

22.05.2021 COVENANT LAW

*“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, **keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments**” Deuteronomy 7:9*

This week we study the law associated with the Sinai Covenant.

The Election of Israel

*For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. **7 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of [c]bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.***

9 “Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments. Deuteronomy 7:6-9

The basis of God’s election (choosing a person or a people) is His grace...’ **because the Lord loves you...**’

And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, ¹⁸since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” Gen. 18;16-19

Why did God choose Israel? Was it because in His foreknowledge He knew that Abraham would be faithful and from among Abrahams’ descendants would arise those who would be faithful to God?. They would preserve and keep His laws including the law of the Sabbath. They would witness to the world and the nations and prepare them for the first coming of the Messiah.

For Reflection: Today, the church is spiritual Israel...called to have the faith of Abraham, to preserve and keep the commandments of God, to proclaim the everlasting (eternal) gospel so that the world by faith will lay hold on the merits of Christ and be prepared for the second coming of Christ Jesus. Ellen white called this message ‘the message of justification by faith in verity’.

Ties that Bind

“And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; He wrote them upon two tables of stone” Deut. 4:13

Law within the Covenant

*“And now, Israel, **what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Deuteronomy 10:12, 13***

Here is the crucial understanding we must have about God’s law. Do we keep it and preserve it because we love God and we recognise His law as a design law – a design for optimal (abundant) life? Or do we look upon the law as something imposed upon us by God and for which we will be punished if we fail to abide by it?

“What are your first thoughts when you think of law?” Yes, this is the key question to almost all issues of theology—if your concept of law is wrong almost every conclusion from the Bible will be wrong.

The universe is under unvarying moral and physical laws, which means they cannot be imposed, legislated or function like human law. They are God’s design laws. He has designed health laws, civic laws and moral laws for man. In Patriarchs and Prophets we are told that these laws were written in Adam’s heart at Creation.

An illustration of Design Law:

Imagine you have bought a computer. You will receive a design manual with it. Now suppose that one day the computer malfunctions. What do you do? Do you punish it? DO you smash it up? Or do you go back to the manufacturer who designed it; who understands the malfunction and will correct it?

This is how God works. He is not waiting to punish us the moment we make a mistake. He wants to lovingly correct us and lead us in the paths of righteousness, **if we will allow Him to do so.**

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7

*As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame (He understands our constitution);
He remembers that we are dust. Psalm 103:13, 14*

This is the God we love and serve and worship. He knows the principle of sin that lies within us and so He is endlessly gracious to those who come to Him for pardon. Much more, He offers us the blood and body of His Son – His blood for remission of our sins and His Body in which He perfected righteousness and offers it as a free gift to all.

Christ has done God's will in providing us with His righteousness.

- We have been sanctified through **the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** Hebrews 10:10
- **'You are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.'** 1 Cor.1:30
- For **by one offering** He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14

God has accepted Christ's work for us.

God accepts our FAITH in Christ's work for us.

Do we tell the world of such a God. A God who loves us with an everlasting love? Or do we portray Him as stern, unloving and waiting to punish us for every wrong action? Do we portray God as Christ portrayed Him on earth? OR do we portray Him as Satan the Liar does (John 8:44)?.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. John 1:18

The Stability of God's Law

"For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob." Malachi 3:6

For ever, O LORD, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Psalm 119:89

'We must let God be God. He knows what He is doing, when He displays mercy and when He displays justice....In repentance and turning to Christ lies the only hope of salvation. *Vern Poythress: the Returning King*

If...

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. Exodus 19:5

Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honour Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men. Isaiah 29:13

The divine 'ifs' recognise human weakness.

The "if texts" are not intended to teach or imply that salvation is by works.

The author is simply telling us that those who are truly saved are those who have put their faith in God. Their faith and trust in Jesus will not fail under pressure. We are encouraged to draw near because we are saved, not to work harder in order to be saved. It is Christ who saves us, it is Christ through His Spirit who sanctifies us, and it is Christ who keeps us. This is precisely why we need to draw near (and stay near) to Him.

"Which is the first commandment of all?" The answer of Christ is direct and forcible: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." The second is like the first, said Christ; for it flows out of it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The last six are included in the other, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially.

And since all the commandments are summed up in love to God and man, it follows that not one precept can be broken without violating this principle. Thus Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments...

The scribe was near to the kingdom of God, in that he recognized deeds of righteousness as more acceptable to God than burnt offerings and sacrifices. But he needed to recognize the divine character of Christ, and through faith in Him receive power to do the works of righteousness. The ritual service was of no value, unless connected with Christ by living faith. Even the moral law fails of its purpose, unless it is understood in its relation to the Saviour. **Christ had repeatedly shown that His Father's law contained something deeper than mere authoritative commands. In the law is embodied the same principle that is revealed in the gospel. The law points out man's duty and shows him his guilt. To Christ he must look for pardon and for power to do what the law enjoins.** *Desire of Ages p 606-609*

The LORD who is my shepherd.... leads me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. Psalm 23:4

Conclusion:

What is your relationship to God's law? Do you recognise that He has designed it to be a template of His character of Love and that as fallen human beings we are totally incapable of keeping His Law for we are incapable of loving as He loves?...12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. 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. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. Romans 7:12-20

Have we fled to Jesus who is our sure and certain refuge; who will forgive our sins and cause us to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake...that God may be glorified? This is the glorious purpose of the Law – to send us to Jesus who will fulfil His New Covenant promise to write His laws in our hearts and cause us to walk in them by His Spirit. *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Ezekiel 36:26, 27*

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!
Romans 7:24, 25
