

The Gospel: God's Covenant of Grace

By Harold Camping

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Phone: (408) 741-0219 FAX: (775) 305-3953

Web Site: GoodMessage.org Email: Info@GoodMessage.org

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The Gospel: God's Covenant of Grace

By Harold Camping

Introduction

The Bible speaks extensively of the Covenant. God made a Covenant with Noah. He made a Covenant with Abraham, and with Israel, etc.

The Bible speaks of Covenant-breakers, of the salt of the Covenant, of the bond of the Covenant, and of the curses of the Covenant. The Bible speaks of the Ten Commandments as the Covenant. It indicates that the sign of the Covenant was circumcision. Many people today consider themselves to be Covenant people and their children Covenant children. God made a Covenant with Noah. He made one with Abraham. He made one with Israel. The Bible speaks of a New Covenant and an Old Covenant.

What is this Covenant that is referred to in so many ways in the Bible? In this study, we will attempt to gain an understanding so that we can see the relevance of biblical references to the Covenant.

We must remember, of course, that the Bible is its own interpreter. Therefore, we must not look for answers in what men have said; we must look in the Bible only. We must also be careful to include anything and everything the Bible says about the Covenant. Only when we find harmony between all parts of Bible truth do we dare trust our conclusions.

Chapter 1 – What is the Covenant Spoken of in the Bible?

The word "Covenant" carries within it the concept of an agreement, an agreement or contract in which two or more parties agree to the statements and conditions described in the agreement or contract. Within the agreement, stipulations are made as to what penalties are to be assessed against the one who breaks the agreement. All parties sign the agreement to indicate they agree with its terms.

The Covenant spoken of in the Bible is indeed an agreement. We will discover in this study that it has only one signature. While it concerns mankind, no man signs the agreement. It is made completely within the Godhead on behalf of mankind.

It might help us to understand the nature of the agreement if we had a synonym for it. Is there another word or phrase for "agreement" that would help us understand the biblical meaning of the word "Covenant"?

God's Covenant: The Gospel for the Whole Human Race

As we develop an understanding of the "Covenant," we will discover that it is a synonym for the Gospel. It is actually God's salvation plan for the human race. We will also discover that the term "New Covenant" is an integral part of the Gospel but focuses on the actuality of salvation.

That the Covenant is synonymous with the Gospel is not surprising. God divides the Bible, which is the Gospel in its entirety, into two parts – the Old Testament (or Covenant) and the New Testament (or Covenant). Thus, God assures us that the Covenant is the Gospel.

God's Covenant relates to the whole human race. This is implied by the language of Deuteronomy 29:14-15:

Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; {But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day;

It is shown more clearly that it is related to the whole human race in the language of Isaiah 24:5:

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

God is speaking in this verse to the whole human race. This is seen by the introductory verses to Isaiah

24:5. Verses 1-4 declare:

Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

Verse 5 speaks of the inhabitants of the earth as being Covenant-breakers. One cannot be a Covenant-breaker unless one is involved in the Covenant. Since all mankind has broken the Covenant, all of mankind is under the Covenant. Since they are under the Covenant, they are under the Gospel, from several vantage points.

First of all, they are under the Covenant in the sense that God has made Himself known to the whole human race apart from the Bible by revealing Himself through creation. God records in Romans 1:18-20:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Secondly, God has revealed Himself to natural man apart from the revelation of the Bible in that He has blessed mankind with many blessings. Acts 14:16, 17:

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

These verses speak of blessings as a witness.

Thirdly, God has revealed Himself to mankind in that He has written His laws on man's heart.

Not only is mankind without excuse because he should know that God is the Creator and because God has witnessed to him through His many blessings, he is also without excuse because God's Law is written on his heart. We read in Romans 2:14-15:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

Not only has He placed His Law within the heart of natural man, He has also placed within man knowledge of his sinful condition; he knows he is in trouble with God. We read in Romans 2:1-6:

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds.

The fact that man has some knowledge of the Gospel, apart from that which he receives from the written Word, is demonstrated by the actions of men who have never heard about the Bible.

1. Ancient times people, such as Cain, Abel and Noah offered sacrifices to God. Later, on Mount Sinai, these sacrifices were integrated into the written Word. Throughout history and today, pagans with no knowledge of the Bible offer sacrifices to appease the anger of God as they know Him. These offerings indicate that they intuitively are aware there is a God whom they must worship (Acts 17:23). It also indicates that they intuitively know that a sacrifice must be made to pay for their sins.

2. The creation account and the flood account were known to man by oral records handed down throughout many generations. These, together with the direct messages given to Adam, Enoch and Noah, etc., though meager in content and corrupted by much retelling, served to send the

Gospel to the world before the invention of writing.

Because man knows there is a God and knows he is in terrible trouble with God because of his sins, he should cry out to God for mercy. He should recognize that he is under the judgment of God and that only God can provide a solution to his awful situation.

New Testament Covenant Breakers

It is no wonder then that we read in Romans 1:31 that mankind is "without understanding, Covenant-breakers...." In this verse the New Testament parallels the Old Testament. God assures us that all mankind by nature is a Covenant-breaker. We cannot avoid the principle that anyone who is Covenant-breaker must be related in some way to the Covenant. Since, to some degree, the Law of God and a knowledge of God are integral parts of the Gospel, then the Covenant is the Gospel.

That all men are under the Gospel, in the sense revealed to us in Romans 1 and Romans 2, may offer an explanation to the declarations of Colossians 1:5-6 and Colossians 1:23:

For the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel: which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth....If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.

This reminds us of Psalm 19:1-3, where God declares:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

Keep in mind that the whole Bible is the **complete** articulation of the Gospel. However, any part of the Bible is the Gospel. Later, we shall see that there was a progressive revelation of the Covenant, or the Gospel, as God wrote the Bible. For example, Israel was told that God had made a Covenant with them that was not made with their fathers. This will be developed further a bit later.

The Gospel that natural man has – he knows there is a God who is the Creator and who is to be worshipped, and he knows some of God's Laws, which are written on his heart – is not the Gospel in all its fullness that we have in the whole Bible. What he does have is, nevertheless, the Gospel. God can, therefore, speak of natural man who remains unsaved as a Covenant-breaker. It must be understood, therefore, that apart from the Bible, God looks upon the revelation of Himself to mankind as a revelation of the Gospel. It was a revelation inferior to the Bible, and yet it served the world for about 9500 years. During Moses' lifetime (he died in the year 1407 BC), God began to give the Gospel in written form.

A few men during the 9500-year period did receive direct information from God. They were often separated from each other by thousands of years. Before any of the Bible was written, God spoke to the following men:

Adam	11,013 – 10,183 BC
Cain	
Enoch	7106 – 6741 BC
Noah	5590 – 4640 BC
Abraham	2167 – 1992 BC
Isaac	2067 – 1887 BC
Jacob	1887 – 1740 BC

God gave additional revelation of the Gospel directly to these men and thus to the human race. As corrupted as this revelation would have become while verbally handed down to succeeding generations, nevertheless, it was part of God's Gospel for the world during these 9500 years. Significantly, some people were saved as a result of this declaration of the Gospel. Because it is considered by God to be the Gospel, God can speak of these who did not become saved as Covenant-breakers.

It should be noted that when we speak of the Gospel, we often think of it as the Good News. The Good News is that there is a solution to mankind's problem, and the solution is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are certain we have not brought the Gospel unless we declare the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Be aware, however, that the greatest revival recorded in the Bible took place with no mention by the preacher of the love of God or the coming of Jesus Christ as Savior. The revival took place in the City of Nineveh and is recorded in the Book of Jonah. The Gospel preached was of impending judgment. The result of that preaching was the salvation of the city. According to the account of Matthew 12:41, we may believe that salvation did come to them.

The point is that God does not require the whole Bible to save people. God can save people regardless of their limited spiritual truth. God saved the Ninevites within the context of a message of judgment and there is no reason to believe God could not save by means of the meager Gospel available to mankind before the invention of writing. The Ninevites' salvation, of course, was on account of Christ's shed blood; there is no other Name whereby they could become saved.

The fact that sacrifices were offered by these pagans indicates they knew that somehow payment must be made for sin, and the one sacrificed was someone other than themselves. Therefore, unknowingly they anticipated the coming of Christ, even though they had no specific knowledge of Christ.

Once Christ came, the times of ignorance God overlooked (Acts 17:30). Since that momentous event, God requires the declaration of some part of the Bible as a vehicle by which He saves. Nevertheless, those who live and die without hearing any part of the Bible are not innocent. They are regarded as Covenant-breakers.

The Bible Becomes More Specific about the Nature of the Covenant

God began to produce the Bible as the verbalized record, and He became specific about what those who hear the Word of God are to do in the face of their terrible trouble with Him. God commands mankind to come to Him for forgiveness and mercy. A few verses given here illustrate this.

Isaiah 26:4: Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.

Deuteronomy 4:29: But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Psalms 6:1-4: O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

Isaiah 55:6-7: Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 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.

The Bible articulates the Gospel by commanding people to come to Him for forgiveness. As it continues to develop the nature of God's Covenant with mankind, it shows us the basis on which God can forgive our sins. Forgiveness is provided by Christ the Savior. All who believe on Him become saved. All who look only to God for eternal life will receive it; that is, all who will be reconciled to God on His terms will find Him. The coming of Christ is beautifully declared in Isaiah 49. In verse 8, God says the coming Messiah is to be the Covenant.

Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

Christ is the Covenant because He was the personification of the Gospel. Incidentally, God speaks of breaking His Covenant in Zechariah 11:10:

And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

This surprising statement can be understood only if we realize that Christ is the Covenant Who must be broken. He is the Covenant; He was broken so that the Covenant could be an everlasting Covenant. He experienced death that was the equivalent of eternal damnation, in order that God's Covenant of grace could provide eternal life for all believers. The ark, located in the Holy of Holies, was called the ark of the covenant (Numbers 10:33). The ark typified Christ, who is the essence of the Gospel of salvation.

The Bible speaks of this Covenant as a Covenant of peace (Numbers 25:12), because it is the Gospel that provides a way for mankind to have peace with God. Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant, is called the Prince of Peace. The Covenant God made with mankind, the Gospel of grace, declares that man is in trouble with God because of man's sin. God also promises to the human race that He will provide

forgiveness and eternal life to those who trust Christ as their sinbearer.

The Covenant, therefore, was an agreement within the Godhead whereby payment for sin, demanded by God's Law, would be paid by God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Mankind was not to attempt to make any part of the required payment. He was to throw himself on the mercies of God, while convicted of his own miserable condition.

The Bible is the Covenant

We have begun to discover that the revelation of the articulated Covenant or Gospel is the Bible. Therefore, the Covenant identifies entirely with the Law of God. In fact, God speaks of the Ten Commandments as the Covenant in Deuteronomy 9:15:

So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.

The Law of God is called the Covenant because it:

1. Described it and gave illustrations of it,
2. Showed man his need of redemption by declaring the perfect standard of sinlessness he must have if he is to be right with God,
3. Shows how perfect we become in God's sight when we become saved, and
4. Is the vehicle or means by which God saves those who become saved.

The Covenant: A Progressive Revelation

We have learned that apart from the Bible the Gospel message or the message of the Covenant has been given to some degree. The creation itself testifies concerning the existence of God who must be worshipped by mankind (Rom 1:20 and Rom 8). Moreover, man was created with some knowledge of the Law of God and that the breaking of God's Law deserves judgment. Thus, to some degree, the Gospel has always been available to the human race. It is no surprise that thousands of years before the invention of writing, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

It was God's plan that the Gospel should become more and more complete and specific, and He accomplished this by providing the Bible. God progressively presented the Gospel in the Bible. The writing of the Bible took approximately fifteen hundred years. As it was being written, the Gospel message became increasingly clear and more specific. The progressive revelation is indicated by the way in which the Bible speaks of the Covenant.

In Genesis 17 we read that God made the Covenant with Abraham. Yet in Deuteronomy 5:2-3 God declares:

The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

God effectively declares that there is more to the Covenant or Gospel message than what was given to Abraham. Since Abraham became saved, and his salvation was no different from any other believer's salvation, God is not indicating that the results of the Gospel or Covenant are different as time goes by. Rather, He is emphasizing the progressive knowledge of the Covenant or Gospel God gives to mankind through His law book, the Bible. The progressive revelation is seen in the language of Deuteronomy 29:1:

These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

The progressive revelation of the Covenant of the Bible was presented over a period of approximately 1500 years. With the New Testament command to send the Gospel into all the world, the whole world came under the Covenant in the sense that the people of the world increasingly come to a knowledge of the Gospel in its complete and written form.

Moreover, with the coming of Christ and the focus on the New Covenant, God became more insistent that mankind recognize this Covenant. We read in Acts 17:29-31:

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance

unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

This passage teaches that before Jesus shed His blood, God was not insistent upon mankind having a trusting relationship with Christ. True, men were Covenant-breakers and therefore under the curse of God and eternal damnation; but it was in the context of an inferior knowledge of the Covenant. After Christ had actually shed His blood, God insistently commands all men to repent. All men are to see in Christ their only means of salvation, which is why God simultaneously commanded that the Gospel, the written Word of God, be sent into all the world. In I John 3:23, the insistence to obey the Gospel is clear:

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Not only have the people of the world a natural knowledge of God, as Romans 1 and 2 teach us, but it is God's intention that they are to increasingly and more specifically know of their need and God's provision for it. This knowledge is given when the Gospel is sent into the world. Isaiah 24:5 teaches and Romans 1:31 declares all of mankind are Covenant-breakers. No one naturally wants God's salvation plan.

Thus far we have seen that God's solution (His Covenant), to man's sin is available to anyone who comes to God on His terms and pleads for mercy. Man by nature knows that God is the only One who can help him; but he does not want God on God's terms. He will not come to God; he is a Covenant-breaker, as Isaiah 24:5 and Romans 1:31 indicate. In his rebellion against God, he has made the Covenant void and of no effect.

Chapter 2 – God's Covenant with Noah

We have begun to understand something of what the Covenant is as it is presented to us in the Bible. We must consider anything and everything the Bible offers concerning the Covenant. When we have harmony with every Bible reference to the Covenant, then we may believe we have come to an understanding of the subject.

We will now look at the first reference to the Covenant, found in regard to Noah and the flood. In Genesis 6:17-18, we read:

And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

After the flood, God further revealed His intention concerning the Covenant, in Genesis 9:8-17:

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I will establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my Covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

In this surprising passage, God speaks of a Covenant not only with Noah and his seed, but also with the animals and birds. What Covenant is this?

Remember, we learned earlier that the Covenant is the Gospel. Those with whom God has made a Covenant are those who have come under the Gospel. Certainly Noah and his family had come under the Gospel, because we read in Genesis 6:8 that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. But what about the animals? Do they, too, somehow come under God's salvation plan as it is given in the Bible? Or is the Covenant spoken of in Genesis 9 a Covenant other than the Covenant of grace, which is the Gospel?

God's Covenant with Noah is the Covenant of Grace

The Covenant made with Noah is the same Covenant we have been studying. Earlier, we learned that God's Covenant is concerned with all mankind. In this revealing passage of Genesis 9, God indicates that the Covenant of grace, the Gospel, impinges on the whole creation.

Because of man's sin, God put the whole creation under a curse. Although God had created a perfect universe, man, who had been appointed by God to rule over the creation, rebelled against God and came under the curse of God. To correct the anomaly that developed from a perfect universe being ruled over by cursed man, God brought His curse upon all creation. We read in Romans 8:19-22:

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

In this informative passage, God tells us that the creation was made subject to vanity; that is, it, too, came under the curse of God, which is why animals die, and why we have volcanoes, earthquakes, deadly viruses, thorns and thistles.

God teaches that when His salvation plan is completed and man receives his resurrected body, then the curse will be removed from the universe. Actually, in other passages God indicates that the present universe will be destroyed by fire and then recreated as a new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1). Thus, we can be sure that God's Covenant, that is the Gospel, is intimately involved with the whole universe.

Animals Used by God to Represent the Whole Earth

However, the question must be answered, "Why does God speak of the Covenant, the Gospel, with the animals?" When God raises the dead on the last day and believers enter the new heaven and new earth, will He resurrect animals to eternal life?

The animals will not be resurrected, and they do not have eternal life. The Bible does not allow animal resurrection. God speaks of animals and birds in a Covenant figure of the whole earth. He used the lamb, the bullock, the lion, and the turtledove as types and figures of Christ, and He used animals and birds as types and figures of the whole earth.

This is seen dramatically, for example, when God destroyed the firstborn of Egypt prior to Israel being set free. The firstborn of the animals were killed and the firstborn of the men of Egypt were killed. The death of the firstborn pointed to the judgment of God upon mankind and also the destruction of the universe. When the people of the cities of Canaan, such as Jericho and Ai, were destroyed, God specifically decreed that all the cattle were to be destroyed. The destruction of the people of these cities points to Judgment Day, and the destruction of the animals points to the destruction of the earth at the end of time.

In Genesis 9, it is taught that God's Covenant is made not only with mankind, but with the whole earth. That is, the Gospel has an impact not only on the human race but on the whole universe.

In Genesis 9, the special focus of the Covenant or Gospel is not so much on salvation as it is on preservation. In order for God's Gospel plan to be carried out, the earth and its inhabitants must continue until the end of time. If God would again bring a flood such as that of the time of Noah, God's plan to send the Gospel into all the world could be seriously interrupted. By saying that a flood would never again destroy the whole earth, God effectively declares that His Covenant, His Gospel program, will be worked out in the world.

Later in the Bible, God further defines and delineates what His Gospel program is to be. In Genesis 9, God simply declares that such a Gospel does exist and that it will have an impact on the whole world. The only intimation we have in Genesis 6 and in Genesis 9 that this Covenant is the Covenant of grace is the statement of Genesis 6:8: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

The ark serves as a beautiful figure of Christ as our Savior. This is suggested by Genesis 6:18-19:

But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

The inclusion of the animals and birds into the safety of the ark implies that God's Covenant of grace impinges on the whole creation. Because of the Gospel of redemption, not only are believers saved, but

the whole creation is rescued from the curse of God, as Romans 8 teaches.

The Rainbow: The Sign of the Covenant

Interestingly, God later made the sign of the Covenant the act of circumcision, but in Genesis 9 the sign of the Covenant was the rainbow. The sign of circumcision was particularly focused on the requirement of the shedding of blood and upon the seed, Christ, Who was to come. It was a far clearer sign as to the true nature of the Covenant than the sign of the rainbow. On the other hand, the rainbow spoke of the universal nature of the Covenant, and even more particularly, of the fact that God would preserve this world until the end of time, when His Covenant promises could be fulfilled.

The Rainbow Ties the Covenant to Christ

The Book of Revelation teaches us that the rainbow is totally identified with Christ. Revelation 4:3 declares:

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

Revelation 10:1 speaks of a mighty messenger ("angel" in *King James* translation), who is not an angel, He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has a rainbow around his head. Rev. 10:1:

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

These verses teach that the rainbow is a picture of Christ. Thus, the rainbow of Genesis 9 points to Jesus, our Mediator, the One through whom the curse of God would be removed – not only from believers, but also from the creation.

In the Bible, clouds are frequently used as a symbol of God coming in judgment. For example, in Revelation 14:14-16:

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

This passage points to Christ coming as the Judge of the earth. A cloud is prominently featured in this context and identifies with Christ as Judge. Thus, the Genesis 9:14 declaration that the bow shall be seen in the cloud surely points to Christ the Mediator Who keeps God's judgment from coming upon the saved, and Who guarantees that the universe will not be eternally destroyed as a consequence of man's sin.

The concept that the Covenant of grace is universal in character is seen also in Isaiah 24. The context of this chapter includes the whole earth. Verses 1-3 establish this with the language of judgment upon the earth.

Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.

Verse 5 reinforces this concept and relates it to the Gospel.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

Mankind has broken the everlasting Covenant. They have made of no effect the Gospel of salvation. They have made it void or empty of salvation for them. Therefore, the earth is in the precarious position of being eternally cursed. Isaiah 24, verse 20 warns:

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression therefore shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

Grace barely shines through. We will learn that the New Covenant signifies that in spite of the fact that all men by nature are Covenant-breakers, God will be victorious in the Gospel, in His everlasting Covenant. Completely apart from any action of man, God will establish His Covenant, His Gospel, as He desires. In

Chapter 25 of Isaiah, we see the glorious reality. Verse 1 anticipates victory.

O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

In verses 6-9, God shows that He is the One Who will gain the victory. He alone brings about the complete fulfillment of all His promises.

And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away all tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Verse 8 says that God will take away the rebuke of His people "from off all the earth," which means that the curse that was put upon the universe because of man's sin will also be removed by the action of God.

Later it will be seen how wonderfully the New Covenant is anticipated in these verses. For now, rejoice that God is not frustrated by man's natural abhorrence to the Gospel, whereby even though God commands men to believe and be saved, no one will believe. God Himself will complete all of the salvation action, so that the obligations of God's will or Covenant will be carried out. All who are to receive the inheritance will receive it.

Thus far we have learned from Deuteronomy 29 and Isaiah 24 that the Covenant of Grace embraces, to some degree, all of mankind. We discovered that Romans 1 and 2, Colossians 1, and Psalm 19 support this principle. We found that God's Covenant embraces not only all mankind but the whole universe.

We have much more to learn about the Covenant. God relates the Covenant to certain historical events recorded in the Bible. These events are types and figures that point to Christ. Next, we will examine the matter of types and figures whereby God teaches many things concerning the nature and character of His Covenant.

Chapter 3 – Types and Figures Illustrate the Covenant

God's Covenant of grace, that is, the Gospel, is presented to mankind in many types and figures. One of the most dramatic is Israel's release from Egyptian captivity. God refers to this in Hebrews 8:8-9:

...Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out in the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

The physical departure of the nation of Israel from Egypt and their entrance into the land of Canaan is an outstanding example of elements that are present in the Covenant of grace or God's salvation plan. In Exodus 6:3-8, God identifies this event with the Covenant.

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

A number of elements in the Covenant of grace as they were typified in the historical pictures of the Covenant are:

1. The unbeliever is in bondage to sin and is in slavery to Satan. So, too, Israel was enslaved to

the Egyptians in Egypt.

2. Mankind has no means in himself to be free from the bondage of sin and enslavement to Satan. Israel had no means in itself to obtain freedom from the bondage to Egypt.

3. It is God's intention to bring His own from among the unsaved into the Kingdom of God. It was God's intention to bring Israel into the land of Canaan.

4. To free men from sin requires the shedding of blood, actually, the blood of the only begotten Son of God. When Israel was set free from Egypt, God took the lives of all the firstborn of Egypt.

5. Those who come under the blood of Christ do not come into judgment. Those who took the blood of the lamb and placed it on their doorposts did not have death enter their homes.

6. Those who become saved must first go through Hell. Christ, of course, did this on behalf of believers. So, too, Israel went through the Red Sea and the Jordan River on dry ground. (Both the Red Sea and the Jordan River typified Hell.) A way through the waters had been prepared for believers.

7. The damnation from which the believer escapes comes upon the enemies of the Gospel. The armies of Egypt were destroyed by the waters of the Red Sea.

8. After the believer is saved, he is sustained in this life by the spiritual bread and water of the Gospel, which identifies with Christ Himself. Israel was sustained by heavenly manna and water that flowed from the rock.

9. Salvation is a free gift that the believer in no way deserves. God says of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:7-8:

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

10. Salvation is a wonderful gift for which the believer does not work. Deuteronomy 6:10,11 declares of Israel:

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full.

In Joshua 24:13 we read:

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

11. God guarantees salvation. God promised that Israel would be given salvation. Genesis 15:18-21 states:

In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenizzites and the Kadmonites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

God kept that promise, as we read in Joshua 23:14:

And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

In Nehemiah 9:8 God declares:

And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous.

12. To enable us to have salvation, death was required. This was typified by the death of the firstborn sons of Egypt and by the numerous sacrifices of lambs, bullocks, etc., that were required of Israel. It was also typified by the death of the Canaanites whose cities were given to Israel.

Isaiah 43:3-4:

For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

The list of types and figures recorded in connection with God's dealings with ancient Israel is much longer. Those listed will serve to make the point that God in a remarkable way outlined His Covenant, or Gospel, through historical types.

Types and Figures do not Give the Full Picture of the Covenant

Types and figures serve to illustrate many aspects of the Covenant of grace, as it is called in the Old Covenant or First Covenant, but the picture is incomplete. They do not point to every aspect of God's Covenant. This is seen in a comparison of the impact of the Covenant of grace upon those who become saved with the impact of God's mercies upon Israel.

One goal of the Covenant is realized when a person becomes saved. He discovers within himself an intense desire to do the will of God. He becomes a new creature in Christ. At the completion of his salvation, he is given his resurrected body and will never again sin. This is the goal of the Covenant that God made with mankind and with Israel. It is seen in the language that God uses to describe the types and figures He utilized to demonstrate His Covenant.

In Deuteronomy 7:11-12 God declares:

Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers.

In Deuteronomy 28:9-13, God declares:

The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them.

Unfortunately, the result of God bringing Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan did not result in a people that loved the Lord and wished to serve Him. Hebrews 3:17-19 tells of the typical reaction to God's mercies to Israel.

But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

God anticipated this reaction in Israel to His Covenant blessings, as is seen in the language of Deuteronomy 31:16-17, where God prophesied to Moses:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?

Another goal of the covenant, which is seen in God's repeated statement that His Covenant is an everlasting Covenant, is that it will provide eternal life for His people. In Genesis 17:7 God decrees:

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

In Genesis 17:19, God says,

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

In Psalm 111:9 God declares: "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." However, when we look carefully at the types and figures that point to this Covenant or salvation program, it does not appear to be everlasting in nature. For example, Israel did not possess the land of Canaan forevermore. As a consequence of their rebellion against God, they were driven from the land.

Apparently, the Covenant or the Gospel of grace as presented many places in the Bible and particularly as typified by God's dealings with ancient Israel did not accomplish the purposes promised in it. This is seen in the continued sin of Israel, which resulted in God's judgments coming upon them.

Spiritually, this is the result of the fact that man's heart is desperately wicked. He is dead in his sins. Therefore, no matter how insistently God commands people to believe in Christ, no matter how lovingly God promises eternal blessings to those who become saved, mankind will not respond to the Gospel. Instead, every human being is a Covenant-breaker, even as Deuteronomy 31:16 decrees, "this people will rise up...and break my Covenant which I have made with them." Isaiah 24:5 declares,

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

The problem is not with God's action or promise; the problem is with man's heart, as Romans 8:3 puts it,

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

The Law of God is an integral part of the Covenant, the Gospel. The Law of God is perfect (Ps 19:7); the defect is in the flesh of man. The fault lies with man, not with God. Hebrews 8:7-8 puts the blame on "them," that is, mankind.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

In Galatians, God addresses the problem of the perverseness of mankind. In Galatians 3:19, He explains that the Law was added because of transgressions until the seed should come. As was seen, the Ten Commandments are called the Covenant, and in fact, the whole Bible is called the Covenant. By means of the Bible, mankind should see his sin and his need of a Savior. He should, therefore, cry to God for mercy.

Mankind made a ruin of the Covenant by trying to obtain the blessings by **keeping** the Law. He effectively turned the Covenant of grace, as presented in the Old Covenant, into a Covenant of works. God speaks of the Covenant in Galatians 4 where He contrasts the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. Galatians 4:21-24:

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Abraham had been given Covenant promises. He tried to make them come to fruition by his action – his work. He tried to produce the promised seed, which was an integral part of the Covenant, by obtaining it from Hagar. This typifies what mankind did with the Covenant. Rather than look through the Law of God to the seed – the Savior Who could pay for their sins – they attempted to become worthy by keeping the laws. The Covenant, or Gospel, that God declared to them was not defective. What was defective was their sinful hearts; they tried to produce salvation by good works. Romans 9:31-32 declares,

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.

In Galatians 4, God speaks of the new Covenant, which is based on God's promises, typified by the miraculous birth of Isaac, through whom the seed, Christ, was to come. This is the second of the two Covenants spoken of in Galatians 4:24.

Circumcision: The Covenant Sign

Significantly, God indicates in Genesis 17 that the sign of the Covenant was circumcision. The man who

was not circumcised was to be cut off, and he was called a Covenant-breaker. Spiritually, one becomes circumcised by being saved. God circumcises the foreskins of our hearts (to use the language of Deuteronomy 30), which indicates that the command of the Gospel, or the end of the Gospel, is to provide salvation. If man does not become saved, he has made the Gospel of no effect in his life, and he is still subject to damnation.

Circumcision was the sign of the Covenant because:

1. It involved the shedding of blood, which pointed to the shed blood of Christ, the requirement for salvation.
2. It involved the reproductive organ, and thus indicates the seed who would come as the Mediator of the Covenant.
3. It involved cutting off flesh, which pointed to the fact that those who become saved must have their sins cut off.

All who participated in the rite of circumcision effectively demonstrated that they had knowledge of the Covenant, the Gospel of grace. Adults accompanied it with a declaration of assent to God's salvation program. In children, it indicated that the parents pledged to bring them up within the salvation program. Exodus 12:48:

And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

Unfortunately, mankind tries to rewrite God's rules. This was true, for example, with the sign of circumcision. This ceremonial act was a sign that pointed to man's need of salvation, but ancient Israel turned it into a guarantee of salvation. They adopted the conclusion that the physical act of circumcision guaranteed the salvation of the one circumcised.

When ancient Israel was in the wilderness, the Gospel or the Covenant was very close to them, but they perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Their knowledge of the Gospel was not mixed with faith. The Covenant, or Gospel, can make no headway with mankind, because everyone is dead in sin. He not only will not come to God with a broken and contrite heart and plead for mercy, but he cannot. Spiritually, he is a corpse. Therefore, he will never of himself come to God on God's terms.

So God speaks of a new Covenant. Is this a different Covenant from the one we have been studying? We will examine this question in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 – The New Covenant

We have learned that the Covenant is the Gospel. The thrust of the Gospel is to emphasize to mankind that they are sinners and under judgment. God began to articulate the Gospel by producing the Bible. God showed that only by throwing oneself on the mercies of God and believing in the coming Messiah would salvation come. This salvation was to be eternal in character and encompass not only those who would believe in God, but the entire universe.

To assist men to be able to see the nature of the Gospel, God developed many types and figures of the Gospel, which were fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah. God took Israel out of Egypt and brought them through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. He established all the ceremonial laws, such as those that involve sacrifices, burnt offering, the temple, the Sabbath days, and the Passover.

This was the Old Covenant. It was indeed the Covenant of grace, but no man became saved by it. Because of the utter perverseness of man, no one by nature will plead for God's mercy so that he might become saved. The Bible declares this in the succinct language of Romans 3:11, "There is none that seeketh after God." A few became saved like Noah, Abraham, David, etc. This was possible only because God specially intervened in their lives. Basically, however, all people of the earth remained in unbelief. Even in ancient Israel, where they had the best knowledge of the Old Covenant, few people became saved.

Man made that Covenant of no effect. Israel effectively turned it into a Covenant of works, which could never produce salvation; thus, God speaks of mankind as a Covenant-breaker. Even though it is a perfect Covenant, it fails because of man's spiritual deadness.

Therefore, God speaks of a New Covenant. God gives new insight into the nature of salvation, based on

the principle that God recognizes that no man of himself wants God's salvation program. No man will respond to the Gospel of grace. Every human being by nature is a Covenant-breaker.

The New Covenant focuses especially on three truths:

1. The New Covenant is an articulation of the Gospel of grace wherein God indicates he will save a people for Himself in spite of man's stubborn refusal to cry out to God for mercy.
2. The actual historical event of Christ going to the cross and dying.
3. God's command that the Gospel be proclaimed to the whole world, and His command that all of mankind is to repent and believe in Jesus as Savior.

God describes the New Covenant as a Will. After we understand the biblical concept of a will or testament, many Scripture verses will fall into place. We will also discover that while the Old Covenant is the entire Gospel declaration to mankind, the New Covenant identifies only with those who actually become saved. Thus, the New Covenant becomes synonymous with salvation even as salvation becomes synonymous with the New Covenant.

Man's Last Will and Testament

God discusses a human will in Galatians 3:15:

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

A man knows he is going to die. Therefore, he writes a will or testament to dispose of his estate after his death. His will is a legal document with the following characteristics:

1. It has no legal validity until the maker, called the testator, dies.
2. The testator has absolute control over whom he names in the will. He can divide his estate in any way he wishes. He can name as beneficiaries anyone he wishes. He can change his mind and rewrite the will as often as he desires.
3. Those named as beneficiaries do not earn a place in the will. If he so desires, the maker of the will, the testator, can name the worst person in the world to receive part or all of his estate.
4. At the moment the testator dies, his will becomes an unchangeable legal document. The terms of the will must be carried out. Those named to receive an inheritance from his estate must receive it.
5. Those named in the will are called heirs. They inherit that part of the testator's estate that he had decided to give them.

Unlike other contracts or agreements between two parties, a will is an agreement by only one party, but it benefits others who had not agreed to the terms of the covenant or will.

God's Covenant: A Will

A will is the legal document God speaks of to describe his New Covenant. God uses the words "Covenant," "Testament," and "Will" interchangeably in the Bible.

In Hebrews 9:15-17 we find these revealing words:

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

The entire plan of salvation is revealed in this statement, which utilizes language that pertains to a Will or Testament. Moreover, He identifies this Will as the New Testament. Thus, we learn that the New Testament or New Covenant particularly identifies only with those who have become saved. It becomes synonymous with salvation.

Before God created the universe, He wrote a Will or Covenant. In this Will, He named all who were to be beneficiaries when the Testator died. The beneficiaries were chosen according to God's sovereign pleasure. The inheritance they were to receive was eternal life. Thus, when the Testator died, God obligated Himself to carry out the terms of the Will. In fact, in Hebrews 6 we read that God swore an oath that the terms of His Will would be carried out. Hebrews 6:13-17:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.

Note that verse 17 speaks of the heirs of promise. Heirs receive an inheritance when the testator of a will dies. When did God die? Revelation 13:8 records:

And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Christ, the Maker of the Will, Died

Revelation 13:8 declares that God, the Testator of the Will, was slain, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world. Thus, God's Will, or Covenant, became a legal document before God created the world. That is why we can read Ephesians 1:4 with assurance.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Later, we will look in greater detail at the implications of this Will for the believer; but at this point, we want to recognize that with the death of the Testator, Who is Christ, three important conditions were met.

First, it activates the Will, so that God became obligated to fulfill the promises.

Second, the death of Christ provided the satisfaction of God's justice, insofar as penalty for sin is concerned. It was the penalty for sin that was thoroughly anticipated by and typified by Old Testament shadows and types. Christ in His death had to take upon Himself the sins of all those whom He had named in the Will.

Third, the focus on the New Covenant was intensified because the Testator actually died. Prior to AD 33, Christ in principle was the Lamb that was slain; but when He went to the cross, His death became an actual fact of history. No longer was it something to be anticipated; rather, it is stark reality. Christ, of course, could be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world because God is outside time. He is the ever-present One. This is seen in Christ's repeated use of the term "I am" (Matt. 24:5), "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "I am the first and the last" (Rev. 1:17), etc.

God's Obligation to Save Those Named in the Will

The fact that God obligated Himself to save those named in the Will made it necessary that He qualify those named. This was absolutely necessary because man was spiritually dead. Hebrews 10:16-17:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

This was originally stated in Jeremiah 31:33-34.

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

By disclosing to us the Will that God made, He makes us understand that the Gospel ultimately is more than a command to believe, which was the essence of the Old Covenant. It includes an obligation God put upon Himself to save men in spite of the fact that no human being of himself would respond to this command. God speaks of this enlarged view of the Covenant as the New Covenant.

God declares His intentions to do all that is embraced in the New Covenant in many Old Testament passages, for example, in Deuteronomy 30:6:

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

In Ezekiel 34:11-15, God promises:

For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out

my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

In Ezekiel 36:21-28, God sets forth the same intention:

But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you out from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

The land God promises in this passage is the Kingdom of God, which we enter into when we become saved. Please note that in all these references God Himself takes the action. He repeatedly says that I will do this and I will do that. This ties into the obligation that God put upon Himself to give eternal life to those named in His Will.

Many Old Testament passages could be given to emphasize that this was God's plan, but a couple more will suffice for this study. Isaiah 40:9-11:

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

In Jeremiah 32:37-41, God beautifully promises:

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

All these passages foreshadow what God speaks of as the New Covenant. After Jesus had actually shed His blood, God began to help His people understand more about the New Covenant by revealing the information that He had written or prepared the Will that required the death of the writer of the Will. From His teaching concerning this Will, we learn that God obligated Himself to save those who had been chosen, those who were named in the Will that God wrote before He created the universe. Thus, the concept of a will is exceedingly important to help us understand the nature of God's salvation plan, which is articulated in the New Covenant.

Comparison of a Human Will with God's Will

When a human will is compared with God's Will or Testament, striking parallels are seen. A human will helps us to more clearly understand God's salvation plan.

Point 1. A physical, man-made will has no legal validity until the maker or the writer of the will, called the testator, dies.

Christ speaks of His will in Hebrews 9:16-18

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

Point 2. The testator has absolute control over whom he names in the will.

God declares in Romans 9:15-16:

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Point 3. Those named as beneficiaries in the will do not earn a place in the will.

Ephesians 1:4 declares:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Point 4. When the testator dies, his will becomes an unchangeable legal document.

In John 6:37-40, we read this beautiful language:

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

The unchangeable nature of the Will God made is demonstrated in a most remarkable way in the Bible.

In Hebrews 6:12-14 God makes reference to the promises that He made to Abraham. It is known from Genesis 17 and other passages that these promises are totally identified with God's Covenant, or Will, with Abraham. Hebrews 6:12-13:

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.

The fulfillment of these promises is underscored by the fact that God took an oath that they would be fulfilled. Hebrews 6:14-18:

Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

Reference to this oath is found in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 20:33-38.

As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

In these verses, God insists that by His action and through His fury (that is, God's wrath poured out on Christ on behalf of those who are to be saved), He will bring His people into the bond of the Covenant. The word "bond" is a synonym for the word "oath." Numbers 30:2:

If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Thus, God has taken a binding oath that those who are in the bond of the Covenant will certainly become saved.

Point 5. Those who are named in a will are called heirs.

They are inheritors of the things promised by the testator. The Bible constantly and insistently speaks of believers as heirs who receive an inheritance. A few of the passages that tell this are given below.

Ephesians 1:11-14: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Galatians 3:29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Titus 3:7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Hebrews 1:14: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

James 2:5: Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Psalms 37:11: But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Matthew 19:29: And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.

Revelation 21:7: He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Psalms 28:9: Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

I Peter 1:4: To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

Psalms 37:18: The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever.

Colossians 3:24: Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

In the Old Testament, the Bible repeatedly speaks of Israel as God's inheritance and the land of Canaan as an inheritance. This language points to the Israel of God – the true believers – those who receive the inheritance of eternal life as a result of having been named in God's Will. The inheritance of the land of Canaan, or of the earth, has in view the Kingdom of God that we inherit because we have been named in God's Will or Covenant. Surprisingly, Christ is also an Heir of the Will that He wrote. Romans 8:17:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Hebrews 1:4 declares this concerning our Savior: "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Christ, of course, is named a beneficiary of the Will because He rose from the dead, as we are risen from the dead. We are raised from death to eternal life, and eternal life is the inheritance. We are risen because Christ arose. In the sense of the atonement, Christ arose to eternal life.

The New Covenant in Christ's Shed Blood

We have seen that the New Covenant is spoken of as a Will or Testament that required the death of the Testator to become a legal document. In the Book of Hebrews, in connection with the New Covenant, God particularly focuses on the historical reality that Christ shed His blood. In the Old Covenant, the salvation plan or Gospel anticipated the coming of Christ to die for our sins. True, in principle, He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; however, the reality of that principle required His actual historical death.

God identifies His death, an accomplished fact of history, as the New Covenant. No longer was His atoning death, whereby He paid for sins, to be looked upon as a future historical event, as it was in the Old Covenant. No longer was the atonement to be understood through types and figures as it was in the Old Covenant. With the coming of Christ and His going to the cross and rising again, the reality of the Covenant of grace has come into brilliant focus. In Matthew 26:28, we read: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for the remission of sins."

Hebrews 9 emphasizes that types and shadows pointed to the coming of Christ in the first Covenant. Verse 1 declares: "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." In Hebrews 9:9, God summarizes:

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

God focuses on the actual coming of Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant or New Testament in Hebrews 9:11-15:

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

The focus of the phrase "new covenant" is on God's redemptive act of shedding his blood, whereby He gave eternal life to all who were chosen before creation to salvation. Those named in this Will can never become Covenant-breakers. God obligated Himself to save them and guaranteed eternal life will be their inheritance. Therefore, the New Covenant is completely synonymous with salvation. All of those who are in the New Covenant are saved. Likewise, all those who are saved have been saved by God's New Covenant.

The Old Covenant focused on the promise that God would save all who would come to Him. Anyone who hears the Gospel and remains unsaved is a Covenant-breaker. The reality of the Old Covenant was demonstrated in the numerous ceremonies that identified with the Gospel. For example, every Israelite observed the Passover, which pointed to Christ, the only one who could take away the wrath of God. He was to do this by shedding His blood future in history.

With few exceptions, Israel remained unsaved. They were a nation of Covenant-breakers. No man of himself will respond to the command to believe. A remnant did believe, a remnant chosen by God to be named in the Will – the New Covenant. Therefore, God obligated Himself to circumcise the foreskins of their hearts and to bring them into the bond of the Covenant, which is the New Covenant.

The Lord's Supper and the New Covenant

In the New Testament, there is an explosion of those who are a part of the New Covenant. Three thousand are saved in one day, as recorded in Acts 2. To focus on the New Covenant, the Will that guarantees the salvation of those who believe, God introduced the Lord's Supper. It was instituted at the last observance of the Passover.

The Lord's Supper is similar to the Passover, but it is also quite different. The Passover was to be observed by the whole family, most of whom at any time were unsaved. The Lord's Supper is to be observed only by true believers. The Passover anticipated the shed blood of Christ. The Lord's Supper looks back in remembrance upon the shed blood of Christ; that is, it focuses on the death of the Testator of the Will, whereby those who have become saved inherit eternal life. When instituting the Lord's Supper Christ said in Matthew 26:26-28:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Only those named in the Will are to partake of the Lord's Supper, which is emphasized in the warning of I

Corinthians 11:27-19:

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

The New Covenant focuses not only on the fact that God obligated Himself to save those named in the Will, but also on the fact that God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ had come to actually die as the Testator of the Will. In the Lord's Supper we are to remember this historical fact. The Passover was not exclusively for true believers; it was for all who identified with the Gospel. The Lord's Supper focuses only upon those who have received the inheritance, eternal life, which is the inheritance named in the Will that was written by God.

Thus, it is a correct practice for church members to supervise communion services, so that insofar as can be determined, only true believers participate.

The Bible: Old and New Testaments

We may now understand why the Bible is in two parts – the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament concentrates on the need of salvation for those who would trust in the coming Messiah. Many types and shadows are recorded to indicate the nature of this salvation. Man is spiritually dead and relatively few became saved, and they became saved because they had been named in God's Will. That is, those who did become saved did so because of the eternal reality of the New Covenant. However, reference to His Will, which is the New Covenant, is quite veiled in the Old Testament.

After our Savior came to earth, God speaks of the New Covenant that focuses on the Will written by God before creation and in which God obligates Himself to give the inheritance of eternal life to those named in the Will. The focus is sharp because the Maker of the Will, Christ, actually died, a fact of historical reality, which is why the last part of the Bible is called the New Testament or New Covenant.

It is also called the New Testament or New Covenant because immediately following the ascension of Jesus, God put His plan of salvation into high gear. The evidence of the existence of the New Covenant was available everywhere as God, beginning with the 3,000 who were saved at Pentecost, began to save people from every nation.

The Old Testament Anticipated the New Covenant

The Bible makes only one reference to the New Covenant in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah 31:31-32:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD.

The New Covenant is implied in many places in the Old Testament. For example, in the references God makes to an everlasting or perpetual Covenant, this could be true only in the light of the New Covenant. Thus, these references point to the New Covenant. Among others, God makes these promises:

Genesis 9:16: And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Genesis 17:19: And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Psalms 105:10: And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant.

Isaiah 55:3: Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Isaiah 61:8: For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Jeremiah 32:40: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

Ezekiel 16:60: Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

Ezekiel 37:26: Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore.

These promises can be fulfilled only by God's action; He changes the rebellious hearts of those whom He intends to save. This action, which emphasizes the promises of the New Covenant, was indicated throughout the Old Testament by symbols and figures. For example, in Deuteronomy 30:5-8:

And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 tells of this action in direct connection with the New Covenant.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

God gives us a beautiful promise concerning the Covenant or Gospel plan that anticipates the New Covenant in Ezekiel 36:23-28:

And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

The same focus is found in Ezekiel 37:13-14:

And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

Ezekiel 37:23-27:

Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

In all Old Testament references to "returning the captivity" or bringing Israel again into their land, the New Covenant is anticipated. The New Covenant particularly emphasizes that God provides for the salvation of those named in the Covenant or Gospel of grace and makes that Covenant effective in the lives of those whom God saves.

A multitude of Old Testament references insists that God's plan of salvation, His everlasting Covenant, will result in people being saved because God will cause the elect to turn to Him. A few examples can be found in the Book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 14:1: For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

Isaiah 35:3-10: Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 40:9-10: O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Isaiah 42:6-7: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Isaiah 42:16: And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

Isaiah 43:5-8: Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

The New Testament also contains many statements that identify the principle that God will do the complete work of saving. A few of the passages follow.

Colossians 2:11-13: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Ephesians 2:1-6: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Hebrews 12:2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Indeed, we can be grateful for the New Covenant, God's salvation plan in which He will do all that is necessary that His elect will become saved. Without God's intervention in our lives, not one of us would

become saved. How merciful He is to us.

Chapter 5 – God the Father, the Writer of the Will

Understanding God's Covenant of grace in the form of a Will or Testament gives interesting and significant insights into the relationship of both God the Father and God the Lord Jesus Christ to the Gospel. However, there is much about God we cannot know, for example, who can understand or fathom the God who is from everlasting and who is able to speak and bring this complex universe into existence. Who can understand God, who effectively teaches that there is one God and yet He reveals Himself as three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Anyone who thinks he understands these awesome truths will surely end up in folly.

Nevertheless, God gives many statements in the Bible that we can discuss with some profit. However, we must keep in mind that our knowledge of God cannot be greater than is permitted by the abilities and limitations placed on us by God when He designed our minds. For example, we are designed to live in time and cannot understand eternity. We are designed to live on earth where everything seen has physical substance, and even though we know a spirit world exists (angels, devils, God Himself), we cannot describe or understand a spirit being.

With these limitations and cautions in mind, let us look at some interesting information God gives us in connection with the Will that He wrote before the foundation of the earth and by which those who have been named in the Will receive their inheritance. In Hebrews 10:10, we find this significant statement: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Let us look carefully at the word "will" in this verse: "By the which will we are sanctified."

As was learned from Hebrews 9:15-18, the writer of a Will (or Covenant or Testament) is called the testator. The Will or Testament has no force or effect as long as the testator lives, but when the testator dies, the Will becomes a binding, legal document, the terms of which must be carried out. We learned that God is the writer of the Will (the Testator), and God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ died to make the Will effective. It is this Will that is spoken of in Hebrews 10:10, "by the which will we are sanctified." This verse teaches that believers are sanctified because Christ offered His body. In this context, the phrase "we are sanctified" must relate to the fact that He took on a human nature, and as the God-man bore the wrath of God for our sins. Hebrews 10:12 declares: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." The phrase, "by the which will we are sanctified," therefore, must be speaking of God's Will or Testament.

In verses 14 and 16, it is seen conclusively that the Will spoken of in verse 10 is indeed the Covenant or Testament of which God is the Testator. Verse 10 speaks of the Will by which "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." God thus identifies the Will that He wrote with the fact that we are sanctified by the offering of Jesus. Verse 14 continues to speak of this Will because it also speaks of an offering by which we are sanctified. Verse 14: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

In verse 15, God continues to speak of the offering by which we are sanctified by indicating that it was witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. Verse 15 declares, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." In other words, God declares that the Will He spoke of in Hebrews 10:10 also witnesses to us by the Holy Spirit. God indicates where He had previously spoken of this Will, which has to do with the offering by which we are sanctified, in the last part of verse 15 and all of verse 16:

For after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

God spoke concerning this Will in Jeremiah 31:33, which is quoted in Hebrews 10:16. Thus God clearly identifies the Will of Hebrews 10:10 with the Covenant of Jeremiah 31:33. Sanctification comes by means of this Will or Covenant in that God's Law becomes an integral part of our hearts and minds. We live with an earnest desire to do the will of God. The language God uses in connection with His Will enables us to discover that when the Bible says that Christ came to do the Will of God, He teaches that Christ came to effectuate, that is to bring into reality, His Will.

Hebrews 10:9 and 10:10: Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of

Jesus Christ once for all.

In verse 9, we read that Christ came to do the Will of God. Verse 10 declares that "by the which will we are sanctified." As we look carefully at these two verses, we cannot escape the conclusion that for Christ to do the Will of God is language that indicates that He came to **effectuate** the Will God had written.

The Father Wrote the Will; the Son was Assigned to Effectuate the Will

We are beginning to discover that God the Father is the Testator of the Will, but the provision of the Will, which required the death of the Testator, was assigned to Jesus. Jesus came on behalf of the Father to be the Mediator of the Covenant or Will that God had prepared. As the Mediator, Jesus not only had to die to make the Will effective, He also had to die to pay for the sins of those named beneficiaries in the Will. In His death, He came to do the Father's Will from both standpoints.

Hebrews 10:5: Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

The Old Testament ceremonial sacrifices and offerings were types and shadows pointing to the sacrifice of Christ as the Testator. These sacrifices and offerings in no way met the combined requirements of the death of the Testator and the payment for sin. God declares in Hebrews 10:6: "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure." Therefore, Christ came to do the Will of God by being both the Testator who died and the One who paid for believers sins.

The Bible says that the coming of Christ to do the Will of God ended ceremonial sacrifices and offerings, which were commanded by the Law of God. Hebrews 10:9 teaches: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." The "first" in this verse is shadows and types. The "second" is Christ who is the reality. The "first," that is, shadows and types, was prominent in the Old Covenant. The "second," the actual historical death of Christ, is emphasized in the New Covenant.

When Christ came to do the Will of God, He came to establish the Will of God by dying as the Testator of the Will. The word "will" in the phrase "to do thy will" has a double meaning. First, it means that Christ came to accomplish the will of God in the sense that He came to fulfill the desires of God. Second, it means that He came to effectuate the Will that God had written as the Testator. This information gives us additional insights concerning a number of verses.

Jesus Can Legally Take the Place of the Father as the Testator

One principle God established is that Christ must meet the legal requirements of being the Testator who dies. If a man writes a will, his will does not become a legally binding document that is then fulfilled because his brother or close relative dies. It requires his death. No one else can take his place. How then can Christ, the Son of God, take the place of the Father as the Testator? This is a very important question.

In John 10, significant statements address this question. In verse 30 we read: "I and my Father are one."

In verse 38, Jesus declares, ". . . that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him."

John 14:9 conveys the same truth with slightly different language: ". . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

John 14:10 further reinforces the oneness of the Father and the Son: ". . . I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

In John 5:43, He declares, "I am come in my Father's name."

As we ponder these verses, we learn that Christ is indeed the legitimate, authoritative Testator. When He bore the wrath of God for our sins, it was as if the Father had borne the wrath of God for our sins. When He died to effectuate the Will, it was as if the Father had died.

We have thus seen that both Jesus and the Father are in a real sense identified as the Testator and, therefore, also as the Mediator. Significantly, God indicates that God the Holy Spirit is also involved in that enormous sacrifice. In Hebrews 9:14, we read:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself when He went to the cross. God is assuring us that in every facet of His divine being, He is involved in our salvation. No wonder we are to be baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Ah, the mystery of it all. In this life, we get

only a glimpse of the wonder of God's love. Perhaps in eternity we will understand more fully.

God, with the principle focus on the Father, is the writer of the Will that provides for the salvation of all those who are named in the Will. Jesus was sent by the Father to effectuate the Will. Jesus declares in John 5:30: ". . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus cried out, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

In John 6:38, Jesus repeats this assertion: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

In these statements, Jesus emphasizes that He came to accomplish the desires of His Father. He declares in John 8:29: "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

The desire of the Father was that Christ serve as the Testator and die to establish the Will God had written. His death would also make the payment for the sins of those named in God's Will or Testament. Thus, they could receive the inheritance promised in the Will. The desires of the Father, of course, included the work of preaching the Gospel. Jesus says in Luke 4:43:

. . . I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

In John 20:21 we read: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Jesus' assertion, "I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30), implies more than that He had come to fulfill the desires of the Father, it also directly focuses on the Will the Father had written. In Hebrews 10:9 Jesus declares, "I come to do thy will, O God," and in verse 10 says, "By the which will we are sanctified." These two verses definitely tie doing the Will of the Father to the actual Will itself. Therefore, when Jesus said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father," He is indicating that the Father prepared the Will; but Jesus was named by God as the Person of the Godhead who must die to make the Will or Testament of God effective. The action of taking the role of the Testator also fulfilled the desires of the Father.

When Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," and in John 5:30, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me," He is not indicating that His desires are different from the desires of the Father. In His perfect obedience to the Father, this could not be. There is perfect harmony between the Father and the Son. Therefore, one might think these phrases, which appear to suggest that Jesus had a different will from the Father, are quite incongruous.

God the Father Wrote the Will

To understand the phrase "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me," keep in mind that God is teaching that the focus is on the Father, the writer of the Will. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16): Jesus, the Son of God, was given, was sent, by the Father to do the Will, to effectuate the Will, the Father had prepared. Jesus was the suffering servant Who came to do the will of the Father. He served as the Testator of the Will which God the Father had written because of His love for us, so that we might be saved: This is the Testament or Will of the Father. It was not Christ's will, but Jesus was sent by the Father to take the place of the Testator, so that the Father's Will would be effectuated.

The demand of the Will was so awful, so terrible, that Jesus cried out, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39). To die as the Testator of the Will required a death that was equal to the payment of eternal damnation of all those named in the Will. The thrice-repeated question of Jesus concerning the cup of God's wrath, the second death of Revelation 20, emphasized that there was no other way for God's Will, or Covenant, to be established. Jesus had to die as the Testator of the Will. Jesus had to pay for the sins of all who were named in the Will.

Christ was Also Named in the Will to Receive an Inheritance

The Bible calls our attention to the consequence for Christ, in that He faithfully was the Testator who died. The consequence was that He was to receive an inheritance. He is named in the Will as one of the beneficiaries. We read in Romans 8:17 that believers are "joint-heirs with Christ." We cannot be joint heirs with Christ unless He, too, receives an inheritance when the terms of the Will are carried out.

When we study the Bible, we find that the inheritance believers receive focuses on eternal life: we escape

from Hell, we become the inheritors of the new Heaven and new earth, we become sons of God, we reign with Christ forevermore, etc.

The Bible especially points to the following facts about the inheritance that Christ receives:

1. All authority is given Him.

Matthew 28:18 records: And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Ephesians 1:19-22 declares to us: And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

I Timothy 6:14-16 states: That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

2. All believers are named in the Father's Will and are given to Him.

John 6:37: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

John 17:2: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

John 17:9: I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

3. All honor and glory is given Him.

Revelation 5:12-13: Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

As joint-heirs with Christ, believers share in His inheritance. Not only do we experience the resurrection, we also reign with Christ (Revelation 5:10). We are seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). We are glorified with Him (I Peter 5:4, etc.). Indeed, God's salvation plan is magnificent.

We have learned that Christ came to do the will of God by becoming the Testator Who had to die to effectuate that Will. God gave abundant evidence that Jesus legitimately could be the Testator on behalf of the Father. How wonderful it is that Jesus was so faithful in carrying out this awesome assignment.

Chapter 6 – The Making of a Covenant

In this study, we are interested in everything the Bible offers concerning the Covenant of grace. We want to be sure we have missed nothing that might help us to understand why God uses the word "covenant" in connection with the Gospel.

One strange account in the Bible that definitely relates to the Covenant is the experience of Abram in Genesis 15. The words "covenant" and "testament" are not found in this chapter, but when we compare the language used to describe Abram's experience with other language in the Bible, we know that it relates directly to Covenant-making. Therefore, we will look at this experience in some detail.

The experience of Abram recorded in Genesis 15 is an interesting demonstration of what was required to make God's Covenant of grace effective. The setting for Abram's strange experience is that God had promised to the patriarch Abram that He would give him the land of Canaan as an inheritance. Abram desired a sign or some proof that he would be given this inheritance. Verse 8: "And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" God then instructed him in Genesis 15:9:

And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

Verse 10:

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

The sign concludes in verse 17:

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

An understanding of this puzzling experience can be received if we realize what each participant spiritually represents. This information, of course, must be derived from the Bible.

Abram Represents What or Whom?

Who or what does Abram represent in this drama? Wonderfully, God gives us assistance in Jeremiah 34, where the Bible discusses a covenant that was made by ancient Israel. The description of this covenant includes discussion about the maker of the covenant, who cuts a calf in two and then passed between the pieces. We will focus on verse 18 and 19 of Jeremiah 34:

And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf.

Immediately we can see the parallelism between this account and the account in Genesis 15, where the same elements, cutting animals in two and passing between the parts, are emphasized. Thus, Jeremiah 34 serves as a commentary on Genesis 15 and helps us understand it.

In Jeremiah 34, the one who cut the calf into two parts is the maker of a covenant. Verse 18 speaks of the men who "have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain."

Later in the study, we will try to discover the failure of Israel, in that they did not perform the covenant they had made. We will also discover what covenant they made. For now, we know from this passage that the one who divided the calf was the maker of the covenant. We also know that the act of dividing a calf related to the making of a covenant.

In Genesis 15:10, God says that Abram divided the animals. Therefore, according to what we have learned from Jeremiah 34, Abram was the maker of a covenant. What covenant is in view in Genesis 15? Remember, Abram's experience was a response to his desire that God give him proof that he would inherit the land of Canaan. In Romans 4:13, God relates to the promises He made to Abraham:

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

In this verse, God substitutes the words "land of Canaan" with the word "world," which parallels Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

The ultimate destination of all believers, those who have become citizens of the Kingdom of God, is the new Heaven and new earth, which God will create immediately after He has destroyed the present universe with fire (II Peter 3:10-13). The promise of the land of Canaan, therefore, embraces the wonderful spiritual fulfillment of citizenship in the Kingdom of God, which begins the moment we are saved and is fully realized in the new Heaven and new earth.

Since we know that the Covenant of grace is intimately identified with our inheritance of the Kingdom of God (the land of Canaan of Genesis 15), we know that the action of Abram in dividing the animals relates to the Covenant of grace.

But now we have a problem. The maker of the Covenant of grace is God Himself, whereas the maker of the Covenant in Genesis 15 was Abram. Remember, the one who cut the animal in two was the maker of the covenant. This difficulty is removed if we remember that God spoke in parables, that is, He utilized historical persons and situations to illustrate spiritual truth. In the experience of Genesis 15, Abram must be a picture or type of God Himself, because God is the maker of the Covenant of grace. He was typified by Abram, when he cut the animals in two.

Abram: A Picture of God

The fact that Abram represents God in this historical portrait of Genesis 15 is not surprising when we remember that the Bible speaks of him as the father of all believers (Romans 4:11-12). Obviously, God is our Heavenly Father, and we who become saved have become children of God. Therefore, Abraham is a figure or type of our Heavenly Father. In the parable of Luke 16, where the poor man is caught up into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), this parable will not begin to divulge its spiritual truth until it is understood that Abraham is a representation of our Heavenly Father.

Returning to Jeremiah 34, it was discovered that the maker of a covenant passed between the two parts of the calf. Verse 18 declares that the men "have not performed the words of the covenant which they have made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof."

Verse 19 reiterates this truth:

The princes of Judah, and princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf. . . .

The question must be asked, "Did Abram, a picture of God who made the Covenant, pass between the parts of the animals he divided?" We will discover that while the Bible does not say that Abram passed between the pieces of the three animals, God, who was typified by Abram, did. God is the maker of the Covenant of grace. He is in view as the one Who killed the animals and Who passed between the pieces. This truth will be further developed during study of the smoking furnace and burning lamp that passed between the pieces.

Thus, we have learned that Abram, who cut each of the three animals into two pieces, represents God, the maker of the Covenant of grace.

The Animals: A Picture of Our Savior

Who or what do the three animals that were divided in two represent?

When we study the Bible, we find that a number of animals are used to typify Christ. Three are animals that Abram cut into two pieces: the heifer, the goat, and the ram, which were repeatedly sacrificed as burnt offerings and blood sacrifices. These sacrifices all pointed to **The Sacrifice** – Jesus. Without question, in the account of Genesis 15, the animals are a representation of our Savior.

Significantly, Abram divided each animal in two, which means that he had to kill them. He had to shed their blood. Even as Christ's blood was shed to pay for our sins, Abram shed the blood of the animals. The maker of the Covenant of grace, God Himself, Who is typified by Abram, shed the blood of Jesus, who is typified by the three animals

Why were **three** animals killed by Abram, and why were they each to be **three** years old? One reason may be that the number three is frequently used in the Bible to signify **purpose**. Three times Paul prayed for the removal of the thorn in his flesh, but it was the purpose of God that he endure it (II Corinthians 12:7-9). Three times Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that the cup might pass from Him, but it was God's purpose that He had to drink of the cup (Matthew 26:39).

Likewise, it was God's purpose that Christ's blood be shed to effectuate the Covenant of grace. As was learned earlier, Christ had to die as the Testator of the Covenant, and He had to die to make possible the forgiveness of those named beneficiaries of the Covenant. It was absolutely required that Christ's blood be shed. The purpose of God is highlighted by the killing of three animals each three years of age.

Making the Covenant of grace required God, typified by Abram, to kill Christ, typified by the heifer, the goat, and the ram, which were divided. Regarding Abram's experience, Genesis 15:12 says, "when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." What does this mean and whom does Abram represent?

Abram Typifies Jesus

Abram divided the animals, therefore, he was the maker of the covenant. Abram was a representation of God, Who made the Covenant of grace. God, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, had to experience the horrors of eternal damnation to effectuate the Covenant.

Therefore, in Genesis 15:12, Abram is a representation of Jesus, Who died for our sins. The Bible speaks of believers as the seed of Abraham. While this points to Abraham as a picture of our Heavenly Father, it also points to Abraham as a picture of Jesus. In Psalms 89:3,4, Jesus is typified by David and believers by

the seed of David. Thus, believers are the seed of Christ, Who is called everlasting Father in Isaiah 9:6. Abraham not only typified the Father, he also typified Christ. Abram was cast into a deep sleep, which signifies that Jesus experienced the second death, eternal damnation.

Isaiah 29:1-10 indicates that ancient Israel was under the wrath of God, for instance, Isaiah 29:6 speaks of a flame of devouring fire. In this context, God declares in verse 10, "For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes." This spiritual blindness is synonymous with being subject to eternal damnation. Abram was put into a deep sleep as a figure or type of Jesus, Who endured the equivalent of eternal damnation on behalf of all who are to be saved.

The word "horror" in Genesis 15:12 also points to Judgment Day, when God's wrath will be poured out. The Hebrew word that is translated "horror" in Genesis 15:12 is translated "terror" in Deuteronomy 32:25, where God definitely speaks of the Hell that will come upon unbelievers:

The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

Thus, we know that the horror Abram experienced in his deep sleep was that of Judgment Day and eternal damnation. This is what our Savior experienced to pay for our sins.

We can understand why Genesis 15:12 speaks of the sun going down and great darkness. God teaches in Malachi 4:2 that Christ is the Sun of righteousness. The physical sun brings physical light to a physical world, and Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, brings spiritual light to a world that is in the darkness of sin. What happens when the sun goes down? There is darkness. Spiritually, the sun will go down when the world ends and the Gospel light no longer shines. Then the peoples of the world must face the judgment throne of God and the darkness of eternal damnation. Jesus, the Mediator of those who are to become saved, had this awesome experience, as pictured in Genesis 15:12.

In Abram's Genesis 15 experience, he typifies God, the maker of the Covenant of grace. When Abram divided the animals, it was to portray the purpose of God: that Jesus was to shed His blood. In the horror-ridden deep sleep of Abram, we see Jesus enduring Hell for our sins.

God the Judge

What is taught by Genesis 15:17, where God records that a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of the animals? We know that Hell is in view because of the parallels to verse 12. Both verses speak of the sun going down and darkness.

We learned from Jeremiah 34 that the maker of the covenant not only divided the calf, but also passed between the pieces. Therefore, since God, typified by Abram, divided the animals in the Genesis 15 account, it must be God Who is typified by the smoking furnace and the burning lamp. In this portrait, it is God the Judge Who pours out His wrath on Jesus, Who is typified by the animals. God as the Judge is typified by the smoking furnace and by the burning lamp. God portrays Himself as a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), and the Bible repeatedly sets forth the warning that the enemies will be burned by fire. Jesus had to endure the fire of God's wrath in all of its totality. Perhaps the completeness or the totality of the wrath of God is being emphasized by the fact that the smoking furnace and burning light **passed** between the pieces.

In other words, God is saying that the wrath of God did not just touch Jesus; rather, the judgment of God passed completely over Jesus. Jesus endured the full measure of God's wrath for those for whom He had come as the substitute. Thus, it can be seen that Abram's experience of Genesis 15 represents the atonement in all its stark reality. The atonement was required to make the Covenant of grace effective for the heirs of the Covenant.

The Two Birds Represent Whom?

Genesis 15:9 says that God told Abram to take, in addition to the three animals, a turtledove and a young pigeon. Verse 10 informs us that Abram divided the animals, "but the birds divided he not." What does this mean?

Dividing the animals focused on the fact that Jesus was killed. Thus, since the two birds were not divided, the implication is that they were not killed. Moreover, the smoking furnace and burning lamp are spoken of as passing between the parts of the animals, but nothing is said about the two birds in that context.

Verse 9 assures us there is an intimate relationship between the animals that were killed and the two birds that were not divided. The birds must have been dead, if they are intimately identified with the three

animals that were killed. Nevertheless, God's treatment of them is different from that of the three animals, which the Bible specifically declares were divided, while it specifically declares that the birds were not divided. Thus, if the turtledove and pigeon are dead, then the emphasis is not on the fact that Abram (God) killed them to accomplish the atonement. What then do these birds represent?

First of all, note that the two birds were clean birds. In the Old Testament, God said all animals, birds, and fish were either clean or unclean. Sacrifices were made of the clean animals and birds. The three animals that were divided in Genesis 15 were clean animals; they typified the sacrifice of Jesus.

Sacrificed animals were killed, but the Genesis 15 account contains no statement that the two birds were killed. They do not, therefore, typify Christ as do the killed animals.

Believers: A Turtledove and a Pigeon

God used clean and unclean animals to represent the saved and unsaved. When Peter was being prepared to bring the Gospel to the Gentile Cornelius, he was told to eat of the unclean animals. At that time, God removed the picture of clean and unclean animals as representative of saved and unsaved people. Prior to the cross, clean animals and birds pointed to those who through salvation had become identified with Jesus, Who was typified by sacrificed clean animals and birds, which is precisely what God has in view in Genesis 15.

The clean animals, which are to be killed, are closest in identification with the turtledove and pigeon. The two birds of Genesis 15 are a picture or type of those who have become saved. God specifically points to birds as a picture of believers, for example, in Psalm 11:1, "Flee as a bird to your mountain". The mountain to which we flee is the Kingdom of God. As birds, we are to flee to it, because Jesus, typified by the three animals, was killed. Jesus endured the fire of God's wrath, which is typified by the smoking furnace passing between the pieces. Those of us who are saved did not have God's wrath pass over us, even though we were spiritually dead when Christ came to save us.

Even though we were spiritual corpses, we ourselves were not personally punished in Hell. To use the language of Genesis 15, we were not personally divided, nor did the wrath of God (the smoking furnace and burning lamp) pass between us. In this dreadful experience of Genesis 15, God teaches that those who become saved, who are typified by the turtledove and pigeon, are intimately involved in the atonement that was provided by God pouring out His wrath on Jesus. Romans 6:4 says that we are "buried with Him by baptism into death" and the next verse says "we have been planted together in the likeness of His death." How gracious God is to us.

The number of birds in this account further focuses on the fact that they typify those who have become saved. Repeatedly, God uses the number two to signify the church. The disciples were sent out two by two, as were the seventy (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1). The two witnesses of Revelation 11 signify the same truth.

Christ Drove the Wrath of God Away from Believers

Genesis 15:11: "And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." The carcasses that God apparently has in view are those of the animals and birds that represent Christ and the believers. The focus of this verse, however, is not on Christ, but on believers. Why is this?

Many times in the Bible, God utilizes the picture of a battle to typify Judgment Day, for instance, in Revelation 19 where Christ is pictured as coming as the victorious conqueror to make war with sin and Satan. Revelation 19 verse 17 and 18:

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

The picture of the birds feeding on the flesh of the slain represents God's judgment resting forevermore on the unsaved. This concept is in view in Luke 17:36 and 37:

Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

The eagles or vultures are gathered together in the presence of those who are left on earth to be judged. The saved will have been raptured to be with Jesus. The unsaved are the body whose flesh the vultures

will eat; that is, they will be forever under the wrath of God.

The Carcasses of Believers

Returning to Genesis 15:11, we see that Abraham drove the fowls away from the carcasses. Before we are saved, we are spiritually dead and subject to having our flesh eaten by the vultures; that is, we are subject to experiencing the eternal wrath of God.

Abram drove the vultures away. Abram, in his horrible deep sleep, typified Christ bearing the wrath of God for our sins. Because Christ paid for our sins, the wrath of God, typified by the fowls and their desire to feed on the carcasses, has been driven away. In Jeremiah 7:3, God warns that His wrath will be visited upon Israel because of their sins:

And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.

The Old English word "fray" means "to frighten." As was seen, the fowls of the heaven feeding on the carcasses is a picture of the wrath of God being poured out on the unsaved in Hell. The statement that there is no one to frighten them away can mean only that there is no one who can set aside the judgment of God after they are judged on the last day. They must experience Hell. The fowls being driven away in Genesis 15 indicates that the judgment of God does not come on these carcasses.

It might be argued that the word "carcasses" in Genesis 15 has to include the bodies of the killed animals. While that conclusion appears justified by a superficial look at these verses, that conclusion cannot stand in the light of all that the Bible teaches. The language of Genesis 15 contains information that Jesus bore the full wrath of God. The carcasses of the turtledove and pigeon represent the spiritually dead who become believers and escape the wrath of God because it was driven away by virtue of Christ's payment for their sins.

Verse 11 says "carcasses," it does not say "the carcasses of the animals." Therefore, we must look at the immediate carcasses in view. Then it is discovered that they can refer only to the carcasses of the two birds, which represent believers.

The original question Abram asked in Genesis 15 was, How was he to know that he was to inherit the land? Abram spoke here as a figure of Christ. Christ was named in the inheritance that God promised in accordance with the Will or Testament or Covenant written by the Father. In this experience of Abram, God shows how Christ will receive the inheritance. He, as the heifers, the goats, the rams, had to be divided, that is, He had to die. He had to shed His blood. He had to experience the terrors of eternal damnation and Hell fire as typified by the horror Abram experienced in his deep sleep.

To put it another way, the inheritance of the Kingdom of God was guaranteed because God as Judge, typified by the smoking furnace and burning lamp, passed between the parts of the animals. Christ as the heifer, the goat, the lamb, thoroughly endured the wrath of God, typified by the smoking furnace and the burning lamp. Because our Savior endured the death of the wrath of God, the Covenant of grace became effective. Our Lord was guaranteed His inheritance of the Kingdom of God, typified by the land of Canaan.

As was learned from Jeremiah 34, the maker of the Covenant cut the calf in two and passed between the parts. Abram, as a figure of God, cut the animals in two, that is, he represented God Who poured out His wrath on Christ, the Lamb Who was slain. The burning lamp and smoking furnace that passed between the parts also represented God, Who brought His wrath on Christ. This is the way God's Covenant became a reality.

Israel Made a Covenant

The Covenant is referred to in Jeremiah 34:18, "I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant." "My Covenant" is the Gospel; it is the Covenant of grace, but Israel had become Covenant-breakers. They transgressed God's Covenant by making their own covenant, as indicated in the rest of verse 18:

. . . which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof.

This verse teaches that they made their own covenant and then did not perform the words of the covenant that **they** made. What was their covenant? Their covenant surely is an attempt to turn God's Covenant of grace into a covenant of works. Rather than look to Christ to pay for their sins, they redesigned God's salvation plan so that they could try to provide for their salvation. Careful study of this verse demonstrates that during any time of Israel's existence, most of the people remained unsaved.

As was learned, the maker of a covenant did two things, he: (1) divided the calf and (2) passed between the halves of the calf. What calf did Israel divide that made them the maker of their covenant? It was not Christ, because He is the calf divided by God, the maker of the Covenant of grace. It was the physical, literal calves that they sacrificed. They should have seen that the physical sacrifices were types and shadows of **The Sacrifice** – the Messiah – who was to come, but they did not. They made the sacrifices of animals the basis of their salvation. Therefore, the calf they killed (divided) no longer related to God's Covenant – God's salvation plan. The sacrifices became a salvation plan designed by the Israelites.

They also walked between the pieces of the calf. In God's Covenant or salvation plan, God walked between the pieces. God the Judge brought His wrath on the divided calf (Christ), so that the Covenant might become effective.

In the covenant of Jeremiah 34, which Israel made, they did not have Christ as their sinbearer. They attempted to become right with God on their own. They believed they were going to obtain salvation by keeping the law and by ceremonial law. God passed between the pieces of the calf in God's Covenant; that is, Christ met the demands of the Law; He suffered the equivalent of eternal damnation on behalf of all who would believe on Him. Israel attempted to satisfy the law by their own actions. They believed they could make their covenant effective by keeping the law.

Jeremiah 34:18 indicates that Israel did not perform their covenant. To perform their covenant, they were required to have perfect obedience. Anyone who tries to become right with God by his own obedience will fail, because every human being is dead in his sins. This covenant made by Israel is referred to in Galatians 4:21-25 where we read:

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Abraham on his own, with no direction from God, attempted to make God's promise of a seed come true by marrying Hagar. Of course, he utterly failed in his attempt to force God's hand in obtaining the promised seed. God likens this attempt of Abraham to a covenant that Israel made by which they tried to get right with God by keeping the law. As we have seen from Jeremiah 34:18, they failed in their attempt because they did not keep their side of the agreement which would have required perfect obedience before God. Romans 9:31-33 describes the predicament of ancient Israel.

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Please note that it was not the law that God gave on Mount Sinai that was the problem. That was given as an integral part of the Covenant of Grace, as we learned earlier in our study. Rather, the problem arose because of what Israel did with the law. The law was given as a school master that should have shown Israel their sins and their desperate need of a Savior. Instead, they developed their own covenant in that they decided they could keep the law sufficiently well so that their own righteousness would save them. Interestingly in Isaiah 28, God makes reference to this covenant Israel made. There we read in verses 14, 15 and 18:

Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. . . . And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

This covenant or agreement with death and hell is what develops when mankind decides he can escape hell, the second death, by keeping the law. Effectively he thinks he has made an agreement with the prospect of eternal damnation that his good works are sufficient to keep him from the wrath of God. Unfortunately, his agreement or covenant will not stand. It will be shown to be nothing at all when the "overflowing scourge," that is, Judgment Day, passes through.

On the other hand, the other Covenant spoken of in Galatians 4:24 can only be the Covenant of Grace

that the Bible speaks of continuously. It was typified by the grace of God being manifested as Abraham was given Isaac as the promised seed. God be praised that He has given us His Covenant, a Covenant that cannot fail because God has perfectly met all the terms. How marvelously gracious God is to us.

Chapter 7 – The Covenant of Grace

When we study the Bible, we find that the declaration of the Gospel is progressive. Noah's understanding was not as clear as Abraham's. Abraham's understanding was not as clear as that of Moses. Moses' understanding was inferior to that of Isaiah. Isaiah's understanding was inferior to that of John the Baptist. John the Baptist did not know as much about the Gospel as did Paul. Paul's understanding was less than ours because we have the complete declaration of the Word of God.

Nevertheless, Noah was under the hearing of the same Gospel as was Moses, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Paul. There is only one Gospel; but, as the Bible was being written that Gospel was progressively being revealed with increasing clarity. However, until the Bible was completed, mankind did not have the entire Gospel.

Because the Covenant of Grace is the Gospel itself, we, therefore, should expect to find biblical language that demonstrates that the Covenant, too, was revealed progressively. Indeed, that is what we have learned in this study.

In Genesis 17, God speaks of a Covenant with Abraham that appears to be unrelated to the Covenant made with Noah. In Deuteronomy 5:3, when Israel was at Mount Sinai, He speaks of a Covenant not made with the fathers. In Deuteronomy 29:1, God speaks of a Covenant with Israel in the land of Moab that was beside the Covenant made with them at Horeb (Mount Sinai). And in Hebrews, God speaks of a New Covenant and an Old Covenant.

One might get snared into thinking that these are different Covenants made at different times. The fact is, however, they are progressive revelations of one Covenant, that of the Covenant of Grace. When we finally see it as the New Covenant, we see it in its full glory, its full revelation. Likewise, when God completed the writing of the Bible, we see God's message of salvation in its full declaration.

Those who did become saved before the giving of the full revelation of God's Covenant of Grace were saved under the New Covenant. Hebrews 9:15 declares:

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

That is, those who never heard of the New Covenant, such as Noah or Abraham, were saved under the terms of the New Covenant. Anyone who hears the Gospel identifies with the Covenant as it was called the first or Old Testament. Anyone who actually became saved at any time in history had to become saved under the terms of the New Covenant. This is so because no one becomes saved unless God does the work of salvation in the heart of the one being saved. And this doing the work of salvation in the heart of the one hearing the Gospel is a provision of the New Covenant.

Covenant Breakers

Before we finish our study of the Covenant, we will once again study the matter of Covenant-breakers. The Bible repeatedly speaks of Covenant-breakers. If the Covenant is a Covenant of grace, how can one break that Covenant? The Bible will guide us to the answer.

All who hear the Gospel are automatically identified with the Covenant, as was seen in Genesis 6, Genesis 9, and Isaiah 24. By the Bible's own definition, God made a Covenant with anyone who comes under the hearing of the Gospel. The intent of the Gospel, or Covenant, is salvation. Everyone who hears the Gospel is commanded to believe.

The consequence of not becoming saved is articulated within and is indeed a vital part of the Covenant. In Deuteronomy 29:20-21, God speaks of those who remain in unbelief:

The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel,

according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law.

A Covenant of Salt

The Covenant was called a Covenant of salt (Num. 18:19). Many have the idea that the Bible uses the term "salt" to emphasize a type of preservation or enhancement of the Gospel. Salt makes food more tasty, and this inference is made from the verse, "ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

In the Bible, the word "salt" relates to damnation and God's wrath. Lot's wife became a pillar of salt. The vale of Siddim is called the Salt Sea (Gen. 14:3). In Deuteronomy 29:23, we read this pertinent use of the word "salt."

And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath.

The offerings were made with salt (Lev. 2:13) to underscore Hell and damnation, as did the fire that consumed the offering. The land that was to remain forever barren was sowed with salt (Judges 9:45). Jeremiah 17:6 speaks of God's judgment as "a salt land not inhabited."

The identification of salt with judgment is underscored in Mark 9:49, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." When God speaks of believers as the salt of the earth, He indicates that they have the message of damnation. The Covenant that they bring to the world is a Covenant of salt, as II Corinthians 2:16 puts it:

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Of course, this verse teaches that judgment is not the whole Gospel. Under judgment is the condition of man. He is under judgment and must be told so that he might see his desperate need for salvation. That is why God warns that if the salt has lost its saltiness, it is good for nothing. If the Gospel no longer teaches damnation as an integral part of the Gospel message, it is a worthless message. Therefore, the Covenant that incorporates the curses of God is called a Covenant of salt.

The consequence of remaining unsaved after hearing the Gospel is to remain under the curse of God. To use a biblical term, to become saved is to become spiritually circumcised. One who was not circumcised was called a Covenant-breaker (Gen. 17:14):

And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my Covenant.

The term "Covenant-breaker" is used many times in the Bible. It refers to anyone who has heard the Gospel and remains unsaved.

It must be understood that God defines His terms. Those who are the elect of God to salvation can never become Covenant-breakers. It is altogether impossible that the elect become Covenant-breakers. God defines the words "Covenant" or "Gospel" to include many more than just the elect. As was repeatedly seen, it includes anyone who has heard the Gospel in any way and remains unsaved.

The Hebrew word in the phrase "broken the Covenant" or "break the Covenant" in the *King James Version* is also translated "make void" or "make of no effect" or "disannul." Thus, those who are Covenant-breakers make void or make of no effect the promises of the Covenant. When God promises eternal life to those who believe, those who do not believe make of no effect that promise of God. In that sense, they are Covenant-breakers.

To be a Covenant-breaker, therefore, is terribly serious. To further emphasize this, God speaks about the "curses of the Covenant." Deuteronomy 29:20-21 tells about God's wrath coming upon unbelievers:

The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law.

Let everyone who reads this be warned and let each of us make sure of our own salvation.

Covenant Families

Now that we have discovered the nature and character of the Covenant, we can better define the biblical

meaning of phrases that utilize the word "Covenant." What is a "Covenant church"? What is a "Covenant family"? What are "Covenant children"?

The word Covenant is a synonym for the word Gospel. A Covenant church, therefore, is one that faithfully brings the Gospel; it faithfully brings the whole counsel of God as revealed in the Bible.

A Covenant family is one that acknowledges the Gospel, particularly if at least one of the parents believes he or she has become saved and thus believes that he has become an eternal beneficiary of the Covenant. The children in such a family, in turn, are called Covenant children because they have been placed under the hearing of the Gospel. God commands believing parents to bring their children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Before the time of the Cross, the sign of the Covenant was circumcision (Genesis 17:10-11). It was administered to the members of the family that had identified with the Gospel whether those members were elect or non-elect. Because it involved the cutting of the foreskin of the reproductive organ, it, of course, could be placed on only male members of the family. It did not, in any way, guarantee the salvation of those upon whom the sign was placed. Nor did it require acceptance on the part of the children involved of the salvation promised in the Covenant of Grace.

It did recognize, however, that this family was under the hearing of the Gospel and God did promise that those who would call upon Him would be saved. Thus, those who were under the hearing of the Gospel became identified with the Covenant of Grace and this was signified by the sign of circumcision. The parent who had his son circumcised also came under the command to diligently teach the Gospel to his children. Deuteronomy 6:7 declares:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Thus, the circumcision of the child became a command to the parent to faithfully declare the Gospel to his children. It also became a call and a command to the child to trust in the coming Messiah for his salvation.

The New Testament Covenant Sign: Baptism

After Christ went to the Cross, the sign of the Covenant could no longer be used; Christ's blood had been poured out and never again should there be any blood used in a ceremonial sign. Moreover, the coming seed anticipated in the circumcision rite had come. For these reasons and possibly others, circumcision could no longer be used as a sign of the Covenant after Christ went to the Cross. Then we may wonder if God left the New Testament church with any outward sign of the Covenant of Grace.

Indeed He did. The New Testament sign is water baptism. When the Ethiopian eunuch was saved, he was baptized in water, even as the Old Testament believer was circumcised. What about the family of the New Testament believer? Was the same sign to be applied to them at the time the sign was applied to the believing parent? That surely is the Bible's teaching. In Acts 16:14-15 we read:

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

In these verses, God gives us a parallel to the experience of Abraham when he was given the Covenant and received the sign of the Covenant, which was circumcision, and all of his household were circumcised. It was parallel to Exodus 12:48, where we read:

And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

It is very easy to understand this. The Old Testament believer became saved exactly as the New Testament believer. He became saved under the terms of the New Covenant that God had applied His Word to the heart of the one who became saved. Both the Old Testament believer and the New Testament believer had become saved only because they had been named in the Will or Testament that God had written. Christ was the Testator to make this Will effectual. Both received the same inheritance – eternal life. Both through salvation became eternal citizens of the Kingdom of God. Both were given the same promise concerning their children. Both were commanded to diligently bring the Gospel to their children. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:7 sets forth this command. In the New Testament, the same command is given in Ephesians 6:4.

Indeed, we can see why the sign of the Covenant was placed on the household of Lydia when she became saved. We can see why the apostle speaks of the baptism of the family of Stephanas in I Corinthians 1:16. Why shouldn't the children receive the sign of the Covenant? The promises of the Covenant are to them as well as to the parents. They, too, are members of a Covenant family.

Circumcision and Baptism: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Wonderfully, the Bible interrelates circumcision and baptism so that we can see quickly that they are two sides of the same coin. In Colossians 2:11 God declares:

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

This verse uses Old Testament language in connection with the salvation of New Testament believers. It ties back to God's promise of Deuteronomy 30:6:

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Likewise the Old Testament beautifully anticipates New Testament baptism and its relationship to salvation in such verses as Isaiah 1:16, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;" Jeremiah 4:14, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" and Ezekiel 36:25, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

New Testament statements that coincide with these are Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Ephesians 5:26, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and Hebrews 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

We must keep in mind that the word "baptism" means to "wash" or "purify." This washing which is typified by the outward sign of water baptism is, of course, accomplished by Christ enduring the second death, eternal damnation. This death is always in view when the Bible speaks of His shed blood or simply of Christ's death. The Bible clearly identifies baptism with His death in such verses as Romans 6:3-4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life," and Colossians 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

In Revelation 1:5, God speaks of this act of salvation by the term "washing," which we have seen is synonymous with baptism.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

As we see the marvelous oneness in the terms "circumcision," "baptism," and "washing," we can see the complete harmony of the Bible, as in the New Testament church, the act of water baptism is used in the same way as physical circumcision was used in the Old Testament church.

Water Baptism: No Guarantee of Salvation

Unfortunately, New Testament Covenant families only too frequently have fallen into the same snare that Old Testament families fell into. Old Testament families too frequently concluded that because they were circumcised, their salvation was guaranteed. So, too, there are New Testament families who believe the baptism of their children guarantees salvation for them. They fail to realize that no outward act saves anyone. Salvation is a result of God working out His elective decrees in the lives of those whom He plans to save. Nowhere in the Bible does God tell us who are the elect of God before they have actually become saved.

The abuses that have occurred concerning infant baptism should in no way detract from its use in a biblical and God-glorifying manner. We should not deprive our children of this sign just because some people have misused or abused the sign.

This seems like an appropriate place to voice a word of caution. We must be very careful to not limit the extent of the Covenant. We like to talk about our Covenant families and Covenant homes as we relate to

God's promise that He will be a God to us and to our children. How we love that promise. Often we consider Isaac and Ishmael. We like to think of the Covenant as it was promised to Isaac. We often think of other families as Ishmael. It is easy to arrive at the apparent conclusion based on Genesis 17 that Isaac was in the Covenant but Ishmael was not. Genesis 17:19-21 says:

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

These verses distinguish between Isaac and Ishmael. Do these verses teach that Ishmael was unrelated to the Covenant? Other verses in the Bible clearly indicate that Ishmael was identified with the Covenant. Genesis 17:10-11 declares:

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

In response to the command to circumcise, which identified with all of Abraham's children, Ishmael, too, was circumcised. God tells us three times that Ishmael was circumcised.

Genesis 17:23: And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

Genesis 17:25: And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Genesis 17:26: In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

God does not want us to miss the fact that the sign of the Covenant was put on Ishmael. As we have seen, this sign was put on the children whether they were elect or not. It was placed on the children of a believing parent because they were under the care and responsibility of the parent. Therefore God also gave commandment to the parent to teach his children.

Beginning with Moses, the placing of the sign was a congregational matter. Until Pentecost of Acts 2, the only congregation that existed was identified with the nation of Israel. Thus, a Gentile who became saved became identified with this congregation and had the same rules apply to him at the time he became saved. There is no indication that any families which did not belong to the congregation were to receive the sign. This is so even though any Gentile who heard the Gospel and did not become saved became a Covenant breaker. This agrees, for example, with Genesis 9:17, where God declares:

And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

From this verse we know that the Covenant, which is the Gospel, is identified to some degree with the whole human race.

Returning to Genesis 17:19-21, we can know that God distinguishes between Isaac and Ishmael in the sense that the New Covenant applies to Isaac but not to Ishmael. The New Covenant is the Old Covenant together with the provision that God will intervene in the lives of those who are in the New Covenant, so that they will become saved. This is why God declares in Genesis 17:19: "Thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant." God's Covenant is everlasting only in the lives of those whom God saves. For them it becomes synonymous with salvation.

We have learned that the Old Covenant is the Gospel as it goes out to the human race, either now or at any time in history. God declares in Acts 2:39:

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

The promise of the Covenant of Grace is that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This promise was in effect ever since sin entered the world through Adam. For example, it is the basis of Noah's salvation when he found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Genesis 6:8). Because of the promise of Acts 2:39, every child, whether elect or non-elect, in a family where the Gospel is observed is a Covenant child. Externally even the non-elect child is involved with the Covenant and is a Covenant child. That is why we read in I Corinthians 7:14:

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the

husband: else where your children unclean; but now they are holy.

In this verse to be "holy" or to be sanctified does not necessarily identify with salvation. Even the non-elect members of the household are holy. They have become holy in the sense that they are externally a part of the Kingdom of God in view of the fact that one of the parents has given evidence of salvation.

That is why Hebrews 10:29 can speak of a person having been sanctified by the blood of the Covenant even though he is still under the wrath of God – because he is still in rebellion against God. He is not sanctified in the sense of the New Covenant wherein God has applied the Gospel to his heart and saved him. Rather, he is sanctified in the sense of the Old Covenant in that he has been called by God to become saved. He has been set apart to serve God (sanctified) in the sense that he has heard the Gospel even as Old Testament Israel heard the Gospel and yet remained unsaved. Because he refuses God's salvation, he, of course, becomes a Covenant-breaker.

Even as God has made the promise of the Covenant to parents and children who may be elect or non-elect, so, too, God makes the same promise of the Covenant to all that He calls. This is the beautiful promise of Acts 2:39. Anyone who hears the Gospel receives God's call to believe. Anyone who hears that call and does become saved, whether in the family or out in the world, becomes a part of the New Covenant. He believes only because God has circumcised the foreskin of his heart, has sprinkled clean water upon him so that he is cleansed of all his uncleanness, has put His law into his mind. Those in the family or anywhere else in the world who have come under the hearing of the Gospel – God's Covenant of Grace – and who remain unsaved are Covenant-breakers.

As we have seen, beginning with Pentecost, the Covenant sign was changed from circumcision to baptism. Moreover, the congregations were greatly expanded in number. Nevertheless, the New Testament churches have correctly seen that the sign of baptism was related to church membership so that it was to be administered only by properly authorized men of the congregation. Even as the sign of circumcision was applied to the family of a believing parent who became a part of the Old Testament congregation, so, too, the sign was applied to the families of the believing parent in the New Testament account. This was so even though there may have been those in the family in whose lives there was no evidence of salvation. Even as was true in the Old Testament covenant family, the New Testament parent was commanded by God to bring his children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, that is, as citizens of God's Kingdom. But there is no indication that the sign of the Covenant was to be placed on those outside the church even though those who heard the Gospel became Covenant breakers if they did not believe.

Returning to the promise of Acts 2:39, we must remember that the phrase "to all that are afar off" is just as important as the phrase "unto you, and to your children." We must not fall into the snare that ancient Israel fell into: they thought they alone were the recipients of God's Covenant promises. We must have a worldwide vision of God's Covenant promises if we are to be faithful to the Bible. God is not a respecter of persons; He goes out to seek and to save that which was lost.

Water Baptism: A Sign but Not the Substance

One very important truth we must keep in mind is that the substance of the biblical doctrine of baptism is God's action in washing away sins. Unfortunately many people see the word "baptism" in the Bible and immediately they think only of water baptism. But water baptism is only a sign. It is an outward reflection or recognizance of the washing away of sins which has occurred or hopefully will occur in the life of the one baptized. It has no efficacy whatsoever in washing away sins. For example, Acts 2:38 declares:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The baptism in view is not water baptism. That can never provide for the forgiveness of sins. Rather the word "baptism" referred to in this verse can only be focused on baptism in the Spirit. That is, it can only refer to the action of God as He washes away the sins of the one who has come to faith in Jesus. The same must be said of Mark 16:16, which reads: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This baptism, too, is not water baptism. It can only be the cleansing provided by the action of God.

Then, too, there are those who agree that water baptism is only a sign with no substance in the act itself. However, they believe that water baptism is an action that causes God to take instant action insofar as the substance of baptism is concerned. That is, they believe that baptizing a person with water causes God to simultaneously wash away the sins of the individual who was baptized. They read for example Acts 22:16 where God tells of the commands the preacher Ananias gave to Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the

Apostle. This verse declares:

And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

To have complete harmony with all that the Bible teaches concerning salvation means that in this verse we want to understand that God was simply commanding Saul to become saved. To "arise" is a command to experience the resurrection. To "be baptized" is a command to be saved. To "wash away his sins" was also a command to become saved. To "call on the name of the Lord" was a command to look to God for salvation.

One can readily understand that if water baptism was in view in this verse then salvation would be dependent upon our action. It would be a work we must do before salvation could come. Thus we would no longer have a salvation based only on the grace of God. Rather the commands in this verse parallel the statement in I John 3:23 in which God commands that we are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Then, too, there are those who read in Romans 4:11 that the physical act of circumcision Abraham experienced was a seal of the righteousness of faith which he was given. They correctly understand that the physical act of circumcision, therefore, was God's seal or guarantee that he had become saved. And indeed this was so. Whenever the Bible speaks of a seal in connection with any aspect of salvation, God is speaking of His guarantee that the one sealed is indeed saved. We see this in Ephesians 1:13:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.

Ephesians 4:30: And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

II Timothy 2:19: Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Since the Bible shows that Abraham was already saved before he was circumcised, the act of physical circumcision could be looked upon as a seal or guarantee of his salvation.

Consequently, there are those who teach that since physical circumcision was a seal then water baptism should be looked upon as a seal of God's righteousness to save that individual. They believe, therefore, that by water baptism God has somehow guaranteed to save the one baptized.

However, when we examined the Bible more carefully we found that Ishmael was circumcised and he did not become saved. Therefore, we surely cannot say that his circumcision was a seal or guarantee that God would save him. Nor does the Bible imply that the circumcision of a non-elect person is a seal of God. It only speaks of circumcision as a seal in connection with Abraham, who the Bible reveals to be a saved person.

Likewise, does the Bible speak of water baptism as a seal? Obviously it could be looked upon as a seal in relationship to those who have truly become saved. But the Bible does not speak of it as a seal. We can readily see why this is so. Since no human knows who the elect are before they are actually saved, the act of water baptism cannot be looked upon as a seal. Fact is, even amongst those who are baptized as adults because it appears they have been saved, water baptism cannot be looked upon as a seal in every instance. This is so because a percentage of those baptized will be like the seed that fell on rocky soil. They believe awhile and then they fall away. They were never saved.

Thus, we must be certain and sure that water baptism may not be looked upon as a guarantee of past or future salvation. It is, however, a sign pointing to the salvation of those who come to faith in the Lord Jesus.

Conclusion

We have attempted to understand God's use of the word "Covenant." We have learned that it embraces a whole lot more than what we perhaps realized. We have tried to faithfully examine any and every concept the Bible offers concerning the Covenant. In so doing, we have discovered that the Covenant, in its widest sense, embraces the whole universe. We have also learned that in its eternal sense, it includes only those

who are elect of God to salvation. We have discovered that the Covenant is the Gospel, which should not surprise us in view of the fact that the Bible is divided into two parts – the Old Testament and the New Testament or the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. We have learned that the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are two sides of the same Covenant.

The Old Covenant is the declaration of God's salvation plan as it is given to all mankind through the Gospel. To some degree that Gospel was in evidence in the world before the existence of the written Word, the Bible. Mankind should have known without the Bible that they must cry out to God for mercy. When God began to write the Bible, some of those who heard the written Word learned that man is a sinner and is subject to damnation because of his sins. The written Word commanded people to plead with God for mercy and to trust in God as the only One who can save them from God's wrath. The written Word says that Christ, the Messiah, would save those who trust Him.

To make the nature of the Covenant clear, God set up many types and figures as illustrations. The types and shadows pointed to the reality of Christ coming, an actual historical event, to shed His blood and to suffer damnation for all who would believe on Him. These types were not the reality.

Everything that God promises in the Old Covenant is trustworthy, but apart from God's further action of applying salvation to those who were to be saved, there was salvation for no one. The problem was not with the Gospel, that is, with the Old Covenant; the problem was with mankind. Mankind is spiritually dead. There is none that seeks after God (Psalms 14:3 and 53:3, Romans 3:10-11). No one becomes saved of his own will. Consequently, everyone in the human race by nature is a Covenant-breaker. He will not independently decide to become spiritually circumcised, that is, he will not become saved.

God introduced the New Covenant with at least three more giant actions, promises, and commandments in addition to all that is indicated in the Old Covenant. These are:

1. The actual historical death of Christ, the sin-bearer.
2. The activity of God in applying the Gospel to the rebellious hearts of those He had named in His Will and to save us in spite of our natural rebellion against the Gospel.
3. God's command that the Gospel be proclaimed to the whole world, and His command that all the people of the world are to repent and believe in Jesus as Savior.

The Old Covenant is synonymous with the whole Gospel as God commands the human race to believe on Him. The New Covenant effectively is synonymous with salvation because it includes only those who have become saved.

To clarify the New Covenant, God speaks of it as a Will. By doing this, God declares that the terms of the Will must be kept by God. God has obligated Himself to those whom He has named in the Will, those who are elected to salvation. Therefore, in spite of the natural rebellion of those who become saved, God inclines their hearts, He makes them new creatures, He does everything necessary in their lives that they might be saved and he saves them.

The key to the New Covenant is the death of the maker of the Will, Christ Himself. His death satisfied the penalty demanded by God for the sin of all who become saved. The New Covenant stresses the fact that salvation is entirely of God. Those who become saved can take no credit for salvation. Indeed, the Covenant is a Covenant of grace. The outward sign ordained by God that points to the existence of the Gospel or Covenant is water baptism. This action has no efficacy or supernatural power in itself nor is it used of God in any way to cause the supernatural event of salvation to take place.

The administration of water baptism is to be done only in a congregational setting when an individual has given evidence of salvation and becomes a member of the congregation. If he or she is a parent, the children of the household are also to be baptized, as a sign that they are corporately or externally being reared in a covenant household; that is, in a home where the believing parent will bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

If the adult or child has been saved prior to his baptism with water, this sign also is a seal of the righteousness of the faith that is found in his life as the evidence of salvation. It effectively signifies that in his life, the Covenant of Grace has become completely identified with salvation.

* * *

Background Information

Family Radio

The following information was copied from the Family Radio Web site:

The Ministry of Family Radio

Broadcasting Christ-centered programs to the United States & around the world!

Committed to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Family Radio is committed to the Person and salvation work of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's divine Word, the Bible. We are a nonprofit, nondenominational, educational organization dedicated to obeying our Lord's command to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Family Radio programs include no commercial advertisements. Air time for other Christian broadcasters on Family Radio is free of charge. The ministry relies solely upon God working through listeners for the financial support of day-to-day operations. We as a ministry desire to be entirely faithful to God's divine, infallible Word, the Bible. Every effort is made to accurately present the Gospel of the Bible. In purpose and belief, we stand out from other radio and TV ministries in our faithful reliance on the Bible as the ONLY infallible authority.

First Broadcast in 1959

Family Radio was organized in 1958 under our official name, Family Stations, Inc., and began to broadcast February 4, 1959, over KEAR FM in San Francisco. Since then, God has enabled the ministry to purchase a number of powerful AM and FM stations and several smaller educational facilities and translators around the country. Our domestic broadcasts reach metropolitan areas such as Birmingham, Charleston, Chicago, Cleveland, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Omaha, Philadelphia, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

International Broadcasts

An important addition came in 1973 with the purchase of an international short-wave station, which we called WYFR, in Scituate, Massachusetts. With the use of many transmitters and antennas, the Gospel is proclaimed in ten languages from thy WYFR facility, now located in Okeechobee, Florida. In 1982, our international outreach was expanded to India and the Far East with the use of powerful transmitters in Taiwan. Family Radio has become a worldwide ministry; our broadcasts now span the globe so "That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kings 8:60).

A Diversified Outreach

In addition to the broadcasts, Family Radio offers Bible-based pamphlets and tracts to teach and exhort and other diverse means of spreading the Gospel, including the following.

Family Radio School of the Bible

Primarily a correspondence school, Family Radio School of the Bible courses are designed to help laymen and professionals to minister in the church, on the job, and at home through the study of various subjects and certificate and degree programs. The school operates on the principle of Matthew 10:8, "freely ye have received, freely give." In accordance with this principle, the FRSB does not charge tuition; it is dependent upon the generosity of students and friends.

Missionary Tours

Family Radio sponsors "Missionary Tours" which provide opportunities for staff members and listeners (at their own expense) to help spread the Gospel through tract distribution. Our ambassadors for Christ have visited cities in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia (every continent except Antarctica).

On the Internet

Our Christ-centered programs are now available worldwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on the Internet. Access to the Internet may be via computer or television (with the proper equipment). In addition to the programs on the Internet, Bible studies such as "The Glorious Garden of Eden" and "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9" are on our Home Page. Downloadable books include "What God Hath Joined Together" and "God's Magnificent Salvation Plan." The Internet also has our program guide, short-wave schedule, and The Bible. Tell your friends and family that they can find Family Radio on the Internet at: <http://www.familyradio.com>

Supporting Family Radio

If you believe God would have you financially support Family Radio you can send your tax-deductible gift to:

Family Radio

Oakland, CA 94621 USA

Or use our "Secure Internet Check Form!"

End of Web site information.

For biblically based answers to your questions, you can listen to the *Open Forum* on Family Radio stations in many locations in the USA on Monday through Friday evenings at 8:30-10:00 p.m. Eastern Time (5:30-7:00 p.m. Pacific Time) or call 800-322-5385 (from within the USA and Canada) during the program to ask a question or make a comment. You can also listen to live broadcasts on Family Radio's Web site at <http://www.familyradio.com/> during those hours. There are also recordings of past programs available on this Web site.

The Open Forum is translated from English into nine other languages and broadcast by short-wave radio around the world. You can also listen to prerecorded short-wave broadcasts on the Web site. Write to Family Radio at the above address to obtain a short-wave broadcasting schedule for your area or call these numbers:

Toll Free: 800-543-1495 (from within the USA and Canada)

Toll Call: 501-568-6200 (from outside the USA and Canada)

This Book (Ver:1010 4/30/2001)

This book was reformatted from material downloaded from the Web site of a Family Radio listener and checked for accuracy against Family Radio's printed book. This was done by two Family Radio listeners who have grown in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior over the years (with help from the questions and answers about the Bible as heard on the *Open Forum* program and other Family Radio materials) and who desire the same for others.

Martin E. Lee

Mail to:

1072 S. De Anza Blvd #372

San Jose, CA 95129 USA

Phone: 408 741-5342

Email: MLee@USStepper.com

Gerald D. Mittelstadt

Mail to:

2850 Sagittarius Drive

Reno, NV 89509 USA

Phone: 775 786-1665

Email: gdmitt@prodigy.net