kings, both Jewish and non-Jewish Kings. God had said personally, not just nationally, that a great nation of Israel would come to him, but personally God would make his name great. Now consider this: over half of the human race this very day is connected to a religion, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim, which believes that Abraham is a most outstanding patriarch of faith. God fulfilled His personal promise, as well as the national, to Abraham through the Abrahamic Covenant.

Then there is a universal promise here, He says: 'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'. Now this is pointing forward to what we touched on this morning, that Israel was an elected people in order to bring Messiah to the world for world redemption - they were the vehicle that God was going to use to bring Messiah and salvation. Now, in this covenant there are physical blessings to the Jews. There is the land, and there is the Davidic kingdom and so on. The descendants of the Jews, even in the Messianic State, and we'll not go into that this evening, but they will still enjoy those. Just because Christ has come and the church is here doesn't mean that those things are erased. The spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant are with the Jews as well, but these also pertain to the Gentiles, to the seed of Abraham. The seed, as Galatians teaches us, is singular; and those promises were made to Christ, Abraham's seed. When we are in Christ we enjoy those spiritual blessings as the spiritual descendants of Abraham.

Now, this Abrahamic Covenant is announced in chapter 12, but it's later confirmed in greater detail in chapter 13 if you will turn to that please. This is the confirmation, and each time it's repeated it tells us a little bit more about it. We've seen a broad outline, now the confirmation, verse 14 of chapter 13: 'And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are; northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you''. Then it's confirmed again in chapter 15, turn to it, and verse 1: 'After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward'. But Abram said, 'Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'. Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!'. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir'. Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them'. And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'. And he believed in the LORD', Jehovah, 'and He accounted it to him', God accounted it to Abraham, 'for righteousness. Then He said to him, 'I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it'.

This covenant is announced in chapter 12, confirmed in chapter 13 and 15 - now, and this is where we're leading to tonight, it's ratified officially and legally between God and Abraham. It is ratified specifically in answer to a question that Abraham asks of God in verse 8, look at verse 8, after He confirms this covenant again, Abraham says: 'Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?' - how shall I know that I will inherit it? God then says in verse 9: 'Bring Me a threeyearold heifer, a threeyearold female goat, a threeyearold ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon'. Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away'.

Now, in chapter 17, after the covenant is ratified in chapter 15, in chapter 17 the covenant is signified. The covenant of Abraham is signified with a token physical circumcision - eight-day-old boys were to be circumcised, and this was the sign, just as the rainbow was the sign of the Noahic Covenant, circumcision - incidentally 'cutting' - would be the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Now that will become significant when we look at this cutting that's going on here in chapter 15. Now remember: the question that Abraham asks, verse 8, was 'Lord, how shall I know? You're giving me all these promises, and they are out of this world, but how shall I know that I will inherit it? I want a guarantee'. Now, listen carefully: Abraham understood that when God told him in verse 9 to take all these animals, that God was saying, 'Abraham, if you want to know how you can know that I'm telling the truth, get a contract ready for me to sign' - that's literally what is being said here.

What is occurring happened in these days because contracts were made by sacrificially splitting carcasses of animals, and laying them on the ground, and then both parties to the contract would walk through the parts of those animal pieces, repeating to one another the terms of the contract and the agreement. Do you see the import of this? Abraham says: 'How do I know that You're telling me the truth? How do I know that You're going to fulfil what You've said?' - and God is tantamount to saying, 'Get a contract ready and I will sign it'. Now in verse 18 we read at the end of all this that God made a covenant with Abraham. Now, I'm not a Hebrew expert, far from it, but I do know that the word 'made' there for 'the LORD made a covenant', actually is in the original Hebrew 'the LORD cut a covenant'. A covenant is spoken of in Hebrew as being 'cut', and the idea is - and this is coming from secular usage in agreements and contracts - that one party in a contract, by cutting the animals and walking in the midst of them, was saying, listen: 'May the same be done to me if I break my covenant with you! May the same be done to you if you break your covenant with me!'. You see that again in Jeremiah 34.

Now, isn't it reassuring that Abraham had doubts, for who of us - as the man said, doubt the man that never doubts - all of us, from time to time, have had doubts. Doubts are different than unbelief, by the way. Abraham had his doubts, who could blame him, about how God was going to fulfil all this. He's well on the other side of pension age, and God's telling him he's going to have a son! He wants an assurance. Now, this is unmistakably what the Lord is saying: 'Abraham, if you want an assurance, let's sign a contract and settle it once and for all'. Here is what the Lord is saying by inference: 'If I do not honour My word, let Me be pulled asunder!'. There is a very strange verse in Psalm 138 verse 2, and it says this, that God has magnified His word above His name. In the pecking order, if you like, God has put His word, what He says, what He promises, above His holy name. Could you get a better illustration of that than this? God is saying: 'May I be rent asunder', He's putting His reputation on the line by signing a contract with Abraham! That teaches us - and this is what covenants teach us - that God wants to be believed.

Indeed, I think if you scour this book from cover to cover, you will find, generally speaking, that all God asks of man is that he believes Him. Indeed, we have it here, faith, in verse 6 of chapter 15: Abraham believed in the LORD, and God accounted it, accredited it to him for righteousness. What Abraham was doing was having faith in God's word on the basis of a blood-sacrifice that was a contract that God was promising He would never break.

Now, look at the animals that God asks Abraham to take in verse 9, and these animals are prophetic in and of themselves. Before we look at them specifically, note the wording of how God tells him to get them: 'Bring me'. Now, I'm not going to take time to go into all this, but this shows that this unconditional unilateral covenant, and this sacrifice, and this agreement was for God. It was for God. 'Bring me' - and that's exactly the same with the sacrifice of Calvary that we will see is enshrined here in wonderful type and Holy Spirit inspired picture. That sacrifice ultimately and primarily was for God, because it was in the heart of God to reconcile mankind to Himself - and in order to do that righteously and justly, God needed a sacrifice to satisfy Him: 'Bring me'.

Three animals are named. You will note that all three of them are tame animals, not one of them needed to be captured by Abraham, they were willing servants for man's need: the heifer, the goat, and the ram. What a picture of our Lord Jesus. Mark's gospel is the gospel of the Suffering Servant, the Lord Jesus - did He not say: 'I've come to do the will of Him who sent me'. Each of these animals, tame animals, foreshadows a distinctive aspect of Christ's person and work. The heifer seems to indicate strength and energy to do the will of the Father. The goat, of course, if you know the Old Testament, is the animal of the sin offering. He was coming to do the will of God energetically, but He was going to Calvary to die in our place and take our sins. Then there is the ram, and of course the ram in levitical offerings was connected with consecration. This was a work, as His life was, His death would be completely consecrated to God. In these birds, surely, is there not a picture of the One from heaven, John's gospel? Three times we read of three years repeated, and our blessed Lord, after three years approximately of service here on Earth, life, and ministry, He goes to the cross to die the sacrificial death.

Now, after Abram does what God asks him, in verse 11 we read this: 'When the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away'. Now that implies something. Sometimes you need to read between the lines a little, and that implies that Abram was waiting on God. He's done what God has asked him, and now he's waiting. What is he waiting on? Well, had not God said: 'Get a contract ready, and I'll sign it'. It's not conjecture to say that he had now got the contract ready, and he's waiting for God to come down and ratify it. He's waiting for God, literally, to take his hand, Abram's hand, and walk him through the pieces reciting the agreement one to the other. We read in verse 12 that he waits all day: 'Now when the sun was going down', he waited to the very end of the day, and at that point, when the sun was going down, 'a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him'.

Now, what does all that mean? Well, some believe that it means, because Abram is sleeping now, that he would not inherit the promised land in his own natural lifetime - and that may well be, but surely there's more to it than this? You see the significance of sacrifice, and you see the typology that relates to the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, surely we are seeing here a representation of death? Abraham undergoes a deep sleep, and we will see in a moment or two that there is a resurrection. We see this further back in Genesis, before there was even a fall, we see Adam falls into a deep sleep, God does an operation while he's under 'anaesthetic', takes a rib and makes a woman. There is this picture of this birth and new

creation coming out of death and then resurrection. The whole message is that blessing, this covenant blessing that has been promised to God's people, and indeed to the whole Earth, will only be inherited through suffering.

In verses 13 through to verse 16, God specifically prophesies sevenfold the suffering that the descendants of Abraham, physically, would have to bear. In verse 13, in this sleep and in this horror of great darkness, God tells Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years'. He is telling them they're going to be 400 years in Egypt - and before anyone says it, some scriptures say that the Israelites were 430 years in Egypt, and that's correct, they were; but they were 400 years of the 430 in affliction. Then in verse 14 God says to Abram: 'And also the nation whom they serve I will judge', He's going to judge the Egyptians, that's the plagues, 'afterward they shall come out', that's the Passover, 'with great possessions', that's what Exodus 12 describes as the Israelites plundering the Egyptians as they exited the land.

Verse 16, another very specific prophecy, God tells them that they will go in, what they will suffer; they will come out, how they will come out, and when they will come out. Verse 16: 'In the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete'. Now if you were to turn - and you can if you want, but we're not going to read it - to Exodus 6 verses 16 to 20, you will read there that Levi, Abram's great-grandson, was the first generation of Israelites in Egypt. Then we read that Levi's son, by the name of Kohath, was the second generation of Israelites in Egypt. Then we read on that Amram was the third generation of Israelites in Egypt, and the son of Amram and Jochebed was Moses, the fourth generation of Israelites in Egypt - the generation that God said to Abraham would be delivered.

Now, let me ask you a question before I go on any further: do you think God fulfils His word accurately? Do you think He fulfils His word literally? I think it's self-evident. In verse 16 God told him that they would not return to Canaan until the iniquity of the Amorites was complete, and then it is the end of the dream - and we know that because it says in verse 17: 'It came to pass, when the sun went down', so Abram is back to reality. This is important, because this was not a vision that Abram is seeing now from verse 17 on, this is a literal, miraculous, supernatural event. We now see this scene of blood, the sun goes down, it is dark, and behold, in the midst of this bloody scene there appears a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between the pieces.

Now, darkness, a smoking oven, and a burning torch passed between the pieces. Some commentators say an oven speaks of affliction, and the Israelites were going to be afflicted - that's true. Some say that a torch speaks of deliverance and guidance, and that may well be the case - but what we have here is unmistakably what we know as 'Shekinah glory'. What is Shekinah glory? Well, Shekinah glory is right throughout the Bible, and it is the visible manifestation of the presence of God. You see it at the burning bush, where Moses turns aside to see the great sight. You see it in the wilderness before the tent of meeting, as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. Here you see the same description: darkness, smoke and flame. Incidentally, this is the first time Shekinah, a visible manifestation of the presence of God, has been seen since Eden when the Shekinah glory of God barred sinful mankind from Paradise. It says there that it was the flame of a sword, Shekinah, that stopped man entering into Eden.

Now this is of great significance, because what this was - a visible manifestation of the

presence of God - was: God was walking down between the pieces of these carcasses, and God was walking alone. God had previously put Abram asleep to let him know that this is not your covenant, it's My covenant with you. Now He walks Himself, illustrating again that this is an unconditional unilateral covenant - in other words, it's based not on the obedience of Abraham, nor his descendants, but it's based on grace alone. 'Abram, you didn't do anything to make it, and you can't do anything to break it'. In all its aspects: to do with the land, Canaan, Israel; to do with the seed, the descendants of the Jews; to do with the spiritual blessings to the church and even Jews today - all are possible because God has promised it, and God has said: 'I will do it. I will fulfil it through Messiah'.

Now, as I was meditating upon this, I realised that there is a sense in which God walked through the bloody body of Jesus to establish His covenant. There's a sense in which God signed His covenant for all of us, Jew and Gentile alike, through the pieces of Calvary. When I thought of that, 2 Corinthians 5:19 came to me: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them'. This is mighty, verse 18, look what God says: 'On the same day the LORD made a covenant', cut a covenant, 'with Abram'. Now, if you were to go back to chapter 13 verse 15 you would read there, at least some versions read that God, as He is affirming again, before it's ratified, He's affirming: 'I will make this covenant with Abram', but now He's saying, 'I have made this covenant with Abram'. He's basically saying: 'It's done! It's finished!'. On what basis? On His word, His promise and the shedding of blood - that's how we are saved, the word and the blood.

Now, let me apply this as I close. The only thing God requires of man, and has ever done, is for man to believe Him. I don't think I'm being simplistic when I say that. He wants us to believe Him prophetically. I know that this is an area of controversy with some, and you mightn't think it matters whether you believe these covenants are for the church or for Israel or whatever. A Jew on one occasion was debating with a Christian over Luke chapter 1 verses 32 and 33, where the angel announced to Mary: 'He', speaking of the Lord Jesus, 'will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end' - speaking of the Davidic kingdom and how Christ would sit on the throne of Israel. The Jew asked the Christian: 'How do you understand that Scripture?'. The Christian answered: 'Well, it's figurative language describing Christ's spiritual reign over the church'. 'Then you don't take it literally?', asked the Jew. 'Certainly not', replied the Christian. The Jew then made a further remark: 'Then why do you expect me to take literally what is before, when it says that the Son of David shall be born of a virgin? Do you take that literally, that He would be born of a virgin?'. 'Surely', said the Christian, 'I take it literally'. The Jew answered: 'Well, why do you accept verse 31 of Luke 1 as literal, but explain verse 32 and verse 33 as figurative?'. 'Because', answered the Christian, 'verse 31 has become a fact, Jesus was so born'. 'Ah', said the Jew, 'I see. You believe the Scriptures when you see them fulfilled, I believe them because they are the word of God'.

It's important that we believe God prophetically - it's not all-important, but it is important. But what is all-important is that we believe God personally: the just shall live by his or her faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. An elderly woman used to like to include a particular verse in her testimony, and it was 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'. Her pastor who knew her delight in the faithfulness of God in that verse one day pointed out to her that the original Greek meaning could literally be translated: 'I'll never, no never leave thee, nor forsake thee'. When she showed no surprise, the pastor asked: 'Doesn't it make you feel better to know that God makes it doubly sure that He won't forsake you?'. 'Oh no', she said, 'I know God says it twice, but that was so some of you preachers could

understand it - once is enough for me!'.

Do we believe God personally? Jesus said we could build our life on the rock of what He said and, though storms come, though they be judgement storms, though this Earth - John says - and the things of this Earth pass away, he who does the will of God abides forever. You see, the problem is not just that some of us have spiritualised God's promises to Israel and so on, but most of us have grown - if the truth be told - over familiar with His promises to us. Would I be wrong in saying that we have even grown tired of them, and have lost their wonder, all of His promises?

Philip Yancey writes that he remembered his first visit to Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park, a geyser. He said that the rings of Japanese and German tourists surrounded the geyser, their video cameras trained like weapons on the famous hole in the ground. He says there is a large digital clock that stood beside the spot predicting 24 minutes until the next eruption. Philip Yancey says that his wife and he passed the countdown in the dining room of Old Faithful Inn overlooking the geyser, and when the digital clock reached one minute, he says: 'We, along with every other diner, rushed to the window to see the big wet event. But I noticed that, immediately, as if on signal, a crew of waiters and waitresses descended on the table to refill water glasses and clear away dirty dishes. When the geyser went off we tourists 'Ohhhed' and 'Ahhed' and clicked cameras, and a few spontaneously applauded, but glancing back over my shoulder I saw not a single waiter, not even those who had finished their chores, look out of the huge window'. This is his comment: 'Old Faithful, grown entirely too familiar, had lost its power to impress'.

Old Faithful, grown entirely too familiar, had lost its power to impress. Do you know He is still true to His word? As the old puritan said: 'Tarry at the promise, and God will meet you there. He always returns by way of His promises'.

Let us pray: Holy Father, we now know a little bit more of what it means for You to have set Your word above Your name. You have chosen in Your sovereignty to put Your reputation on the line - and of course we know it's not on the line, because You always honour Your word. But You have chosen to give us an assurance that we can grasp and understand, in measure, upon our terms - and yet we do not have to fulfil, for it is all of grace. Lord, we thank You for the Lord Jesus, who was torn at Calvary. We thank You that You walked between the pieces of the slain Lamb, to a world that has its back toward You. Lord, we thank You for the wonder of it all, and we thank You, Lord, Your people, as another verse teaches us: when we are faithless, You remain faithful, for You cannot deny Yourself. Forgive us for unbelief, and Lord help us, with the faith of a little child, to simply believe what You have said. We believe this much: that Your heart is delighted, exhilarated, overjoyed when Your children believe You. Thank You for meeting with us tonight, Lord. If there should be even one here who has never known what it is to believe upon the sacrifice of Jesus, that their sins are forgiven, may they take You at Your word tonight and believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved. May the fragrance of Your presence go with us now, Amen.

Covenants - Chapter 2

"The Mosaic Covenant"

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Well, good evening to you all, it's good to be back with you. Last week we began in the evening looking at 'Covenants', and we began with a general introduction into the theme of covenants, and then homed in on 'The Abrahamic Covenant' in Genesis chapter 15. This evening we're going to look at 'The Mosaic Covenant', which is called 'The Old Covenant'. We need the Lord's help before we come to the scriptures, so let us pray just for a moment.

Abba Father, we thank You for Your faithfulness. We thank You that You have revealed Your character through Your word, and Your faithfulness in particular through Your promise. We pray, Lord, that whilst we have an awful lot of subject matter tonight, and an awful lot for our minds to grapple with, we pray that our hearts would not be disengaged. We pray that, Lord, our spirits would touch the very personality of God, and we know that that is only possible through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. So we ask, Abba Father, that the Holy Spirit would be our help, and that the Lord Jesus would be glorified. Amen.

Now, I'm not going to be able to go over all the ground that we covered last week - you'll be glad of that, perhaps! But save to say a couple of things: there are eight major covenants in the Bible. We defined last week a covenant as simply being an agreement. It might be, some might think, crude to call it a contract, but that's essentially what a covenant is. The only difference with a mundane covenant and the covenants of God is obviously that this is an agreement, a contract that God is making. The first three covenants in the Bible are what we call 'general covenants' - that simply means that these covenants were made by God with mankind in general, they are universal in that sense. We looked at them briefly last week: there is the 'Edenic Covenant', the 'Adamic Covenant', and the 'Noahic Covenant'. We'll not say any more about those tonight.

Then, after those first three initial covenants, we're confronted with what we know as 'theocratic covenants'. Now 'democratic', as we said, is the rule of the people, and 'theocratic' is the rule of God. So these covenants were the means by which God was going to bring His influence upon humankind. They pertain to the rule of God on earth. They started with the 'Abrahamic Covenant' that we looked at last week. Essentially all the other covenants come out of the Abrahamic Covenant. This week we're going to look at 'The Mosaic Covenant'. There is also the 'Palestinian', or better put 'The Land Covenant', 'The Davidic Covenant' that relates to the throne in Jerusalem, and 'The New Covenant' - and we'll be looking at that, God willing, next week.

But I want you to remember - and this is vital - that the first three covenants were made with all of mankind, but all five of the last covenants, the theocratic covenants, were made specifically with the nation of Israel. I did touch upon last week a vital rule of biblical interpretation, and that is to - whenever we read something in Scripture - to ascertain who is being addressed, the addressees of any given promise in particular. It's like any contract: you need to know who it's made out to, not only who made it but who it's made out to, who can make legal claim upon it. All these five theocratic covenants, including the one tonight, were made specifically with Israel. Now, as we will find out next week in 'The New Covenant' (it

was made to Israel by the way), we become the beneficiaries of that, and we will see how that transpires - but all of them were made with Israel.

Now also please remember from last week's introduction that there are two types of covenant in the Bible. There is the conditional covenant and the unconditional covenant. The unconditional covenant was the one we looked at last week, the Abrahamic Covenant, is a unilateral covenant. That simply means that the emphasis in this is with God, who is making the covenant. The covenant that is unconditional is a sovereign act of God, and is characterised by the formula: 'I will'. God says: 'I will do something' - so there is no responsibility on the recipient of the covenant, the responsibility is on the one who is promising, and that is God. Therefore the blessings of an unconditional covenant are secured by grace, a free gift. Now, six out of the eight, in total, biblical covenants are unconditional: the Adamic, the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant - but there are also the conditional covenants. If the unconditional covenants are unilateral, the conditional covenants are bilateral, simply meaning: there is responsibility on both partners in the covenant to fulfil.

So a bilateral, conditional covenant is where God proposes to man: 'If you will, then I will'. Do you understand? So the blessing is not secured upon grace, it's not a free gift, but it's secured upon obedience. Before God will meet His conditions - and that's important - before He meets His side of the bargain, if you like, man must first meet his own responsibility. Now, two of the total eight covenants of the Bible, only two, are conditional: the Edenic, which has been broken, hence we have the fall of man and sin upon all mankind with the result of death; and the Mosaic - that's the one we're looking at tonight. Therefore it is worthy of note that only one out of the five theocratic covenants that were made with Israel, only one is conditional - that means that the rest of the four must come to pass. We might spend a bit more time on that next week.

Now, Scrabo really love to be nice to me - last week I had Romans 9, and this week I'm covering a covenant that extends from Exodus chapter 20 to the end of Deuteronomy! So, if your watches are set, we will commence! God cut this covenant with Israel, not just Moses. We use these names like 'Adamic' and 'Mosaic', to just help us differentiate - but it's important to note that it wasn't just made with Moses the patriarch, but with Israel as the nation. Now let's look at where this all took place, Exodus chapter 19 please, and we will begin reading at verse 3.

Exodus 19 and verse 3: *"And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed', there it is, 'if you will indeed obey My voice', conditional, 'and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel'. So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together", this is their response, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do'. So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD".*

Now this covenant, as I've already said, was made with Israel. It was not made with any Gentile nation or people, neither was it made with the church. Deuteronomy chapter 4 reiterates who it was made with, when Moses says: 'For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us', Israel, 'for whatever reason we may call

upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?'. Even the Psalmist in Psalm 147 says: 'He declares', God declares, 'His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them'.

Now the reason why I'm emphasising this is that 'Covenant Theology' and 'Replacement Theology' confound these biblical distinctions. Therefore their teaching, as a result, is confused and contradictory - that's why we have to be very careful and clear who these covenants are made to, and who they apply to. This Mosaic Covenant was not made with Gentile nations nor the church, and we'll see why that is relevant as we go through. The first thing I want to do, and I am indebted to Dr Arnold Fruchtenbaum for his great study and summary of all these matters, but the first thing I want to do is to very quickly summarise the provision that was made to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant.

The main provision that was the Mosaic Covenant is what we call the law of Moses. There are 613 commands in the law of Moses, and those commandments contain both blessings and cursings - the blessings for obedience, and the cursings for disobedience. This covenant was signed and sealed by the Shekinah glory of God in Exodus 24. Now you remember last week we looked at the Abrahamic Covenant, and how Abraham was commanded by God to slay certain animals, cut them in two, and this was for the signing of a contract - but Abraham was put to sleep, and it was God whose Shekinah glory (that is simply a manifestation of the presence of God), His Shekinah glory passed through the pieces. In other words, indicating that this was an unconditional covenant, that God was going to fulfil this covenant for Abraham and the people of Israel, and even Gentile people who would believe in Messiah. But what we have here is: God's Shekinah glory signed and sealed this covenant, but it was a bilateral covenant. In Exodus 24, we'll not turn to it, Moses is asked by God to come along with his brother Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders of Israel, and they have to give their agreement to this covenant. So in verse 3 of that chapter we read: 'So 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 has said we will do''.

Now, do you see the difference? This Mosaic Covenant was signed in such a way that rendered the covenant conditional: there was a responsibility upon the Israelites to fulfil something if God was going to honour His promise. Now let's make some observations about the law of Moses. The law of Moses is a unity, it is complete. Now what I mean by that is: it comprises of those scriptures, as I said already, from Exodus 20 right through to Deuteronomy chapter 28 - but what a lot of people (mainly Christians it has to be said) do is, they understand the Ten Commandments to be the law of Moses, just the Ten Commandments. But as I've already alluded to, there are 613 commandments in the law of Moses, 365 of them are negative - that is, they are prohibitions, things that are forbidden - and 248 of them are things that are prescribed, things that are commanded to be done.

Now there is great confusion about how the law of Moses relates to us today, even as God's believing people. There are two errors, I believe, that have contributed to false applications of the law of Moses to believers today. The first is: a dividing of the law of Moses. Now stay with me, this will help you if you listen. Often the law of Moses is divided in three ways. People will say there is the ceremonial law, there is the legal law, and then there is the moral law. Many understand the moral law to be the Ten Commandments. So many think: 'Well, the believer is obviously free from the ceremonial law and the legal law, but the moral law, it's incumbent upon him to keep that, we're still under the moral commandments'. Now that division might be helpful in studying the scriptures, but Scripture itself never makes such a division.

Scripture always views the law as a totality, as a unity with no division at all.

So, in other words, you cannot just say: 'Well, we are to keep the Ten Commandments today, but not the other laws'. That's the second reason for my perceived misunderstanding among some: this idea that the Ten Commandments are still valid today, while the other 603 commands are not. The Mosaic law is viewed in the Bible as a unit. Now, that is the principle behind the apostle James' statement in James 2 verse 10: 'For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all'. You only have to stumble in one of these 613 commandments of Moses to break the whole law, seen as a unity. Let me illustrate it like this: if a Jew eats ham, according to the law of Moses he is guilty of not just breaking that one command not to eat pig, but he is actually guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments - even though the Ten Commandments say nothing about eating ham. Do you understand what I'm saying? If you offend in one point of the 613, you offend in them all. The law is a totality, the law is a unity - therefore you cannot just segregate ten of them, even if they be the Ten Commandments, and say: 'They only apply'. The whole of the law of Moses, as given in Scripture, was to apply in entirety.

That's the first thing to note, the unity of the law. The second thing is how blood sacrifice is added in this covenant. The key element of the Mosaic law was the blood sacrifice. You remember in Leviticus 17 and verse 11, we read: 'The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul'. Of course, in Leviticus 1 through to 7, there are five offerings detailed there for sacrifice. Now the Hebrew word for 'atonement' does not mean 'removal of sin', it simply means 'a covering over'. It did not provide cleansing, completely, for sin - all it did was cover over sin in order to allow a grounds for fellowship, a grounds for the Jews to come to God in some form.

The unity of the law, blood sacrifice is added, and then also one of the provisions of the Mosaic law were the diet restrictions. This was a restriction in the Noahic Covenant: beasts were only allowed to be eaten if they had cloven hooves and chewed the cud; fish could only be eaten if they had both fins and scales; fowls could be eaten, but no birds of prey were allowed; insects, all of them were forbidden except one type of locust was permitted to eat. There was a unity of the law, the blood sacrifice is added, the diet restrictions, and then the death penalty also was expanded in the law of Moses. You see, according to the Noahic covenant, if you shed man's blood your own blood would be shed. But now in the Mosaic Law, there is a death penalty for sins such as idolatry, adultery, cursing God, cursing parents, breaking the Sabbath day, practising witchcraft, among many other misdemeanours.

A fifth provision was a sign, the sign of circumcision. Now, if you were here last week, you might say: 'Well, circumcision, was that not part of the Abrahamic Covenant?'. Well, it was, but not for the same reasons. Under the Abrahamic Covenant circumcision came in because you were a child of Abraham and in the line of blessing, but in the Mosaic Law to be circumcised was an act of submission to the Mosaic Covenant. Because of that, even Gentiles who wanted to proselytise and become part of the Commonwealth of Israel, it didn't matter that they weren't genetic sons of Abraham, they could, by circumcision, submit to the Mosaic Covenant. By the way, that's why Paul warned Gentile Galatian believers in the book of Galatians that, if they submitted to circumcision, they were obliged to keep the whole law - not just one commandment.

The sign of the Mosaic covenant was circumcision, and one other sign - or we might call it the token of the covenant - was the Sabbath. Now a number of things, please, to note about the

Sabbath. First of all, the Sabbath day was a sign between God and Israel. The Mosaic Covenant was between God and Israel, it was not between God and Gentiles, and it certainly was not between God and the church. The Sabbath day was a sign for the covenant people Israel. Secondly, the Sabbath day was not a creation ordinance - and this is a misconception that many believers have. The Sabbath day began with Moses, not at creation. If you look at Genesis chapter 2, you will see there that it only states what God did on the seventh day: He rested - but there is no command there to any human to observe that day in any way. Indeed, the word 'Sabbath' is not used in the Genesis account, it's just called 'the seventh day'. From Adam right to Moses, there is not one record of anyone keeping the Sabbath day. God listed a number of obligations upon humanity in previous covenants, but keeping the Sabbath day was not one of them. Sabbath Day observance begins with Moses in Exodus 16 and Exodus 20, it is part of the Mosaic Covenant.

The third thing about the Sabbath: the Sabbath was not a day of corporate worship as many assume it was. The Sabbath day was a day of rest. It was largely a thing of prohibitions - what I mean is: you're not allowed to travel, you're not allowed to collect wood, and so on and so forth. Now, when we come to the Gospels, you will see that there were synagogue services on the Sabbath day - but that was actually originated in Babylonian captivity, it didn't start with the law of Moses. Now, of course, the rest on the Sabbath day in itself was an act of worship - but what I'm getting at is: this was not a corporate worship that was prescribed, like we meet together on the Lord's Day. It wasn't anything like that. Now, some will come back and say: 'Well, does it not mention that on the Sabbath day there was to be a holy convocation' - that's a term used of the Sabbath day in the Old Testament. But when you find that used, it's always in reference to the priesthood, not the whole congregation of Israel - and it's particularly in reference to the priesthood performing special sacrifices for the Sabbath day, not the whole people of God meeting for corporate worship. A fourth thing to note about the Sabbath is that it was a sign only in force as long as the Mosaic Covenant was in force. In other words, if the Mosaic Covenant comes to an end, so does mandatory Sabbath keeping.

Now those are the provisions of the Old Covenant. Now, what are the purposes of it? Well, there are several. In relation to God, this covenant reveals God's holiness and God's righteous standards. In other words, it shows us something about God - it shows us the demands that God has upon humanity in order to be satisfied, and to be enabled to have a relationship with man. So in everything I'm saying tonight, and what the Scripture is saying, we are not saying that there is anything wrong with the law of God - there is not! Even Paul in Romans 7 says that the law of God is holy, righteous and good, there is no problem with God's law! It declares His holiness and righteous standards.

Another purpose is to keep Israel distinct from all other peoples, and that's exactly what happened - because, as Israel took the covenant of Moses as a rule of life, the Old Testament saints of God were inevitably separated from the rest of Gentile humanity. Also it provided for individual and corporate worship. In Leviticus 23 we have the seven feasts of Jehovah, and that was the corporate worship of the congregation of Israel. But for an everyday ordinary Jew, the law of Moses was the centre of their devotional life. You know what your devotional life is: reading the Bible, praying, and so on and so forth, meeting together as God's people - well, the Mosaic Covenant, the law of Moses, was the centre of their spiritual existence. As you read this Psalms in particular you will see that this wasn't just a thing of the flesh, the law of God was their delight. How many times do you read that?

A third purpose of the Mosaic Law was in relation to Gentiles. The law of Moses was like a

middle wall of partition, a division wall, a Berlin Wall if you like, that made sure that only proselytes, only converts to the Mosaic Judaism could come to God as Gentiles. In other words, you had to submit to this covenant if you wanted to come to God as a Gentile. It served to separate the Jews in entirety from all other people. Their worship habits were separate. Their eating habits became separate. Their sexual habits were different. Their clothing, and even how the men cut their beards, was different than all other nations of the world.

So the purpose was to reveal God's holiness and His righteous standards, it was to make Israel a distinct people, to put a wall of division between them and all other peoples - but a fourth (and this is perhaps the most important) purpose of the Mosaic Covenant was in relation to sin. This covenant was given, first of all, to reveal what sin is. The New Testament gives us the best commentary on all this, so please turn with me to Romans chapter 3 - this is ground that you have already covered on Sunday mornings of course. The covenant of Moses was given to reveal what sin is, verse 19 of Romans 3: '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. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin'.

So banish the thought that many have, that the Ten Commandments or, indeed, as Jews thought, the whole 613 commandments were like a runged ladder that we might climb to heaven via - far from it! The law of Moses was not given to justify, in fact it was given to reveal sin. If you look at chapter 5 of Romans verse 20, we find this again: 'Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more'. Chapter 7 then, verse 7 - the law entered that the offence might abound, it's there to magnify sin, to show it up - chapter 7 verse 7: 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet''. So the law of God was never given as a means of salvation - and please remember that the children of Israel, when they received the Mosaic Law, they had already been delivered from Egypt, they had already come via Passover through the Red Sea, they are a redeemed people!

Salvation always is by grace through faith. It never has been any other way, nor will be any other way. The law was given to reveal sin, but this is going a bit further, and it's fascinating to realise that the law was also given to make one sin more. Look at chapter 4 of Romans now, chapter 4 verse 15 - not just to reveal the sin that is already there, but to make one sin more, verse 15 of chapter 4: 'because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression'. Now that word 'transgression' is a technical term, and it means more than simply 'sin' - 'transgression' literally means to break a law, to cross over a line. Now what this means here in verse 15, 'for where there is no law there is no transgression', it does not mean that before the law of God was given that there was no such a thing as sin. No, men were sinners before the law was given, but they were not transgressors until the law came. Do you understand?

Let me show you how this works from chapter 7 of Romans, Paul explains how this works in chapter 7 and verse 7, how the law makes one sin more. Verse 7 of chapter 7: 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet''. But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. 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. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good'. Verse 13: 'Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful'.

So sin is already in us from birth, before the law was ever given - but what the law served to do was, if you like, inflame sin in me. You know when you tell a child not to do a thing, there is a marker for them to aim at to do it! It's inherently in us as sinners to do the same: when a demarcation line is drawn, we have a natural bent to transgress, more than before the line was drawn. The law becomes the base of operations for sin, if you like. Now that the law has been given, sin lives around the law, and it becomes magnified and multiplied. As Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15: 'The power of sin is the law'.

So the purpose of the law was to reveal what sin is, to make one sin more, and thirdly: to show that a man cannot attain the righteousness of the law on his own. Staying in chapter 7 of Romans, see verse 14 where we finished: 'For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal', fleshly, 'sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin'. In other words, he's admitting defeat: this law is good, but all this law of Moses serves to do is reveal sin in me, multiply sin for me, and there is no hope at all - if I'm living in this body that is prone to sin and fallen - of me ever attaining to righteousness, living by it.

Then a fourth purpose of the law - not just to reveal sin, and to make one sin more, and to show one cannot have righteousness through the law of Moses: the Mosaic law was given that it might drive us to faith in Christ. Look at chapter 8 of Romans, please, verse 1: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus', that's following on from chapter 7. In other words, there is great condemnation for us if we hold on like grim death to this law - all we will get is death and curse, because we cannot live up to it. But there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ, 'Who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law', of Moses, 'could not do in that it was weak through the flesh', the problem was not with the law but with us, 'God did', what we could not do, God did, 'by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' - He condemned our broken law in His own flesh - 'that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit'.

The law of God was given to reveal our sin, to multiply our sin, to show us that we couldn't live the righteousness of God by it - all in order, with the ultimate purpose, to drive us to faith in Christ as broken sinners without hope. Paul says as much in Galatians 3, verses 24 and 25

say: 'Therefore the law was our tutor', our pedagogue, 'to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under the tutor'. The law was the tutor to show us our brokenness and our sinfulness, but ultimately to point us in the direction of a Saviour who could help.

Now, what is the status of this Mosaic law now? Well, please remember all of it is a unit, and the New Testament clearly teaches that all of the Mosaic law has been rendered inoperative. It's clear in the New Testament, look at Romans 7 verses 5 and 6: 'For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter'. Literally that reads, Paul is saying that the law has been rendered inoperative. In other words, as the rule of life of God's believing people, it's no use any more. It has served its purpose.

Romans 10 verse 4, we were there this morning, let's remind ourselves of it, verse 4, very clearly Paul says, Romans 10: 'For Christ is the end of the law' - and the word there for 'end' literally means 'the termination', for righteousness' sake, of the law. The law has come to an end in Messiah. Galatians 3 and verse 19, if you will turn to it please, Galatians 3 and 19, it teaches us that the law of Moses was in addition to the Abrahamic Covenant for the purpose of making sin clear. It had a temporary function, look at verse 19 of Galatians 3: 'What purpose then does the law', of Moses, 'serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed', that is, Messiah, 'should come to whom the promise', that's the promise of Abraham, 'was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator'. Now that the Messiah has come, He has finished any need for the law of Moses.

Now, also please note another indication that the status of the Mosaic Covenant is now inoperative. It is simply this: with Messiah coming, Jesus Christ, a new order of priesthood has been established - and it is the order, as the book of Hebrews teaches us, of Melchizedek, and not the Aaronic priesthood. Now listen carefully: the law of Moses is inseparable from the Levitical priesthood, in other words, the Aaronic priesthood. The two go together. So, therefore, if there is a new order of priesthood which Hebrews clearly testifies, the order of Melchizedek, there must then be, of necessity, a new law under which that priesthood, the Melchizedek priesthood operates. Let me show you this, Hebrews 7 says exactly that, turn with me to Hebrews chapter 7 please, verse 11: 'Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood', if the old covenant could bring perfection, which it can't, '(for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise', that is, Jesus, 'according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?' - and He was not of the order of Aaron - 'For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law'.

So, if the priesthood changes, there has to be a change of law - has there been? Yes, look at verse 18 of the same chapter: 'For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness'. The writer to the Hebrews is clear: the old covenant has been annulled! Now, also look at chapter 8 of Hebrews please, verse 8 - we'll not read it all - down to verse 13 what we have is a reiteration of the New Covenant that we will look at next week, God willing. The writer to the Hebrews quotes the New Covenant from Jeremiah 31, but he concludes in chapter 8 verse 13: 'In that He says, 'A new covenant'', in that there is a new covenant, 'He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away'.

So the law of Moses, even in Jeremiah's day - his quotation is from Jeremiah - was becoming old with Jeremiah and now, after Messiah, it is vanishing away because of Messiah's death and resurrection. Now some might say: 'Oh, what about what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, 'I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it'?'. Well, you've got to understand the word 'fulfil' in Matthew's gospel in particular has got to do with the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Over and over again that's the way it's used. What He is talking about is how He has come to fulfil everything that the law was a tutor to bring us to. He, of course, in His life did fulfil the law of Moses in absolute completeness - but we know now that He has come and He has died, and dying, Galatians says, has taken the curse of the broken law for us, now we have a different High Priest and a different law. The middle wall of partition, as Ephesians 2 says, is now broken down so the Gentiles don't have to be circumcised and become Jews in order to know God. We can all know God by grace through faith, and the law has been the tutor to show us this.

Now let's try and tie all this together. You might be thinking: 'Well, what about the moral law? You're saying this old Mosaic Covenant is finished, what about the Ten Commandments? Surely are we not supposed to keep those?'. Now, please remember the law is a unity. You can't cherry pick the Mosaic Law. If you offend in one point, you've broken them all. So if you had ham today, and I'm sure it was lovely with honey all over it, you've broken the law. Forget about 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, and lie, and steal', and all the rest - you keep those, but you've broken the law. If you're wearing a particular garment, you've probably broken the law, if there's mixed textile in it. The moral law did not originate with Moses, that's the first thing to note. The moral law is not identical to the Mosaic Law - Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden broke the moral law long before Moses. Satan broke the moral law before Adam. Now the law of Moses, it is true, embodied the moral law, but the law of Moses did not originate the moral law. Now the moral law of God is embodied in the law of Messiah.

What is the law of Messiah? Have you ever heard of the law of Messiah? I bet there's a lot of Christians - maybe a wrong expression! - I'm sure there's a lot of Christians who have never heard of the law of Messiah. Well, here's a verse, Galatians chapter 6 and verse 2: 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ', Christos, Messiah. Another, Romans 8 and verse 2, we read it already: 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus', in Messiah Jesus, 'has made me free from the law of sin and death'. The law of sin and death is not just that law of nature that drives us to sin, it's also speaking of the Mosaic Law, the law that reveals sin, magnifies sin, and increases sin in our lives. So there is a brand-new law separate from the law of Moses, it is the law of Christ. 'What is in it?', you say. Well, it contains all the commandments from our Lord Jesus, it contains all the commandments from the apostles inspired by the Holy Spirit, all those things that are applicable to New Testament believers.

I haven't time to go over everything that I have already gone over, but you can understand the things that don't apply in the law of Moses to a New Testament Christian. But here's the point: believers today are free from the law of Moses, and don't let anybody drag you back into it! You were never in it in the beginning, unless you're a Jew! We are not lawless, we are not as some call 'antinomians', no law - we have the law of Christ. The difference between the law of Christ and the law of Moses (and this is maybe a contradiction in terms), is that the law of Christ is not a legalism, it is a freedom! Freedom from the necessity of keeping a law in order to be acceptable with God! That is done and finished forever!

Are you free in Christ? Free from keeping laws? They mightn't be Moses' laws, they might be a little list that you've made up for yourself, or that someone else - and that often is the case - has made up for you. We are free in Christ, not lawless, but under His law - and, by the

way, the principle of freedom means that (and I'll throw this one in to make you think, and maybe keep you awake tonight!) you've got to allow certain people to be free to keep the law if they desire. Hold on now! Well, I could show you from the Acts of the Apostles that Paul, on various occasions, did certain things according to Old Testament law for particular reasons, but he was free to do it. You see that's what Christian freedom is.

Let me illustrate it to you, so that you're not confused. If a Jewish believer feels that they need to refrain from eating pork, they are free to refrain from eating pork - but what they are not allowed to do is to expect others not to eat pork. They are certainly not allowed to think that they are superior spiritually for not eating pork, and they're certainly not allowed to separate on the grounds that they don't eat pork and you do, so they're not fellowshiping with you. Do you understand the principle of freedom?

Now, let me finish by asking you this - and you can ask me more about that afterwards if you want - do you live your Christian life on the level of the law of Moses, or some other law of someone else, or do you live your Christian life according to the law of Jesus, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Someone has said: 'The Christian under law is a miserable parody of the real thing'. You know, there's a great problem: in 2002 George Barna research group was asked to poll Christians nationwide in the United States to find out how widespread this idea of legalism, obeying laws, was in the American church. One of the six survey statements was this question: 'Do you believe the Christian life is well summed up as 'trying to do what God commands'?'. How would you respond to this statement? Is that what the Christian life is all about? Trying to do what God commands, doing your best, trying hard to keep God's laws and rules, dos and don'ts? Well, if you say 'Yes' to that question, you're in the majority, because 57% of those polled strongly agreed that that's what the Christian life is all about, 25% somewhat agreed, and that means a total of 82% were in general agreement. The only problem is: that statement, as a summary of the Christian life, is completely and utterly wrong. You see, that's a performance-based relationship with God. It's more about doing than being, and the emphasis is on avoiding sin and doing good things, rather than pursuing an intimate relationship, a personal relationship with God. The emphasis where that is concerned is rules rather than relationship.

This is a better definition of the Christian life that we have now inherited: it is a personal faith-based relationship with God. Not a works-based relationship, a faith-based relationship - taking God at His word. It's a relationship with God the Father, through abiding by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ; and walking in loving obedience, not dutiful obedience, but loving obedience to His word. Here's the necessary crux and punchline of that whole statement: through the power and person of the Holy Spirit. Now, we might touch on this more next week, a faith-based relationship with God the Father, through abiding through the Son, Jesus Christ, walking in loving obedience - and how does that happen? It can only happen through the person and power of the Holy Spirit - and I don't think I'm far off the mark in saying that most evangelical Christians don't know 'that' about the power of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals and all. Yet the tragedy is: if you don't, more than likely you're living your life by law.

In the US civil war over the issue of slavery, Charles Sumner, on November 5, 1864, drew the battle lines between two warring sides and declared: 'Where slavery is, there liberty cannot be. Where liberty is, there slavery cannot be'. It's an old hymn, but it's a good one:

'Free from the law - oh, happy condition!
Jesus has bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,

Christ has redeemed us once for all.

Once for all - oh, sinner, believe it' - have you? Are you still striving? Christian, are you still striving?

'Once for all - oh, doubter, receive it;
Cling to the cross, your burden will fall,
Christ has redeemed us once and for all'.

Let us pray. Now, as our heads are bowed, I know this hasn't been light in any respect as subject matter, but I hope that you can see how necessary it is to truly understand the immensity of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. You didn't come into the Mosaic law, you were condemned just for being a Gentile, unless you want to join the Commonwealth of Israel - which we are free to do - but you were still under the curse of not being able to keep these laws. But imagine what it is for all of us, and for all the world potentially, any who will embrace Christ by faith, to be free from the condemnation of the law of God. Can I ask you, believer: have you lost the thrill of it, the wonder of it all? I know, I'm sure some of you are going through very hard times at the moment, but this is the good news - there's not a lot of good news in life, but there is no news like this!

Believer, maybe you are living on the level of law? Do you see if you are, do you know what will happen? Sin will be inflamed in you - things get worse. That's why very religious people can be very miserable, because they have a constant cycle of defeat and success, up and down, rollercoaster. Now listen carefully: you need to recognise that you're dead with Christ and alive through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but you need to be filled, controlled, by the Holy Spirit. I don't care what anyone says - people have been telling me, especially these Sunday mornings, that I'm sound in theology - thank you for that, you don't know all my theology by the way! I'll tell you this much: it is not sound theology to tell believers that at the moment they're saved, they're home on a boat, and they've got everything that they ever need. Potentially that may be true, but we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. I want to ask you to ask yourself: are you filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit? For only then will you know the joy of the law of life in Christ Jesus that sets free. Jesus said to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit.

Father, we thank You for all that our Lord Jesus is and all that He has accomplished. It saddens our hearts to think of the Jews, generally speaking, as we've been thinking about these mornings, who are blind in unbelief. We thank You for the remnant who are being saved but, Lord, we pray for this people here tonight, that they will not be blind to the wonder of it all, and that believers may afresh realise the thrill of being free in Christ - as Paul said to the Galatians: 'To be no more entangled with the yoke of bondage'. But Lord, we know that we're not free from any law, we are compelled by the love of God to fulfil the law of Christ: to love our neighbour, our enemy, to bear one another's burdens. Lord, it is harder, indeed it's impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, may the Holy Spirit's ministry be real in the life of Your people tonight, for Jesus' glory, Amen.

Covenants - Chapter 3

"The New Covenant"

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Good evening to you all again, it's good to be here at Scrabo. I have been coming for some time - is that true about the girls at the Youth Fellowship? Why are you only telling me now!? I don't know! Well, it is good, nevertheless, to be here. It's good to have been with you the last couple of weeks, and it has been hard work but very rewarding - for me probably the most - studying the Word, and hopefully you've gotten something out of it. It might be a good idea to get some of the recordings and just go over it all, there is a lot to take in - but very essential stuff, I hope you agree, and foundational for many other doctrines within the word of God.

Tonight is no different, in fact it's very interesting how it all comes to a crescendo this evening - I don't know whether that was planned! - but it certainly is providential, and fits in with a great deal of what we were studying this morning. We're looking tonight at 'The New Covenant'. If it's your first time with us, I'm sorry, we've covered Romans 9, 10 and 11 these Sunday mornings, and the Covenants in general - but specifically 'The Abrahamic Covenant', Genesis 15; last week we looked at 'The Mosaic Covenant', the Old Covenant which covers a great deal of the first five books of the Old Testament; and tonight we're looking at 'The New Covenant'.

So we're turning to Jeremiah chapter 31 please, Jeremiah 31 verse 31: *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'. Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): 'If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever'. Thus says the LORD: 'If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the LORD'".*

Let's bow in a moment's prayer please: Abba Father, in the name of Your Holy Child, Jesus, we come again and ask help as we come, we know, to a Father who has a throne of grace to provide grace and mercy in time of need. This is an hour of need and, Lord, I need You, and the people gathered here need You. We need what is enshrined in this portion of Scripture, we need to all be taught of God from the least to the greatest. We thank You for the many truths that we've been learning these weeks. Lord, there's been an awful lot to imbibe, and yet we want people going away - from this meeting in particular - changed, transformed, not just through a Bible study, but through a divine encounter. We want to meet the Living God, and we want You to change our lives. For the glory of the Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.

Now, as I've been saying week after week - I'll put it on the screen to help you, and hopefully it will sink in tonight if it hasn't done already - there are eight major covenants in the Bible. The first three covenants are what we call 'general covenants', and they are: the Edenic Covenant, the Adamic Covenant, and the Noahic Covenant. That simply means, 'general covenant', that they're made to the whole of mankind, they are universal in nature, not to one specific nation but to the whole population of the world. They are the first three, and then those after them are what we call 'theocratic covenants'. We've used the comparison of what 'democratic' is, democratic is 'rule of the people', 'theocratic' is 'rule of God'. The theocratic covenants are simply pertaining to the rule of God on earth, how He effects His influence upon His creation. Of course, the theocratic covenants are: the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, the Palestinian or the Land Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant, and tonight we're looking at the New Covenant.

Now it is highly significant, as we've said, that all of these theocratic covenants - all of them without exception - were made with the nation of Israel, God's covenant people. We've also said, as we've gone through these studies, that there are two types of covenants involved in all these eight. There are conditional covenants and unconditional covenants. Briefly, conditional covenants are bilateral, that means there is a responsibility on both parties of the covenant to fulfil. In fact, God proposes to man in these bilateral conditional covenants: 'If you will, then I will'. Blessing in a conditional covenant is conditioned upon obedience. Before God fulfils His conditions, first man must fulfil his own. Now, two out of the eight major covenants of the Bible are conditional, and those are the red ones on your screen: the Edenic Covenant, which we have broken, hence sin upon all men; and the Mosaic Covenant, which we have read tonight has also been broken, and which has now passed, we saw last Sunday night, with the coming of Messiah and His death and resurrection. You will note from the screen that only one of the five covenants made with Israel was conditional, that being the Mosaic as we've said.

Those are the conditional covenants, and then the other type is the unconditional - and that is a unilateral covenant, meaning that this is sovereign act of God. God alone is responsible to fulfil the obligations in this type of covenant. You can see that through passages dealing with unconditional covenants where God continually says: 'I will, I will' - and so the blessing is secured not by obedience, but by God's grace, a free act of God. Six of the eight total covenants of the Bible are unconditional: the Adamic, the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

Now we did highlight, as we've gone through these studies, that one vital rule of Bible interpretation is to ascertain who is being addressed in any given portion of Scripture. It's using that principle of interpretation that we discern that many of these covenants have been made between God and a specific nation, that is, the nation of Israel. The New Covenant is no exception. Verse 31 makes that very clear: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'. In this New Covenant, both houses of Israel are included - Israel, the northern kingdom; and Judah, the southern. Thus this covenant, it includes the entire Jewish people, all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The reason why that is an important biblical principle, and we emphasise who this covenant is made with, is because many have wrongly interpreted this covenant and the other covenants - some of them at least in the Old Testament - as having been made with the church, or having been made with Gentiles. But we see clearly in the context that this is a covenant God made with the covenant people, Israel. There are other Old Testament portions related to the New Covenant that also bear

this out in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel - and we'll not look at them tonight.

But if you want a New Testament example of how this New Covenant has been made specifically with Israel, the best is the one where we were this morning in Romans chapter 11, if you care to turn to it with me. We spent some time, and it wouldn't do any harm for you to get that study if you weren't here and you want to fill in the gaps of what we're dealing with tonight, but in Romans 11 and verse 26 we read that there is a day coming when: 'all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins''. You can see that that is the same covenant as the New Covenant, when God will take away their sins then 'all Israel will be saved'.

Now right away there should be a question that arises in your mind: if this New Covenant was made specifically with Israel and not made with the church, how do we then understand the scriptures that clearly connect the New Covenant with the church? They are obvious, probably the most obvious being the Last Supper where the Lord Jesus, on the night on which He was betrayed, met together with His own disciples. He lifted the cup and He said: 'This is the New Testament, the New Covenant, in My blood'. Of course, Paul reiterates that account in 1 Corinthians 11 to a Gentile church, how the Lord said that we were to drink this cup, for it is the New Covenant in His blood. In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, we read that Paul and the apostles consider themselves, and I believe we have the administration, of the New Covenant - they were ministers of the New Covenant. The book of Hebrews reiterates this New Covenant teaching, where it speaks specifically of a New Covenant, and quotes from Jeremiah 31, our initial reading. It speaks in Hebrews of how this covenant is one of better promises, and we have a new High Priest, and there has been a once and for all eternal sacrifice, and even a new law - and we could go on and on.

So, how can this dilemma, seemingly, be reconciled? The covenant is made specifically with the house of Israel and Judah, and yet there are so many portions of Scripture which connect the New Covenant with the church. Well, the most common solution is what we call 'Replacement Theology', and we've touched a bit on this week after week. Replacement Theology is simply the idea of transference of these covenant promises that were made with Israel, transference of them to the church. In order to take that interpretation of Scripture, you need to have an allegorical approach to God's word - and that simply means that you just sort of spiritualise things that appear to be literal. Now what that does, as we've seen as we've touched on a few interpretive principles over the weeks, it does despite to sound Bible interpretation, and in fact it ignores the details of this covenant, and indeed any of the covenants - for instance, such as the land promises that are given to the nation of Israel.

Other people who don't espouse to Replacement Teaching, believe: 'Well, there are actually two covenants included in the New Covenant. One to Israel, and one to the church' - but that is not supported by any Scripture whatsoever. Then there are others, and they say: 'Well, there are not two covenants, there's only one, but there are two aspects to this one covenant. One aspect for Israel, and one aspect for the church'. The fact of the matter is, as you read this portion to do with the New Covenant and others, the covenant itself does not differentiate aspects at all, one to Israel or to the church. Now, believe it or not, the solution is much more straightforward, and it's found in Romans chapter 11 - where you, perhaps, are already, if not please do turn to it, it's important that you see these scriptures if you're not looking at it from the screen.

Verse 17 of Romans 11: 'If some of the branches were broken off', this is an analogy Paul is

using, an illustration, we looked at it this morning, I'll explain it in a moment, 'If some of the branches were broken off and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you'. Very simply, the olive tree, the natural olive tree in this analogy, is the nation of Israel - it represents, essentially, the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants that Gentiles are foreigners to, and strangers of. The branches partaking of the blessings are natural branches, that is, Jewish believers; and the wild olive branches are Gentile people who have believed in Messiah. Unbelieving Jews have been broken off, natural branches, and thrown away; and Gentile believers in Messiah, wild olive branches have been engrafted in - but they have been engrafted in to be partakers, verse 17 says, partakers of the blessings, the root and fatness of the olive tree. In other words, they are partaking of the benefits of the covenants of the nation of Israel.

Indeed, verse 24 bears this out: 'For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree', that's Israel and her promises, 'how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?' - their own olive tree. Now we saw this morning, very quickly, that God's covenant elect people, Israel, who were foreknown in order to be a missionary nation to the world, and to be a vehicle to bring Messiah to bless all nations, they are in unbelief at this moment. God has judged them with a measure of blindness, though there is a remnant still being saved to this present day. This has been for the purpose of bringing the gospel to the nations: because the Jews have not believed, the nations are now hearing the gospel. This has always been foreseen by God - but there is a day coming when all Israel will be saved, and when God will turn to them again, and the natural branches will again be put into this olive tree. But note how Paul puts it: they will be grafted into their own olive tree - it belongs to them! These are their covenants, even the New Covenant.

So, how do you understand how the church relates to the New Covenant? Well, very simply: according to grace, the relationship of the church to the New Covenant is basically the same as the relationship of the church to the Abrahamic Covenant, and to the Land Covenant - we haven't looked at that, but that's the promise of the land of Israel - and the Davidic Covenant, which is the promise of the throne in Jerusalem. You say: 'How are you making this comparison, that the relationship with the New Covenant is the same with the Abrahamic Covenant, and the Land, and the Davidic Covenant?'. Simply this: the church has no claim upon the physical blessings of any of the covenants that God made with Israel. These physical blessings were partly in the Abrahamic Covenant and the Land Covenant and the Davidic Covenant, however the blessing spiritual aspect of these covenants is amplified in the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31. That spiritual aspect of all these covenants includes the Gentiles.

Now, that might seem a bit complicated to you, but it's really quite simple. In the Abrahamic Covenant, and all the theocratic covenants - apart from the Mosaic Covenant - we, as Gentiles, by grace can be partakers of the spiritual blessings of them all, but not the physical. The physical blessings belong to Israel, the spiritual belong to Israel and the world. Now, this is how God planned to bless the whole world through the nation of Israel. Now we see also from Jeremiah 31 that this New Covenant is to replace the Mosaic Covenant, or the Old Covenant, verse 32: 'not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD'. The Mosaic Covenant, as far as God is concerned, is now considered broken - even before Messiah came - we could nearly say even before the Covenant reached down to the bottom of Mount Sinai it appeared to be

broken! Therefore the New Covenant is distinct from the Mosaic Old Covenant, it is not an elaboration of the Mosaic Covenant.

Now we have to be careful here, because confusion can come through the terminology that we use. I mean by that that we understand the Old Testament as being Genesis through to Malachi. Another term for Old Testament is Old Covenant, isn't it? Therefore some equate the Old Testament of our Bible with the Old Covenant, or the Mosaic Covenant. They read Jeremiah 31 in the New Testament, and because the Old Covenant is replaced by the New Covenant some mistakenly assume that all the covenants in the Old Testament, Genesis to Malachi, have been replaced by the New Covenant - that is not the case at all. In fact, the Old Covenant does not include all the covenants of the Old Testament. We saw last week, what is the Old Covenant? The Old Covenant is simply the Mosaic Covenant, so the Old Covenant is not the Abrahamic Covenant, or indeed any of the unconditional covenants with Israel. The Mosaic Covenant, we saw last week, was conditionally established 430 years after God made His original promise to Abraham.

Let me show you this again in case you weren't here last week, Galatians chapter 3 please. Galatians chapter 3 verses 16 and 17: 'Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made', his Seed is Christ, by the way, 'He does not say, 'And to seeds', as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed', who is Christ. And this I say, that the law', that is the Mosaic Covenant, the Mosaic Law, 'which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect'. So you see the differentiation between the Abrahamic Covenant, and indeed all the unconditional covenants with Israel, and the Mosaic Covenant. In fact, the Mosaic Covenant is an interim covenant until Messiah comes - and verse 19 bears this out: 'What purpose then does the law', that's the Mosaic Law, 'serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed', the Messiah, 'should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator'.

Now that Messiah has come, the Mosaic Covenant has been replaced - stay with me now - the Mosaic Covenant has been replaced with the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is the New Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant, the Old Covenant, has been replaced with the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the New Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant abides today, and you're in the blessing of it - not physically, but spiritually. Now, I think you need another slide, if you look at that you will see where the Mosaic Covenant comes - if you can see it at all, if you haven't your binoculars with you, you'll just have to take our word for it! The Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis chapter 12, and out of the Abrahamic Covenant comes the Land of Israel Covenant, Deuteronomy 30; comes the Davidic Covenant, to do with the throne of David; and comes the New Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant does not come out of the Abrahamic Covenant, it is separate, it is interim - and you see that the Abrahamic Covenant has ramifications for the Land, right into the Millennial Kingdom; for the Davidic throne, right into the Millennial Kingdom; and for the New Covenant, into this New Testament era, the church spiritually, and Israel in the Kingdom. Interesting, isn't it?

Therefore, the Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of promise, and the New Covenant is the covenant fulfilment of everything that the Abrahamic Covenant promised. Now, if I was to ask you the question: who is the major character in the Old Testament? What would your answer be? A lot of people would say 'Moses', but Moses is not. Abraham is the central character of the Old Testament. I said this in our first week when we looked at the Abrahamic Covenant, and I'm repeating it tonight because it's vital: the Abrahamic Covenant is the basis of all the theocratic covenants of God. That simply means that the Abrahamic Covenant is the one

purpose of God for humans into which all of God's programs, plans and works fit. It's a comprehensive, packaged, detailed outlook of what God has done in history, what He will continue to do until the consummation of all things at the end of time. It's remarkable!

So, what was promised to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled now in the New Covenant, and will be fulfilled to Israel, and is being fulfilled to us spiritually. Now, I hope you followed that - but let me try and really tie it all down now specifically: what does the New Covenant mean spiritually to us and physically to Israel? Well, there are four provisions in the New Covenant that we read here: regeneration, national restoration, complete justification and the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now, first of all: regeneration. Spiritual and national regeneration are spoken of in Jeremiah 31. God will put His law in their inward parts, verse 33, and write it on their hearts. Now the key aspect of the entire New Covenant is the blessing of salvation, which includes Israel's national regeneration. We read it in Romans 11: 'So all Israel will be saved'.

It does appear initially that this regeneration of Israel will be universal among the Jews. Certainly that will be the case for Jews who are alive when Messiah returns, who Jesus said will cry: 'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the LORD', and they will embrace Him as Messiah. You can read about that in Zechariah's prophecy in chapters 12 and 13 where there are many details given. It would appear from then on, verse 34: 'No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD' - it appears that from then on there will be no need for one Jew to say to another, 'Know the LORD', for they shall all know Him. This is a promise to the house of Israel, the house of Judah, and when it is fulfilled all Israel shall be saved - there will be regeneration of the people of Israel when Jesus returns.

Incorporated in this is not just a spiritual regeneration, but a national restoration. We read here Jehovah, Yahweh, will be their God, and the nation will be His people, verse 33. So this New Covenant, just like the Abrahamic Covenant, involves the people who have descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, involves the land that God promised them, and involves the throne that was promised to David - physical blessings are in the New Covenant. Material blessings will be showered upon Israel at the New Covenant. We see this even in the same chapter, verse 27 of Jeremiah 31: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast'.

Now Ezekiel has a great deal to say about this New Covenant, if you go to Ezekiel 34 please, you'll read more about this material blessing. Verse 25 of Ezekiel 34: 'I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing. Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them'.

Now the Mosaic Law provided for material blessings when the Jews obeyed God - but, of course, as we know, the Jews largely forfeited those blessings because of their disobedience. However, the New Covenant is an unconditional covenant. God is saying: 'I will'. It's not conditional upon the faithfulness of the people, it's conditional upon the faithfulness of God. Not only will there be material blessings, the sanctuary, the Temple will be rebuilt. Now, I

know this causes problems for some, but the problems are with how you understand Scripture when you turn to passages like Ezekiel 37. Turn to it again, Ezekiel 37 - keep a finger in Ezekiel, we'll be looking at a couple of portions here - the sanctuary is said to be rebuilt. Verse 26: 'Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore'.

Now you either spiritualise those details and, for that matter, if you care to look at it when you go home, chapter 40 on, there are very very graphic measurements and details of what this Temple structure is going to be like in the millennial reign of Christ. You either just spiritualise all of that, or you have to conclude that the sanctuary will be rebuilt. Now, the Mosaic Covenant provided for the Tabernacle, the tent in the wilderness. The Davidic Covenant provided for Solomon's Temple, and now the New Covenant is providing for the Millennial Temple, or the Messianic Temple which is yet to be. This will be a memorial to Israel of all of God's faithfulness to them right throughout their history of unbelief.

So there is regeneration and there is national restoration, but thirdly: there is complete justification. Keep your finger in Ezekiel, and look please at verse 34 in Jeremiah 31 - at the end of verse 34 God says: 'For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more'. This is the very thing, we saw it last week, that the Mosaic Covenant could not do! It only covered over sin, but it could not remove sin - but the New Covenant removes sin, and God pronounces that He remembers sin no more. Rather than merely forgetting, He chooses not to recall them ever again! Christian friend, you are in the good of that: complete justification.

But then fourthly, not only is there regeneration, national restoration, complete justification, there is the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is where I really want to linger tonight. It says in verse 32 that God would write His laws on their hearts, and then it says in verse 34 that they will all be taught individually by God from the least to the greatest. So what we have here is the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now, if you go to Ezekiel 36 this time, you will see this borne out in verse 27 - Ezekiel 36:27, God says: 'I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them'. Now listen carefully: this is the great reason for Israel's failure in keeping the Mosaic Covenant. They could not keep the law of Moses! The reason why they could not keep the law of Moses - as we saw last week, there's nothing wrong with the law, it's holy and it's pure, it's God's righteous standard revealed to mankind - the problem is: we are weak through the flesh, we have an inherent bent toward sin. In fact, what it does is: it multiplies sin for us, it creates sin. The people lacked the power to comply with the Mosaic law, and the purpose now of the New Covenant is to give the people the power to live righteously. Now that is mighty, because that is what freedom in Christ is. Freedom is not license, but it is the liberty to do that which is right, a liberty and freedom that we did not have by birth! Freedom in Christ is the freedom to do righteousness in the power of God.

But hold on a minute, because many New Testament Christians make the mistake and think that righteous living is compliance with the Mosaic Law. Now we saw last week that that cannot be, the Mosaic law is finished. But then others will say: 'Well, this new law of Messiah that you mentioned last week' - that is, Galatians 6 and verse 2, where Paul says 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'; Romans 8 and verse 2, 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death'. That really comprises:

the law of Messiah are the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ from His mouth, or His commandments via His apostles. Now we saw last week that the moral law existed before the Mosaic Law, in the Garden of Eden existed, in fact before Eden it existed - but the Mosaic law embodied the moral law, but now this moral law is embodied in the law of Messiah in totality and in perfection.

Now let us just home in on this for a moment, because there are some slight differences between the Mosaic Law and the moral law that was enshrined in the Mosaic Law, and the moral law that is enshrined perfectly in the law of Messiah. Well, some commands are repeated in the law of Messiah from the Mosaic Law; but some commands are omitted. Then thirdly, some commands are intensified from the Mosaic Law to the Messiah's law. Now let me illustrate this - some commands are repeated: nine out of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament, nine. The one left out is the omission in the law of Messiah, and that is the Sabbath - out of the Ten Commandments that is the one that is not repeated. Also the dietary laws and many rites and rituals of the Old Testament law are not repeated in the law of Messiah. But also some laws are intensified - some Christians get this into their head that the law of Messiah is a bit of an easy ride in comparison to the Mosaic Law, far from it! Some laws are intensified, for instance: the Mosaic Law said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself', Leviticus 19 verse 18 - now this means man is the standard. If you love yourself, and all you men know what that means, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' - man becomes the standard. But in the New Covenant, Jesus said in John 15 verse 12: 'Love one another, even as I have loved you'. Now it's not man as the standard, it's the Suffering Saviour who laid down His life for mankind. So some commands are repeated from the Mosaic Law to the Messiah law, some are omitted like the Sabbath and dietary codes and so on, but some are intensified.

Now listen carefully: from last week I hope no one went away with the assumption, 'Right, the law of Moses doesn't apply to us anymore, we have this law of Messiah that comprises the law of Christ, all the commandments of Jesus and the apostles', and you're going away thinking, 'Well, I don't follow legalistically this code of ethics from the Old Testament, but I follow now a new list of rules from the New Testament' - you could not be further from the truth! You say: 'David, you're contradicting yourself' - I'm not! Listen: the law of Messiah, just as the law of Moses, is impossible to live to according to the flesh. You cannot follow down a list, and tick it off, and say 'I've done this, I've done that, I haven't done this, I haven't done that'. 'What are you saying?', the Holy Spirit is central and vital to the New Covenant. What man could not do in the Old Covenant, he can now do in the Messiah Covenant, the New Covenant, but only by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. So many people think living the Christian life is just about obeying the law of Messiah, well here's the wake-up call for you: the law of Messiah is harder than the law of Moses! It's no longer an eye for an eye, it's turn the other cheek. Are you telling me that's easier?

But you say to me: 'Jesus said it's easier, His commands are not grievous, burdensome. He said, 'Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy laden', burdened with the yoke of bondage that the religious leaders had put on them, 'and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light''. You're missing the punchline! There is only one Man who can live the law of Messiah, and that is Jesus Christ. His life is the only life that pleases God, He is the only one who can fulfil this law - and we can only fulfil it by the power of the Spirit. Can I say to you: some of the folk who are experts in rightly dividing the word of truth when it comes to covenants are pygmies in understanding the ministry and the utter necessity, vitality, of the Holy Spirit. He is the great 'how' it is to be done.

You remember I shared with you the 2002 Barna Research Poll of Christians in the US, I think it was last week. It showed that most who were polled summed up the Christian life as, I'm quoting: 'Trying to do what God commands'. That is the level of doing rather than the level of being, the emphasis is on rules not on relationship - but the New Covenant emphasis is upon relationship. Do you understand? I gave you the better definition of what true Christianity is, and it's the New Covenant - it is a personal faith-based relationship with God as your Abba, your Father, through abiding in Jesus Christ, the Son, and walking in a loving obedience to His word through - here's the punchline - through the power and the person of the Holy Spirit. You can try and do all the rest, and you will fail without the person and power of the Holy Spirit! That's why Jesus said: 'It is necessary that I go' - what else could be so important that Jesus go?

So there's a new motivation in the New Covenant. The Old Covenant motivation was: do to be blessed. The New Covenant motivation is: do because you are blessed. There's a world of difference. Let me illustrate it to you like this, and I hope you'll give me the time tonight - you've been very gracious this past couple of weeks, but I do want to do this justice tonight. There's a world of difference, I'll illustrate it to you like this: the famous Boston preacher, Dr A.J. Gordon, visited the World's Fair in Chicago. In the distance Gordon saw a man robed in bright, gaudy Oriental clothes. He appeared to be laboriously turning the crank of a pump, and thereby making a mighty flow of water. Gordon was so impressed with this man's energy, and his smooth motions, and his obvious physical conditioning, that he went a little bit closer - he was pumping this water tremendously. As he grew closer, Gordon was surprised to discover that the man was actually made of wood. Instead of turning the crank and making the water flow, the flow of water was actually turning the crank and thereby making him go.

Do you understand? Most conservative evangelicals are in their own energy cranking the pump: do, do, do - even if the 'do' is pray, read, don't look at this, don't go here, don't do that. It's not that those things are right or wrong, but they don't figure 'that' in a relationship with God. What God wants to do is, He wants to put His own life in you, that you will live out these New Covenant promises by the power of the Spirit. He wants to fill living waters through you that will crank the pump! The New Covenant was promised as a far prospect in Jeremiah - we're only starting, you know! - and it's promised as a near prospect in Luke chapter 22. Would you turn there with me, please, Luke chapter 22?

Promised as a far prospect in Jeremiah, now promised as a near prospect in Luke 22. This is the Last Supper, verse 15, this is so instructive: 'Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God'. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes'. And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me'. Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you''. Promised as a near prospect, on the night on which He was betrayed the Lord represents the New Covenant in earthly tokens. It is about to be cut - you remember that's how this agreement, covenant, is made, it is spoken of as being 'cut'. It's about to be cut at Calvary.

Now, I want you to imagine this in your mind's eye, because we have lost a lot of the imagery. This was the Passover meal, the Lamb of God is in the centre of this meal, and He is pouring wine into the cup. In the Temple sacrificial system, the blood of the animal would be poured out as a drink offering, and He is pouring out this wine. It is also believed that the cup

after supper that is spoken of here in Luke was the third cup of four cups used in the Passover meal, the Seder meal. In Jesus' day they may have filled up the same cup four times. The first cup represented sanctification, the cup of sanctification. The second is the cup of remembrance, the third is the cup of salvation - and that is the cup after supper that He took and consecrated as the cup, we would say, perhaps, of communion, or the Lord's Supper. It is with that cup in hand that He says: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you' - the cup of salvation, the symbolism is incredible! Here is the New Covenant promised as a near prospect. The benefactor is Jesus in the midst, and He is to be cut by a voluntary sacrifice. This is a unilateral covenant, wholly established by the means of His obedience - Paul says, 'His obedience, even unto death, the death of the cross'. Remember it had nothing to do with the faithfulness of the disciples, they all forsook Him and fled. The beneficiaries are sitting before Him, His own disciples - representing, let it be said, the house of Israel and Judah - and yet we know this mystery, that represented here in spirit are wild olive branches like you and me, of Gentiles who will partake of these blessings.

It was promised in far prospect in Jeremiah, in near prospect in Luke 22, and then it's enacted. It's cut at Calvary where, Isaiah says, He was pierced through for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities. In the Abrahamic Covenant, you remember, Abraham was told to take the animals and cut them in two, and God walked between them. The Mosaic Covenant was cut in stone, and the shedding of blood was sprinkled on the people - but this New Covenant will be engraved on the hearts of believing people, because it is a covenant cut with the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. 'I have graven you upon the palms of my hands', Jehovah says. Hebrews reads: 'If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance'.

The blood of Messiah is the basis of salvation in the New Covenant, and that blood was shed at the cross. The blood of Messiah has ratified, signed and sealed the New Covenant. If you want to read about that, read Hebrews 8 to 10. Not only was it enacted at Calvary, it was fulfilled in the book of the Acts and Romans. In the Acts, the obedience to the great commission - our Lord spoke and said, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' - in Acts this is fulfilled. The gospel is first proclaimed to the Jews in Jerusalem, then it goes to the Samaritans who were a Jew-Gentile hybrid, and it goes to them through Philip. Then it moves out to the Gentiles via Peter, to Cornelius and his household. Then it goes to Antioch and to the regions beyond. Then we come to the book of Romans, and the New Covenant Gospel is proclaimed to the Jew first and then the Greek - that's the power of God unto salvation to them, Romans 1:16.

Then, as we studied these Sunday mornings, Romans 9, 10 and 11, it goes to the Jew first, then it goes to the Greek, the Gentile, and then it's going to go back to the Jew again. We see this on every one of Paul's missionary journeys, he has a pattern to follow. First he seeks out the synagogue and he preaches to the Jews - and even on his last journey, as he was going to his death to Rome, he commences at Jerusalem where he witnesses in Acts 21 in the Temple, and he declares to the Jews in Acts 22: 'I am a Jew'. Then, three days following his arrival at Rome for execution, it says in Acts 28 he called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and declared: 'I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel'. He felt so

indebted to the Jews, we read it in Romans 9, that he could almost wish he was accursed, so that his kinsmen in Judaism could be born again - those through whom the covenants have come, and Messiah has come.

Let me ask you a question: in the light of all this ministry, particularly this morning and tonight, do you feel indebted to the Jew for where you are tonight? For if you don't, you don't understand this salvation. There is a Gentile obligation upon you for your indebtedness to the Jew, and I don't have time to go into it - but in Romans 15 we read that Gentile believers, who had become partakers of the Jewish spiritual blessings, of Macedonia sent finance to the poor church in Jerusalem. Paul basically says in Romans chapter 15: 'Seeing that you have been partakers of their spiritual blessings, should they not be partakers of your material blessings?'. There was an obligation to Israel. Can I say: that obligation is not just material, it's spiritual - pray for the Jews. Witness - I know there's not too many Jews in Ulster, or Ireland for that matter - but, if you can, witness to the Jews, and support the witness to the Jews.

Now I'm concluding, and I'm concluding the whole series by drawing your attention to these last verses - 35 to 37. They are fitting for the close of this whole series: 'Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): 'If those ordinances", those ordinances of the sky, covenants really of the sky, agreements of the sky, "depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever'. Thus says the LORD: 'If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD". That really incorporates one Hebrew word, it's called 'hesed', the steadfast love of the Lord. It's used 250 times in the Old Testament, and it speaks of how God is always faithful to an unfaithful people. He will be faithful to His physical and spiritual promises to Israel, and He will be faithful to His spiritual promises to believing Gentiles - otherwise the heavens would cave in around your head.

All I could think of when I thought of that was a very old hymn entitled, 'Loved with Everlasting Love' - the final verse says:

'His forever, only His:
Who the Lord and me shall part?
Ah, with what a rest of bliss
Christ can fill the loving heart' - listen to this.
'Heaven and earth may fade and flee,
Firstborn light in gloom decline;
But, while God', while God, 'and I shall be,
I am His, and He is mine'.

Father, we thank You for Your truth. We ask that by the Spirit You will write it on every heart. Lord, don't just fill our heads - O God, deliver us from full heads and empty hearts. Give us all the blessings of this New Covenant that cost the blood of Jesus. Oh Lord, how the church needs all the blessings of the New Covenant. We spare a moment for Israel. We pray that that remnant of Jews will increase, and we pray for the day - Maranatha - when they will all be saved when Jesus comes. Amen.

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