

Christ : The New Covenant

One of the things that cannot be overlooked in this study is the fact that Scripture explicitly says that Christ, is the New Covenant. He is the Living New Covenant. The New Covenant is not a document that is written on stone or paper, but a living breathing person, who is Christ our Lord. Another way of saying this is that He is the realized New Covenant.

It is evident from the Scriptures themselves, that if we follow the form and function of picture/fullfilment or shadow/substance, shadow/realization consistently, the idea of a realized Covenant in the person of Christ is no different that what is shown in Scripture as Christ doing the same for any number of things. They are of the earthly realm rather than the heavenly, carnal rather than spiritual, outside the garden rather than inside it but they are intentionally given by God to teach us about the substance in terms and context that we can understand from some earthly experience which vaguely resembles the reality.

These would include Christ as the Temple, as Bread of Life, as the Light of the world and so on as we have studied.

Isaiah has given us many portraits of the Christ as Servant, King, Ensign and others. He also describes the person of the New Covenant that fleshes out what Jeremiah prophecies concerning the coming of a New Covenant and a New Covenant era in redemptive history.

Christ is our New Covenant: Isaiah 42:6, 49:8

- As God-incarnate He is the New Covenant person.
- All of what I am as a believer is rooted and perfectly expressed in Him.
- I am birthed by Him, sustained by Him and kept by Him - not an it

To understand the New Covenant person I must understand Christ. It is not about understanding who I am in Christ first, but who He is.

Then I must know who I am in Him

Many believers really do not know who they are in Christ because they do not pursue growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ as a priority. Christ is the New Covenant person - He is the priority

An example of how this priority can be lost is Gal.2:20.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Some teach that this is the believer surrendering to Christ by living by faith. That certainly changes how I view Christ and His work as the New Covenant person and how it applies to me. This is about Christ living in me because I was saved by Him. It says I believe in Him as the source of my life.

How is Christ, as a person, the New Covenant.

It begins with a decree and a promise from God

Isaiah 42:6-9

6 "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.8 "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. 9 "Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."

Luke 4:15-21 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. 16* And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.17* And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." 20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Is. 49:7-10 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, "Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You." 8 Thus says the LORD, "In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit

the desolate heritages;9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' Along the roads they will feed, And their pasture will be on all bare heights. 10 "They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them And will guide them to springs of water.

Christ is the fullest revelation of God in these last days Heb.1:1-3

Hebrews 1:1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"

Without Christ there is no God to be known (outside of General Revelation) salvation.

The New Covenant in fulfillment cannot be seen without Christ

The Old Covenant was written on tablets of stone - The New is written on the heart

The Old had no life and was an inscription - The New is living and a living inscription (Torah)

The person of Christ is this covenant by Christ's own words.

Mr 14:24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Lu 22:20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

1Co 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

The New Covenant Person gives life.

2Co 3:6* who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Old Covenant had no power to do anything

The Living New Covenant Person has the power to do everything

The Old Covenant had a limited purpose for a limited time to a specific people

The Living New Covenant Person has an eternal purpose for all people

The OC gave conditional guarantees of blessing and curse

The Living New Covenant Person is the guarantee of blessing and curse

Under the OC God was known by the written Covenant and the witness of Gods acts.

Under the NC God is known in and through Christ and His life

All of our hope is in Him. We are born again to LIVING HOPE

The OC was a ministry of death by the written code of the letter

The NC person is life and liberty

The New Covenant Person is the things that are spoken of in the Old Covenant and the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Law of the Old Covenant has ended. Its purpose was served even to the point of removing the curse from those who will be saved by dying under the curse of the Law.

With the living hope, life and liberty we have a different way of living.

It is a fact that we are all legalists by nature in some way, because deep down we want to become 'just', we want God to approve us in some way by what we have done by our own efforts.

The 'GOOD NEWS' is that, though we can't do this, Jesus promises to indwell us and fulfill 'his' nature of righteousness within all whom the Father gives him.

It is so hopeful in Matthew 5 that he first says he came to 'fulfill the law' and then describes to us what that fulfillment will look like as we become 'perfect as the father is perfect.'

“It is, in other words, that all the law and all the prophets point to Him and

will be fulfilled in Him down to the smallest detail. Everything that is in the law and the prophets culminates in Christ, and He is the fulfillment of them. It is the most stupendous claim that He ever made.” D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, on Matt. 5:17, 18

Yet, legalist man loves codes and written rules so he can control and/or beat his brothers over the head with them, feel a sense of self-righteousness by following codes, and completely forget the repeated call to love and forgive (even enemies) while missing the joy of rejoicing in how the Spirit changes himself and his brothers/sisters to be look more like the Christ each day.

Some Theonomists, those who believe our country should be ruled by God’s law ie. the Ten Commandments, insist they don't impose biblical codes on society, but that's exactly what they do to the flock of Christ whom they should forgive and be patient with.

They have been nailed to the cross in the Incarnate Torah, Jesus. One set of laws was not exchanged for another. This is error of some New Covenant thinkers. It seems The New Covenant ethic is not a new set of “law” or “commandments. The entire “law” category and idea has been radically changed in the New Covenant.

The commandments have been fulfilled by the Incarnate Torah (John 1) and the letter of the law has been exchanged for the Spirit (2 Cor. 3). In “nailing it” He became it as we know for Jesus said, “this is the New covenant in my blood.” The New Covenant ethic “flows out of” the Incarnate Torah, energized by the Holy Spirit “written on the heart”, indwelling Christ’s people.

The Messiah himself is the righteousness, which the letter law attempted to reveal in shadow. The letter law was not righteous perfection itself. It was only a reflection of He who is righteousness.

That is how the commandments in letters are fulfilled and replaced in incarnate Torah and written on the heart as indwelling Spirit rather than words.

He is the real thing- the realized New Covenant, and it is He who is written fully on hearts in Spirit rather than letter.

It is that the essence of the New Covenant and the 'law of Christ' is not simply a new list of commandments that come solely from the lips/pen of Christ and the Apostles, but foundationally a relational (Jer 31) rather than a legal covenant - "for Christ is our righteousness." And as such, "all scripture" (II Tim 3:16,17) -- in its covenantal context -- can be comprehended in the term 'the law of Christ.' The fundamental difference between the Old and New Covenants is not just a mere change in the list of laws, but in the *nature of the relationship* between the commandments and the covenant member.

We know this. Our objective is to learn of Him, feed on Him and mature in Christ. We learn of Christ from Genesis to the Revelation. Like the Two on the road who Christ opened the Word we are to seek Him in the Law and Prophets and all of His Word. That's what makes a heart warm! If our objective is to simply learn new external laws as a scribe then we have missed the point.

Jason Meyer writes:

“The most time-honored approach concerning the Christian appropriation of the law of Moses is sometimes called the tripartite approach. Christians can divide the law into three aspects: (1) moral, (2) civil, and (3) ceremonial. The moral laws are based on the unchanging character of God and thus are the unchanging expression of His will, but the civil and ceremonial came to an end with the coming of Christ.

One can appreciate the logical strength of this approach. God's character does not change, and therefore God's moral commands do not change if they are based on His character. This approach also enjoys some textual support in that Jesus distinguished between the “weightier” and “lighter” matters within the law (Matt

23:23). These strengths, however, are offset by numerous difficulties. The NT itself does not make these three distinctions, and no one living under the law of Moses seriously thought they could pick which parts were binding and which were optional. God's law comes as a set with no substitutions. Therefore, exegetes should not read the three distinctions into NT texts that speak of the law as a singular entity. Furthermore, one will find it challenging to divide all the laws into three neat, watertight compartments.

Some argue the principle that whatever is not repealed in the NT remains binding for believers. Others argue the opposite, that whatever is not explicitly reaffirmed in the NT is no longer binding for believers. Both approaches are problematic. Must NT authors specifically repeal individual laws? What about times when they draw a principle from the OT without citing the specific commandment? The opposing perspective also presents some perplexing scenarios. No one would want to argue that bestiality is now acceptable simply because no NT text specifically reinstates the ban on bestiality (see Lev 20:16).

Stephen Westerholm has moved the discussion forward by rightly pointing out that Paul can simultaneously affirm that Christians fulfill the law (Rom 8:4; 13:8,10; Gal 5:14) even though they are no longer under the law (Rom 6:14-15; Gal 5:18). Paul declares that believers are not under the law because they have "died" to it (Rom 7:4,6) and been "redeemed" (Gal 4:5) or "set free" (Rom 7:6) from it. Therefore even though those who are under the law are obligated to "do" its commands (Rom 10:5; Gal 3:10; 5:3), Paul does not command believers to "do" the law. In other words Paul does not prescribe Christian behavior with reference to the law; he describes the "fruit" (*karpos*) of their behavior with a retroactive reference to the way that it conforms to the law and thus amounts to its "fulfillment". Ironically and paradoxically, those who live under the law bear fruit resulting in sinful passions, transgression of the law and death, while those who have died to the law bear fruit that amounts to the law's

fulfillment.

This recognition that Christian behavior will "fulfill" the law even though the Christian behavior is not under the law requires a different starting point for the discussion. I propose that one should begin with Christ and not with the individual Mosaic commands. The coming of Christ has caused a paradigm (model, example) shift that calls for recalibrating all former commands in the light of His centrality. This approach recognizes that the law of Moses in its entirety has come to an end in the sense that the believer does not start by asking, "What did the law teach?" The believer begins at the point where his Christian life began: Christ. The believer found new life in Christ and so now comes to Christ to find out how to live out his new life." Meyer, Jason C. The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Publishing Group, 2009. Pages 282-283.

All of our new life comes from and is in the New Covenant, Jesus Christ.

So then as New Covenant people how do we live without looking first to written law codes? How do we interpret the bible that seems to be filled with them? Or let me say it another way. How do we understand the text, the printed page that we hold in our hands in light of who Christ is as the Living, Eternal Word of God?

If we understand that Jesus is the Living Word and that means that He is the

Word incarnate, then we can understand that the first way to understand Scripture is to understand Christ because that is the priority of Scripture from Genesis to The Revelation. If we do this we can say that the text we read was lived by Him. So, what we read about Him all through Scripture as God, as Jesus, and as The Holy Spirit, reveals to us His completeness as a person with all of His attributes and as we understand that and how He has acted before He was incarnate and how He lived as the God-man then we can more easily understand the things He says with His words because His life and His words are indicative of who He is and the imperatives - the commands He gives us - once we are in Him, are rooted or established first in Him and

who He is then in us and who He has made us to be. We have the Living Torah, The Living Word, the Inscription of God.

When we read Romans 12:1,2, for example, this should give us a better understanding of why and how we understand the Word of God.

“1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:1, 2, NAS95.

For us the will of God in essence is growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. Romans 12:1-2 can be seen, as some may say, a way, and others would say the means of doing this.

The Law of Christ is Christ Himself and His law is written on our hearts. That Law is there because by His Spirit, His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ we are internally driven to outwardly show who we are and a means of that is the desire to obey the imperatives-the commands- the written laws that reveal the standard of Christ for His Jesus is causing us to act RIGHTLY'. It's no longer about obedience to codes, but anticipation for being fully ruled. It's about taking our eyes off of what we need to do in sanctification, fixing them instead on what we are/are becoming by his sanctifying work and fixing them on the glory of what is in store for us and longing for Him to speed up the procession being excited to be ruled (driven) entirely by Him in every act and thought.

We are still under a law, but it's a law of a different nature. His nature is Spirit, not code. Codes tell, but Spirit causes. This Spirit who causes us to think and act righteously is not conforming us to the list of imperatives in the NT anymore than to the Decalogue alone or the whole of Law and Prophets This Law of Christ is everlasting in the forward AND backward sense.

He existed from the beginning even while He was only revealed in the shadows of

Law and Prophets. He was always the true substance of Righteousness.

The True Covenant didn't change so much as His substance became fully visible and exposed the shadows to be mere shadows (Col 2 uses the word 'mere'). None-the-less, among the shadows, the faith of Old Covenant believers trusted that He would perfect them by ruling their very thoughts and desires with His own Spirit.

Our hope should not long for how much we'll obey codes.

Our hope should be fixed on the Righteousness He is fulfilling in us...ruling our thoughts and desires to be "perfect as the Father is perfect."

As the living Word is eternal and as His people we are eternal then His words and the result of them will never pass away. New Covenant people are not shaped by the imperatives-the commands of Christ in the written word but by what Christ has made us to be and is causing/making us to be. I am not who I am in Christ because of what I do. I do what I do because of who I am, even though in this life it will be imperfect.

And so we conclude with Isaiah, with a fuller understanding that he could have known, that God gave us a New Covenant and that New Covenant person is the same as the Servant of the Servant Songs, the Suffering Servant, the Servant King, The Ensign and so much more.

(This ends this series. There is much more to understanding Christ as the New Covenant and it can be found on our website, but in the context of what this study has purposed to do it will suffice for now.)