

What Is The Difference Between The Old And The New Covenants?

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Introduction

A study of the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is both vital and edifying. It is vital, for it takes us to the very heart of the Christian religion. The religion of Scripture is a covenant religion. Since the Scriptures expressly speak of the old and the new covenants, we must properly distinguish between them. Even further, we must realize that the old covenant has been done away with and has been superseded by the new. Failure to do this will lead to a number of errors. There are those today who are trying to force people still to observe the principles of the Old Covenant. Others still claim to possess the promises of the Old Covenant. Still others see an evolutionary development of religion, claiming the development of a new religion of love out of an old religion of fear. In order to refute these errors, we must properly distinguish between the old and the new covenants.

A study of the difference between the old and the new covenants is also edifying as well as vital. It is edifying for it takes us on a grand tour of the Scriptures, setting forth for our admiration and praise the marvels of God's grace. A study of God's covenants is a study of His supreme will over against man with the purpose of bringing about a communion between Himself and man. The theme of this paper speaks of special reference to two particular sections of Scripture. Yet, to limit ourselves to these two sections alone is not possible. The entire letter to the Hebrews deals with the topic we are considering. Paul's epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians abound with references to the difference between the old and new covenants.

We have divided this paper into four sections. Since Scripture speaks of five special covenants, we shall first identify those which Scripture expressly calls the "old" and the "new". The second section will deal with the essence and nature of a covenant. In order properly to understand the difference between the old and new covenants, we must also be aware of what a covenant entails. Such a study will naturally lead us to examine the covenant terms of *berith* and *diatheke*. The third section will deal with the essence and nature of the old covenant. The fourth section will deal with the essence and nature of the new covenant. May the holy Spirit guide and enlighten us as we consider the question, "What Is The Difference Between The Old And The New Covenants?"

The identification of the old and the new covenants

There are five covenants which stand out in bold relief in Scripture. They are the Noachitic covenant (Gen. 6:19; 9:9-11); the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:18; 17:2, 4, 7, 9-11, 21); the Sinaitic covenant (Ex. 19:4-3); the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 23:5); and, the new covenant (Jer. 31:31, Heb. 8:8). The covenant of Shechem (Joshua 24:25) was a ratification of the Sinaitic covenant, effected by Joshua before Israel occupied their inheritance. Thus, it does not fall into the same category as the other five.

The Noachitic covenant was a covenant of forbearance. This covenant was made by God after the flood with Noah and all living creatures. When Noah came out of the ark, he offered thank offerings to the Lord. We are told "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done. (Gen. 8:21) As a sign of His covenant, God placed the rainbow in the sky. (Gen. 9:13) It guaranteed "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." (Gen. 9:15) In spite of man's sin, "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22), so that God's salvation in Christ might be carried out. This covenant is pure grace, and guarantees the gracious preservation of this sin-cursed world unto the end of time.

The Abrahamic covenant was also a covenant of grace. In the first place, God had assured Abraham that "all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed... And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth." (Gen. 13:15-16) Although Abraham's faith was great, he still needed assurance. "And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Gen. 15:8) Condescending to his weakness, the Lord gave Abraham the strongest outward guarantee for the fulfillment of His promises which was known to

Abraham, reared as a Chaldean. Visibly God concluded a blood covenant with Abraham in Chaldean fashion, which Meant-unswerving loyalty for both contracting parties. The Lord originated this covenant as a surety of the promises Abraham received and of His eternal friendship. (Gen. 15:9-21)

This covenant was an assurance that God would carry out His plan of redemption. It was around Christ that God's promises to Abraham revolved. From his descendants the Savior would come. Thus, as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham, God gave him the covenant sign of circumcision. (Gen. 17) This was to serve as a constant reminder that from Abraham's descendants the Savior would come.

The Davidic covenant was God's assurance to David that from his line the Savior would come. 'He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever.' (2 Sam. 7:13) Rather than David building a house of wood and stone for the Lord, the Lord would instead build him a house of flesh and blood from which the Savior would come. From his line David's Son yet David's Lord would be born. Christ would fulfill all the arrangements of the old covenant, including the old tabernacle and the later temple. John tells us of the great fulfillment of this promise: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt (literally: tabernacled) among us. (John 1:14a)

The old covenant is the Sinaitic cove Jeremiah refers to the covenant which God made with their fathers when He 'took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.' (Jer. 31:32) As we study the old or Sinaitic covenant, we must remember that its great antecedent was the Abrahamitic covenant. Without the Abrahamitic covenant the religion of the Old Testament would be an essentially different religion from that of the New Testament. We can only properly understand the Sinaitic covenant in the light of the Abrahamitic covenant. The day on which Israel left Egypt was the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:8). When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, He revealed Himself to Moses as the Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, had to be reminded of the Abrahamitic covenant in a forceful way. As Moses journeyed to Egypt from Midian, we read: "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." (Ex. 4:24) Only after Zipporah had circumcised Gershom, her son, did the Lord let Moses go. Moses was reminded that the mediator of the old covenant as well as his son had to be circumcised and could not be without the "seal of the righteousness of the faith" (Rom. 4:11).

The new covenant, mentioned by Jeremiah (31:31), was inaugurated, established, and brought to fruition by our Savior, Jesus Christ. All of God's covenants found their fulfillment in the Son of God who became the Son of Man. His vicarious atonement secured and won for us the blessings of salvation. The glorious essence and nature of this new covenant we shall study in detail later in this essay.

All of God's covenants have been made for the purpose of a blessed communion with His people by means of His gracious will. They clearly demonstrate what Paul wrote in Ephesians, "And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-to bring all things under heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Eph. 1:9-10 NIV) Dr. Paul Peters beautifully summed up the relationship of God's covenant: in this statement: "All covenants of the Bible can be compared with so many circles, all representing one phase of God's revelation, with Christ as the central point and all parts of these circles focusing on this one point. The Noachitic covenant represents the largest circle...God through His *anoché*, His forbearance, passing over the sinful acts of the world to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins. The Abrahamitic covenant is the circle within this circle being all promise and nothing but promise, while the third circle, the Sinaitic covenant, is characterized by the law, although it has Christ as its center. Into this circle of the Sinaitic covenant we can place the covenant with David until we finally reach the fullness of time with its New Covenant. All of these covenants have certain characteristics, whereby they are to be differentiated from one another, but in God's whole plan of salvation they cannot simply be torn apart.ⁱ

Having an overview of God's covenants, keeping in mind which is the old and which is the new covenant, let us now proceed to examine the essence and nature of a covenant.

The essence and nature of a covenant

In order to understand the essence and nature of a covenant, we must of necessity study the terms *berith* and *diatheke* as they are used in the Scriptures. As we shall see, the concept delineated by these two terms retain some essentials taken over from secular usage. We do, however, note a very special meaning as we study their usage in Scripture. In the final analysis, it is their usage in Scripture that determines the unique concept set forth by these two terms.

According to the Old Testament term *berith*, a covenant is that which binds together two or more parties. Although the exact etymology of the term is a subject of debate, the root meaning seems to be “to bind.” In Ezek. 20:37, the prophet speaks of Israel as brought into the bond of the covenant.” (Ezek. 20:37) Those covenants between individuals and tribes mentioned in the Old Testament had the purpose of bringing about a close union or alliance between the parties. Those sharing in the covenant were called *baale berith*, which the KJV translates as “confederate” in Gen. 14:13.

The relationship between two human parties in a covenant was a legal one. The purpose of the covenant was to bring about the closest of relationships between the two parties. Abraham and Abimelech made such a covenant. (Gen. 21:27) Asa of Judah and Benhadad of Syria made such a league (*berith* cf. 1 Kings 15:19). Yet, these agreements contained not only legal but also religious elements. Three important religious elements of a covenant were the oath, the sacrifice, and the sacrificial meal. Thus, a covenant between human parties is also called a *berith Jehovah* (1 Sam. 20:8). Both parties called upon Jehovah to judge between them.

When Jacob and Laban contracted a covenant, a record of the transaction was erected in a heap of stones. Thus, Laban gave it the Aramaic name *Jegarsahadutha* and Jacob gave it the Hebrew name “*Galeed*”, both meaning “heap of witness” Jacob also called it “*Mizpah*”. (i.e. Watch station). On both sides appeal was made to the God of Abraham. Both sides took an oath. Jacob then offered a sacrifice and invited his brethren to a meal. These brethren included the relatives of Laban, for the point of the covenant was to establish all in the same relationship as though they were blood relatives. The sacrificial meal thereby signified that the parties were commensals partaking as brethren.

Thus, a covenant was both a legal and a sacred agreement. Dr. Peters summed it up this way:

The Semite never separated his religion from his everyday life nor he affairs of his everyday life from his religion. Still less was this the case in regard to the Israelites, who worshipped Jehovah, the God of Revelation. And their having been brought into a covenant-relation with Jehovah signified that their whole life on every side was bound up in a close communion with their God.ⁱⁱ

In Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, the following observation is made: “The question arises, however, whether terms like secular and religious really represent the distinction as conceived by the OT authors. For this terminology does not sufficiently bring out the fact that even the so-called secular covenant is usually surrounded by sacral assurances in the form of oaths or sacrifices, so that it can no longer be called secular. Conversely, the religious covenant is not constructed in a specifically religious way but according to the juridical pattern of legal agreements.”ⁱⁱⁱ

What usually produced the human covenant was the need to secure yourself against someone who threatened your security or to grant security to someone else. There was an unequal distribution of advantage and disadvantage, of voluntariness and compulsion, in relation to the participants. Those who stood as equals hardly needed to enter into a covenant. In the legal institution of the covenant the parity of those concerned was neither an essential prerequisite nor a consequence of the transaction. Thus, no firmer guarantee of legal security, peace, or loyalty could be found than the covenant. The oath taken at the establishment of the covenant indicated that God Himself kept strict watch over the sworn fellowship. To violate a covenant meant to disregard the will of God. The covenant implied the unconditional validity of law surrounded by sacral assurances. It meant order as opposed to caprice, uncertainty, and animosity. For example, the covenant entered into by Jacob and Laban was consummated because of a feeling of insecurity on both sides. It thus assured security for each of them. We can easily see, therefore, how God’s covenants served to give His people the

greatest assurance possible of His good will, to bring men into communion with Him.

The word that was used by the LXX to translate the term *berith* was *diatheke*. As we study the usage of *diatheke*, it becomes evident that it has a different background than does *berith*. The primary meaning of *diatheke* is that of a “*dispositio*”, an “arrangement made by one party with plenary power which the other party may accept or reject, but cannot alter. Since the will was the most conspicuous example of such an instrument, it ultimately monopolized the word in secular usage. Thus *diatheke* stood for the will of a man at his death, particularly regarding his property. *Berith* expressed the will that should go into effect in regard to an agreement between two living persons. Why, then, did the LXX use *diatheke* to translate *berith*? The answer is that their meaning as religious concepts cannot be derived exclusively from etymology or secular usage. Rather, *berith* and *diatheke* gain their ultimate meaning through the relationship into which God entered with men. It is interesting to note that there was not an evolutionary development of the old to the new. Rather, the new reached back to the old for its meaning.

First of all, God is always the originator of the covenant between Himself and man. Man does not propose the covenant, but God takes the initiative. God alone makes and ratifies His covenant with His people. Jesus said to His disciples: “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” (John 15:16) Jehovah was not one of many Semitic tribal gods whom Israel selected as her own. On the contrary, the covenant demonstrates that Israel was God’s elect. As Quell observes, “God is the electing God of the elect.”^{iv} God had selected Israel among the nations. Israel owed her election not to any virtue in her, but solely to God’s *ahabah*, His unconditional election love. God’s *ahabah* for Israel was the very basis for and the only cause of the existence of the covenant between himself and Israel. Amos wrote: Of all the people on earth I have chosen only you. (Amos 3:2AT) Moses also emphasized God’s free and unfettered will in selecting Israel when he said, “Of all the people on earth the Lord your God chose you to be His own people. The Lord set His heart on you and chose you not because you were the greatest of all the nations—you were the smallest of all the nations—but because the Lord loved you and wanted to keep the oath He made with your fathers, the Lord took you out with a mighty hand and rescued you from the place where you were slaves, from Pharaoh, king of Egypt.— (Deut. 7:6-8AT) This is certainly one reason why the LXX did not translate *berith* with *syntheke* (treaty) but with *diatheke*. They wanted to emphasize the one sided nature of God’s covenants—from God to Israel or Abraham.

Secondly, God’s covenants are always an expression of His sovereign will. To Israel the Lord said; “I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God.” (Ex. 6:7) God’s covenants were the revelation of His will to bring about a communion between Himself and man. Since *diatheke* pointed to the supreme will of the testator, and since the covenant between God and men points to the supreme will of God toward men, we can understand why the LXX used *diatheke* for *berith*. Both terms encompass the supreme will of God, and this forms the nucleus of the *sensus litteralis* of the covenant concept. God’s covenant revealed that He was willing to set His covenant partner in a *shalom* status. To translate either *berith* or *diatheke* as agreement is not proper. “Agreement” reminds us of a mutual contract, whereas *berith* or *diatheke* used in connection with God’s grace have the meaning of a unilateral enactment.

In the New Testament we find *diatheke* used in both the sense of the will of an individual and of a covenant. The context must decide the use. In Gal. 3:15 Paul speaks of “a human covenant that has been duly established. Here he obviously is using *diatheke* in the sense of a man’s will. In Hebrews 9:17-18, the writer uses *diatheke* in both ways. In verse 17 he speaks of a will being in force “only when someone has died”. Obviously, he is referring to a testamentary disposition. In the very next verse, however, he switches back to the Old Testament use of the word. In general, we would say that in the New Testament the preponderance of times the word stands for the covenant relationship. *Diatheke* is used 33 times in the New Testament, seven times in Old Testament citation. It occurs nine times in the Pauline epistles, seventeen times in the letter to the Hebrews, four times in the synoptic Gospels, twice in Acts, and once in Revelation. Only in Gal. 3:15 and in Heb. 9:17 does it stand solely for the testamentary disposition. In all other cases it has the primary reference to the covenant concept of *berith*. Even in the Sacrament of Communion the concept of *berith* comes to the foreground, and the last will and testament concept is pushed into the background as we shall see later.

That the covenant concept of *berith* had a strong influence on the use of Greek words in the New Testament scriptures also is evident in other areas. ‘Then considering the words *kleronomos* (heir) and *kleronomia* (inheritance), one cannot forge the covenant concept. The idea of inheritance is not only found where Scripture speaks of the will of a testator. Originally, the right of inheritance lay with those who had been brought into the bond of the covenant. The writer to the Hebrews calls Abraham and his sons the “heirs of promise”. (Heb. 6:17) This and other examples (cf. He 11:7, 9; Gal.4) demonstrate that the Apostles never disconnect the idea of our inheritance from the covenant idea. We have become heirs and sons of God through the covenant of promise. The *kleronomos* is the destined recipient of the promised possession more than one who inherits under the last will of a testator. The idea of inheritance in the Bible is that of possession with certainty and anticipation. The idea of possession has its origin in the covenant. Those who share in the covenant possess the covenant gifts. With this background in mind, let us proceed to examine the essence and the nature of the Old Covenant.

The essence and the nature of the Old Covenant

The difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is not that of law and gospel. Both law and gospel are contained in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Even the word torah, having a narrow meaning of law, in its broader usage in Scripture stands for the whole revelation of God in the Pentateuch, including both law and gospel. Yet, when we come to the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, we find the difference to be just that of law and gospel.

Essentially, the Old Covenant was a law covenant. Even though it was full of promises and patterns of a better covenant, yet these promises were conditional, and these patterns were encased in legal regulations. The Old Covenant was a covenant of the law (*Gesetzesbund*). The Old Covenant, as Paul tells us, was a ministry of “death”, and “condemnation”. (2 Cor. 3:7,9) The very preparations God commanded Israel to make for hearing the terms of His covenant indicated this was a law covenant. The Lord said to Moses: “Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death.” (Ex. 19:10-12) God made it clear that he was holy and therefore separate from Israel.

The manner in which the covenant was given indicated the same thing. The day dawned with a thick cloud settling on Sinai. Thunder and lightning of extraordinary proportions crackled through the atmosphere. The shrill blast of the trumpet pierced the air. Then the glory of the Lord (*kh’bod Jehovah*) settled on Sinai. 111 of Sinai smoked like a smelting furnace, for the Lord descended on it in fire. As the *kh’bod Jehovah* settled on Sinai, the accompanying signs of horror became stronger. The entire mountain shook as though it would fall apart. It appeared as if heaven and earth would be fused together and turn to chaos. The sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, instilling fear into the hearts of the people. Thus God impressed upon Israel the gulf that existed between a holy God and sinful people.

The covenant God made with Israel at Sinai consisted of the Decalog, the ceremonial law, and the political law. The ceremonial law as a holiness code indicated that God lived in the midst of Israel with His glory. The political law indicated that the Israelites were brethren as sharers in one covenant. A sin committed by one was a sin committed by all and was a transgression of God’s covenant. Joshua reminded Israel of this with regard to Achan’s sin. (Joshua 7:15; 22:20) The Decalog impressed upon Israel that Jehovah was their God and Israel His people. As such they should do God’s will. Thus God established Himself in Israel as their King ruling over a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Both the ceremonial and the political law were founded on the moral law (*das Grundstatut*). They flowed from it. The whole set of laws is designated as a covenant. In addition, the Decalog which was given on the two tables of stone is specifically called the “tables of the covenant.” Moses said, And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.” (Dt. 4:13; cf. also Dt. 9:9) It is important to note that the Decalog is not only part of but also

the foundation of the Covenant of Sinai. In addition, the wording of the Decalog as given to Israel through Moses contained certain provisions that were distinctly intended for Israel (i.e., third and fourth commandments). This is important to remember when we discuss the temporary nature of the old Covenant and its abrogation. In summary, then we can observe that the words law and covenant became synonymous, and the book of the law and the book of the covenant are one. (II Kings 22:8 ff.; 23:2, 21). Paul speaks of this very thing when he in Gal. 4 equates the law under which the Galatians wished to place themselves with the Sinaitic covenant.

As to the nature of the Old Covenant, a number of points need to be stated. First of all, the mediator of the Old Covenant was Moses. It was Moses God designated to lead Israel out of Egypt. Through Moses God gave Israel direction as they headed toward Sinai. There God was to make His covenant with Israel. It was through Moses that God gave His preparatory instructions to Israel. Then Israel could not bear to hear the voice of God, they sent Moses up the mountain to talk with God. In turn, Moses relayed to Israel the terms of God's covenant. John wrote: "The law was given through Moses." (John 1:17) Paul stated: "The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator." (Gal. 3:19) As a mediator, Moses was faithful to God, cherishing only His interests. Yet, Moses remained only a faithful servant within the household of faith. He was not the fulfillment of God's promises, and could only serve as a witness to the promises of the future redemption of God's people. The covenant of which he was the mediator was inferior to the covenant to come. As a mediator, he was inferior to Christ, the Mediator of the New covenant. (cf. Heb. 3:1-6)

Let us now turn to the recipients of the Old Covenant—the nation of Israel. The Lord chose Israel as His people. This privilege was not merited, but rather flowed from God's unmerited love. As we consider the election of Israel we must always keep in mind that this was part of God's grand design to "bruise" the head of Satan. The "Seed" of the woman was to come from the "seed" of Abraham. From among the Semitic peoples God chose Abraham to be the father of the race that was to serve as the cradle for the savior. As Paul stated: From them is traced the human ancestry of Christ. (Rom. 9:5) Not all the children of Abraham were included. When Abraham exclaimed: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. 17:18), he recognized that God had passed by Ishmael and had chosen the child Sarah was to have.

The premise of Abraham's mission for his servant to obtain a wife for Isaac from among his relatives in Mesopotamia was God's oath and promise, "Unto thy seed shall I give this land." (Gen. 21:7) Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. He sent the child of Hagar and the children of Keturah away, giving them only gifts. (Gen. 25:5-6) When Rebekah conceived, God passed over the elder (Esau) and chose the younger (Jacob). From Jacob came the 12 sons who were to father the 12 tribes of Israel. As time went on, God narrowed His promise down to the tribe of Judah. From this "lion's whelp" (Gen. 49:8) would come "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David". (Rev. 5:5)

When heathen Canaanite immorality threatened to swamp the patriarchal family, God led Jacob and his descendants into the land of Egypt. There, in the land of Goshen, God brought forth descendants for Abraham "as the sand which is upon the sea shore." (Gen. 23:17) "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." (Ex. 1:7) Then, as God had told Abraham, his descendants were subjected to slavery in Egypt. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again," God had said. (Gen. 15:16) He kept His promise. He called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, in accord with His covenant promise to Abraham. He broke the back of Egypt with 10 terrible plagues. Through Moses He led His people out of Egypt. Moses carefully observed, "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." (Ex. 13:41) All of this was in accord with God's covenant with Abraham.

The Lord then led Israel to Sinai, where He established His covenant with Abraham's descendants. God introduced His covenant with Israel in this way: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you. on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Ex. 19:4) Israel had experienced God's steadfast love and redemption. Thus, God called upon Israel to respond to His love. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' (Ex. 19:5-6) Then God made this

covenant with Israel, He did not abandon all the other people on earth. This covenant did not mean that the other people on earth would no longer belong to God. He said, All the earth is mine. Israel was not chosen to lord it over all the nations. Rather, she was chosen to serve them. “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Just as a priest was ordained to bring sacrifices and prayers for the people, so Israel was set apart by God to worship Him and be the cradle for the Savior, Who would spread salvation to all nations. In steadfast love and faithfulness God kept this covenant in effect until “when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law.” (Gal. 4:4-5a)

As we consider God’s covenant with Israel at Sinai, and remember God’s covenant with Abraham, we must always keep in mind that the Sinaitic covenant was a law covenant. The Abrahamic covenant was a Gospel covenant of promise. The Sinaitic covenant was conditional. The Abrahamic covenant was unconditional. As Paul brings out in Romans and Galatians, there is a difference between the physical Israel and the spiritual Israel. (Romans 9, Gal. 4) The physical Israel corresponds to the Sinaitic covenant; the spiritual Israel to the Abrahamic covenant of promise.

This leads us to our next point: the Sinaitic covenant was a conditional covenant. There were strings attached to it. God said: “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me. (Ex. 19:5) The Sinaitic covenant was not an unconditional covenant like the Noachitic. There God promised that no matter what men did He would not again send a universal flood. Israel was to become God’s special people, however, on the basis of a conditional law covenant. This covenant was initiated by God, but was a bilateral engagement involving reciprocal obligations between God and his people. Israel was not just to receive blessings, but also had real functions to perform. God wooed Israel to become His bride. He showered His love on Israel and thus wanted Israel to respond to His love. Israel was to fear and love God so that in all situations in life, moral, political, and ceremonial, she would do His will.

Thus God came to Israel at Sinai and made His covenant with them. Having stated preparatory terms for the establishment of His covenant, God sent Moses to Israel with the direction: “These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Ex. 19:6) Israel responded: “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” (Ex. 19:8) the Lord then directed Israel to prepare for the giving of the covenant. The glory of the Lord settled on Sinai, and Israel came out of the camp to hear the terms of God’s covenant. The Lord then gave the foundation of his covenant—the Ten Commandments. These words were spoken by God to all of Israel. (Ex. 20) After the Lord had spoken the Decalog, Israel was terrified. In fear they begged Moses: -Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” (Ex. 20:19) Moses then drew near to the Lord, and He continued to give Moses the *mishpatim* (judgments), the basic laws or constitution for Israel’s national organization. The *mishpatim* were the basic law of the *Debarim* (the Decalog and its two tables) as applied to the specific problems and conditions of Israel. They dealt with the way God wished to be worshipped by Israel; the conduct of the covenant people towards each other; and the basic religious regulations including the three great festivals. They concluded with warnings against disobedience and promises of blessings for obedience. Note that the Sabbath provisions were part of the Sinaitic covenant. As such they were intended for Israel and had a typical function of which we shall speak later. When the Seventh Day Adventists try to bind men to the Sabbath today, they ignore both “the context of the book of Exodus and the fact that the Sinaitic covenant was abrogated. As Kretzmann points out: “All those that urge the trooping of the Sabbath according to the Jewish pattern with the argument that this day and this form were included in the will of God as written into the hearts of men at the beginning, overlook or ignore the facts of history as found in the book of Exodus. The deliberate setting aside of this special day of the week and the form of observance of this day as outlined to the Jews was intended for them only.”

After the Lord had finished giving Moses more provisions for moral, civic, and ceremonial duties, He sent him to Israel to relate the terms and to ratify the covenant. The Lord had said to Israel: ‘I am the Lord thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me.’ (Ex. 20:2, 3) He then in essence asked Israel: ‘Will you be Mine?’- Israel answered: “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” (Ex. 24:3) Thus, they accepted the terms of the covenant. Then, it was officially signed and sealed. Moses wrote down the words God gave him. The next morning he erected an altar and 12 pillars according to the 12 tribes of Israel. Moses, acting as

mediator, sprinkled half the blood of the sacrificial oxen on the altar. He read the book of the covenant to Israel, and they again responded with promises of obedience. After this Moses took the other half of the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying: "Behold the blood of the covenant." The sprinkling of the blood, like the passing between the bloody halves of the sacrificial animals in Gen. 15, was a sign for the binding together of the two partners into one inseparable communion with each other.

When the earthly ratification of the covenant had taken place at the foot of Sinai, the heavenly part was then undertaken. Moses, together with Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders of Israel, ascended Sinai. There 'they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.' (Ex. 24:10-11) God took them up as His commensals, and thus the Sinaitic Covenant was "signed and sealed." As Pieper observed: "Through the solemn ratification of a covenant He nominated to place Israel into His strong and gracious arm as a precious set *segullah*, treasure to be guarded with anxious care, that He might fulfill all the Abrahamic promises upon this people and execute His plan of salvation for all nations as comprehended in Christ, the seed of Abraham *katexochen*."^{vi}

The Sinaitic covenant was a conditional law covenant. Yet, it also was full of types and pictures of a better covenant to come. Thus, we need to note that the Old covenant was but a shadow or picture of things to come. Prominent among the shadows to be displaced by the "body of Christ" (Col. 2:17) were the Sabbath, the sign of the Sinaitic covenant; the tabernacle; the sacrifices with the shedding of blood; and, the priesthood. Concerning all these things we must remember what the writer to the Hebrews says: "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-not the realities themselves." (Heb. 10:1)

At the conclusion of the covenant rite on Sinai God Himself documented the covenant on two tables of stone. He called Moses to come up the mount to Him. The glory of the Lord (*k'vod Jehovah*) settled on Sinai and hung there on a mantle of clouds. Significantly Moses had to wait six days before God summoned him into the cloud. On the seventh day Moses entered into the presence of God. There he remained 40 days and 40 nights. The Lord then gave Moses the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle. The tabernacle in the middle of Israel's camp showed that God wanted to dwell in the midst of His people. It also showed that the whole world was the dwelling place of his glory. This great truth had been lost to men who envisioned themselves enthroned as divine in God's universe. In the tabernacle God clearly revealed that He wanted to bind Himself to His own on His own earth. God's perfect communion with men, enjoyed in Paradise, lost by sin, pictured by the sacrificial meal on Sinai, prefigured in the tabernacle, regained by Christ, would ultimately be consummated as St. John declares: "Now the dwelling of God is with men." (Rev. 21:3)

The most important part of the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies with the ark of the covenant and its mercy seat between the golden cherubim. There God came to meet His people. There the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the great day of Atonement signifying that Christ would enter the "Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood" to obtain eternal redemption. (Heb. 9:12) By the tabernacle, then, God communicated to His people His desire to dwell with them in close communion. "There will I meet with the children of Israel. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God." (Ex. 29:43-45)

At the conclusion of the tabernacle instructions, God gave Moses the sign of the covenant the celebration of the Sabbath. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath ...for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever."^{vii} Why is the Sabbath a sign? At the end of creation, on the Great Sabbath, all of God's creation was "very good." (Gen. 1:31) Creation was ready to serve God in holiness and righteousness. But man spoiled God's wondrous creation by becoming a rebel. The peace and perfection of God's paradise and original Sabbath were destroyed. Man chose slavery to Satan instead of the freedom of God's children. But God in love desired to bring man back to Himself. Thus God separated Israel at Sinai for a priestly duty. Israel was chosen so that God through her could regain and restore Paradise for all the nations. In Israel God made a beginning of reclaiming His ruined creation. As a sign of this important origin and goal of all creation God commanded Israel to set apart the seventh day as a sabbath. The Sabbath days and years all pointed through to the eternal Sabbath to come-Paradise regained. This outward sign of the covenant at Sinai also indicated that its goal was a regaining of the ruined Sabbath. This goal would find its

fulfillment in Jesus Christ-the “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:8) who said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)

The Aaronic priesthood with its intercessory nature and pictorial functions served as a reminder of the great high priest to come, Jesus Christ, who “is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them.” (Heb. 7:25) In the New Testament the office of high priest would not be abolished but find its fulfillment in Christ. The bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament also had their significance of the “realities” to come. The burnt offering (*olah*) and the peace offering (*zebach shelamim*) expressed the covenant relationship with God. The sin offering (*chattath*) and the trespass offering (*asham*) expressed the restoring of the covenant relationship when, broken by sin. All of them pointed to Jesus whom God presented as “a sacrifice of atonement.” (Rom. 3:25)^{viii}

Even though the Old Covenant was a conditional law covenant, it was one whereby God still wanted to bring His people into close communion with Himself. Jeremiah relates that God “was a husband unto them. (Jer. 31:32)^{ix} As a loving husband cares for his wife, so the Lord cared for Israel, showering His tender mercies on her giving her the advantages. Paul describes in Romans: “The covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.” (Rom. 9:4) In considering the Sinaitic covenant we must be careful not to conclude that the only way of salvation open to the Jews under the Old Covenant was the perfect keeping of the law. In both the Old and New Testaments God’s economy of salvation remains the same - preach law and Gospel. Salvation came alone through Christ, the focal point of all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. When the Old Covenant was transgressed, Israel was directed back to the promises given to Abraham. Moses himself directed the people back to the Abrahamic Covenant and ahead to the fulfillment of its promises in Christ (Deut. 18:15). Even though he was the mediator of the Old Covenant, he still never ceased to speak of the Abrahamic covenant. He and the other true believers never ceased to yearn for the end of the Old Covenant and for the coming of the new. When Joshua urged Moses to forbid Adad and Medad, two of the 70 elders appointed to help Moses, to prophesy, Moses replied: “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets. (Num. 11:29)

Thus, the Sinaitic Covenant gave Israel a chance to respond to the fatherly love of God. As Pieper states, “The Sinaitic legislation even as all later legislation does not have the import that through obedience to it Israel should first be justified before God, pardoned, and received into his sonship, but rather that as people who were already justified, pardoned, and received into His sonship through the Abrahamic covenant of grace they were now also to walk thankfully and faithfully in the gracious ways of their gracious God. The Law from Sinai had exactly that import which the Formula of Concord calls the third use of the Law - the *tertius usus legis*.”^x It also had the use of a curb and mirror, as we shall see. Then speaking of the uses of the Law, we must also remember what Pieper points out: “Often we speak of different uses of the Law, it is not as though they lay inherent in the nature of the Law, but rather in the different or similar nature of the people whom the Law, which in itself always remains the same, faces.”^{xi}

While the Sinaitic covenant afforded the pious Israelite an opportunity for thankful service to God, it also was, on the other hand, a dreadful burden for his old Adam. We can too readily forget what a yoke of bondage the Sinaitic Covenant was for Israel. Paul speaks of the Sinaitic Covenant in this way: “Ye were held prisoner by the law.” (Gal. 3:23) “enslaved by the basic principles of the world.” (Gal 4:3) He says of the Old Covenant, “one covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves.” Peter called the Sinaitic Covenant “a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear.” (Acts 15:10) The Sinaitic Covenant struck fear into the hearts of Israel. As Moses stated, “God is come to prove you, that his fear may be before your faces.” (Ex. 20:20) Augustine stated that the difference between the Old and the New Covenants could best be expressed as *timor* (fear) versus *amor* (love).^{xii} Our Lutheran forefathers said: “God intended that the believers of the Old Covenant should fear in a far greater degree than the believers in the New Testament. This fear was intensified among them often to the point of deepest horror That not all joyousness of faith was taken away from them is certain; the wonderful promises, which made them happy and alleviated the yoke of the law, were still promised to them.”^{xiii}

It is also clear that the Sinaitic Covenant was a temporary covenant, put into effect by God to serve until the time when Christ came. The very fact that this covenant was full of shadows and types of things to come indicated its temporary nature. Jeremiah expressly stated that a New Covenant would supercede the old. (Jer. 31:31) Paul and the author of Hebrews relate that the Old Covenant was to disappear when the reality – Christ – came.^{xiv} As Ralph Gehrke stated, “The Old Testament with its laws was only a sort of scaffolding encasing the Seed of Abraham until the fullness of time, when it would be torn down, and the Promised Seed would stand forth in His glory.”^{xv}

The Sinaitic Covenant never replaced or annulled the Abrahamic. Paul wrote, “The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.” (Gal. 3:17) The purpose of the Old Covenant was this: “It was added because of transgressions until the Seed, to whom the promise referred had come.” (Gal. 3:19) Paul summed up his case this way: “Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” (Gal. 3:23-25)

Checking the Greek text, we see the old Covenant had the function of a *paidagogos eis Christon*, a slave guardian until Christ came. Some trace *paidagogos* back to the *omen* (nursing father - cf. Num. 11:12) of the Old Testament. The idea is similar - one who is both pedagogue and guardian. The *paidagogos* - literally, boy's leader - watched and corrected the deportment of the boy and also guarded and protected him from hurtful associations.. How this applied to Israel John Brown aptly described: “The apostle is speaking of the design of the law in reference to the Jewish church or people as a body, and their situation under it, They were kept as under the care of a sentinel, they were shut up in a fortress, or confined within certain limits. They were kept from mingling with the rest of mankind, preserved a distinct people; and to gain this object, were subjected to many peculiar usages. The law was “the middle wall of partition” which kept them distinct from the other nations of the world. The making one city the seat of religion, the laws with regard to food and ceremonial pollution, the institutions directly opposed to the prevailing customs of the surrounding nations, all these formed a more powerful barrier to commixture with the surrounding nations than any physical separation of mountains, or seas, or distance could have done...Their state was necessary, and it was happy when compared with that of the heathen nations; but still it was a state of restriction and confinement, and in this point of view not desirable. This state, however, was never intended to be permanent. It was intended to serve a purpose, and when that purpose was served, it was intended to terminate.”^{xvi}

The temporary nature of the Old Covenant was also indicated by the action of Moses after the first breach of the covenant - the Golden Calf incident. God repeated His covenant for Moses and directed him to write “upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.” (Ex. 34:28) when Moses came down from Sinai with the two tables of the covenant, his face reflected the glory of the Lord. The fact that Moses put a veil over his face was not merely a concession to the fears of Israel. Paul tells us that this was done to prevent Israel from seeing the fading nature of the Sinaitic covenant. He wrote: “We are not like Moses, who veiled his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.” (2 Cor. 3:13) For Israel to see the fading nature of the Sinaitic Covenant would have detracted from its usefulness in the pedagogy of God. Because of her persistent violations Israel would bring upon herself all the penalties provided in the covenant. Eventually it had to be superseded by a new ministration of the Spirit. Israel was a rebellious people, and she needed the discipline of the Old Covenant to keep her in check until God's promise of the Savior could be fulfilled. Thus, the Sinaitic Covenant was to serve as a hedge or curb for Israel.

It was a hedge God knew Israel well needed, and thus for Israel to see the transitory nature of the covenant would not have been good. God Himself had said of Israel, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff necked people.” (Ex. 32:9) This was a characteristic national trait of Israel throughout the entire Old Testament, and it continued on into the New, as Stephen observed (Acts 7:51) and Paul experienced (Acts 17:5). Israel's waywardness as a nation demonstrated itself at the outset in Egypt and on to Sinai. It continued thereafter. Thus, God dealt with them as immature children, minors. Even though they were heirs of God's covenant with Abraham, they still were “enslaved by the basic principles of the world” (cf. Gal. 4:1-3) until

Christ came. For this reason also God more quickly, frequently, and severely intervened with external punishment and chastisement when Israel's rebellion threatened to jeopardize His plans. In addition, the discipline of Sinai also served as a mirror. It made the people realize their sinfulness and the futility of their own endeavors. When they learned to despair of their own righteousness, the Law served to make them realize the need and attractiveness of the Abrahamic covenant of pure grace.

To sum up the temporary nature of the Old Covenant, we quote the words of Dr. Peters: "This old covenant was not an everlasting and not an unconditional covenant. Not an eternal covenant, for it was only to last until to 'the time of the reformation' (Heb. 9:10), i.e., until the time of the *diorthosis*, the right order, the new order of the new covenant, the time when faith was come. As such its laws applied only to this one people, to Israel. This even pertains to the Ten Commandments as a code of laws, a *corpus* being the source and fountainhead of all the other Jewish laws."^{xvii}

Concerning the abrogation of the Mosaic Code, a few comments are in order. In a supplemental sheet handed out to the Middler Isagogics class, Prof. Carl Lawrenz makes these four points: 1.) The Mosaic Code was given to one people and was intended to be temporal until the Seed should come. This code is abrogated. Acts 15:5, 10; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:16-17; Gal. 5:2; Luther, St. Louis XX, 146 ff. 2.) The Law as the immutable will of God is the law which God in the very act of creation inscribed into the hearts of all men. This Will of God has been partially obliterated in the human heart as a consequence of sin. It, however, has again been revealed in the Scriptures. This immutable will of God is not abrogated. 3.) The wording of the immutable will of God as formulated through Moses is abrogated. 4.) The wording as found in the New Testament is binding. The New Testament, however, does not give us a new code.^{xviii}

Franz Pieper makes a similar point: "Holy Scripture also determines exactly which laws applied only temporarily and locally, for instance, only to the Jews under the covenant of the Law, and are therefore not the divine norm for all men of all times. A great and harmful confusion of the consciences of men is, even to our day, caused by generalizing temporary and local laws. With reference, for instance, to the commandment given Ex. 31:14-15: 'Ye shall keep the Sabbath... everyone that defileth it shall surely be put to death', and Lev. 19:26: 'Ye shall not eat anything with the blood, and Leviticus 11 and Deut. 14 (the catalog of clean and unclean beasts), the New Testament distinctly says: 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days' (Col. 2:16). We get this result; only that is divine Law for all men which is taught in Holy Writ as binding on all. Not even the Ten Commandments in the form in which they were given to the Jews (Ex. 20) are binding on all men, but only the Ten Commandments as set down in the New Testament, as we have them, e.g., in Luther's Catechism.^{xix} Thus Luther, for instance, in both Small and Large Catechisms, states the Third Commandment this way: "*Du sollst den Feiertag heiligen.*" (Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day.)

Another facet of the Old Covenant rvas that it could be and constantly was broken. When God was communicating to Moses on Sinai His desire to dwell in the midst of His people, at the foot of Sinai Israel was already breaking the covenant by worshipping the golden calf. When Moses descended from Sinai, he saw the lewd dancing of the people and heard their idolatrous songs. To signify God's covenant had been broken, Moses hurled the two stone tablets of the Law to the ground. God in answer to the intercession of noses latched up the covenant again. This covenant, then, was one constantly transgressed by Israel and perpetually restored by God.

The history of Israel was a record of Cod's faithfulness over against Israel's unfaithfulness. This faithful love of God which kept the covenant in force was reflected in the old Testament by the Hebrew word *chesed*. *Chesed* was a term that was used exclusively of God's covenant faithfulness with Israel. Throughout the entire Old Testament it was confined to the historical Israel. *Chesed* was never used in the Old Testament in reference to the heathen.. It was a covenant term and applied only to God's people. As such, it was different than the word *chen*, which referred to the unmerited love of God (grace). This word (*chen*) the LXX regularly translated with *charis*.

In his dissertation on *chesed*, Norman Snaith entitles it "The covenant-love of God."^{xx} *Chesed* was not a general feeling or attitude like mercy or kindness, but rather was fidelity to the requirements of a particular

personal relationship, a loyal devotion which went beyond legal obligation and could be depended on to the utmost. Smith comments: “We do not desire by any means to deny the meanings ‘loving kindness, mercy’ which *chesed* often has. On the contrary our aim is to insist that these renderings are often far too weak to convey the strength, the firmness, and the persistence on God’s sure love.”^{xxi} In general, we could say that *chesed* was God’s determined faithfulness to His covenant.^{xxii}

In keeping with the reciprocal nature of the Old Covenant, God expected the recipients of His *chesed* (the *chasidim*) to be *chasid* (loyal) and return *chesed* to Him. But this Israel failed to do. Thus God commanded Isaiah to cry: all flesh is grass, and all the goodness (*chesed*) thereof is as the flower of the field.^{xxiii} (Is. 40:6) All of Israel’s *chesed* was as perishable as the wild flowers. God’s *chesed*, however, was truly steadfast. Isaiah declared: “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed but my kindness (*chesed*) shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant (*berith*) of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” (Is. 54:10) As a living portrayal of God’s *chesed* and Israel’s lack of it we have the marriage of Hosea to Gomer. The prophet’s steadfast love for his prostitute wife pictured God’s steadfast covenant love for a nation committing spiritual adultery with the Gods of their heathen neighbors.

By unbelief and disobedience Israel broke the covenant. God’s *chesed* kept it in effect until it was fulfilled by the coming of Christ. When Jews crucified Christ, who alone gave meaning to the Old Covenant, this brought about both the fulfillment and the end of the Old Covenant. Israel was scattered to the four corners of the earth, and the Old Covenant was no more. The fault of the Old Covenant, then, was not with the covenant but with the people for whom it was intended. “But God found fault with the people.” (Heb. 8:8.) Because of unbelief Israel did not enter into God’s rest. (Heb. 3:19) Israel disobeyed because they did not believe. Thus God said: “My Covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them.” (Jer. 31:32)

Jeremiah alludes to one final point that must be touched upon with regard to the Old Covenant - the inferior method of propagating the Gospel truths. Referring to the manner of spreading the Gospel under the Old Covenant Jeremiah states, “They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord.” (Jer. 31:34) These words need to be studied in the light of Old Testament times and conditions. There was a great variety of Christian revelation under the Old Covenant. However, the fact that it was varied and piecemeal does not permit us to conclude it was inferior. The doctrines of the Trinity, salvation by grace, and the resurrection of all flesh, to name a few, are not New Testament doctrines only, but are also revealed in the Old Testament. Even Enoch already knew of the judgment to come. (Jude 14-15)

It is not the means of revelation but rather the means of spreading that revelation Jeremiah is referring to. For example, during the days of Eli the word of God was precious (1 Sam. 3:1) There were times when a famine of God’s Word existed (Amos 8:11-12). At times no prophets or priests taught the people. At best, neighbor taught neighbor. Hilkiah found the book of the law lying unused during Josiah’s reign (2 Kgs. 22:8). The word of God was not read to the people as was done by the Levites after the exile (Neh. 8), but passed by word of mouth. Jehoshaphat inaugurated religious instruction (2 Chron. 17: 7 ff.) but he was unique. Even when the prophets were present the people rejected their message (Is. 30:10). The book Jeremiah wrote was burned by Jehoiakim (Jer. 36:23, 28, 32). Even the priests often departed from God’s Word (Hal. 2:1-7) and the people gladly followed them (Hosea 4:4-9).

Under the Old Covenant, then, revelation was added to revelation until the Old Testament canon was complete. According to the author of Hebrews, the finality of revelation was brought by Christ. (Heb. 1:1-2) God dealt faith the Israelites as *nepioi* (babes), giving them revelation for pedagogical guidance. The fullness of God’s revelation was realized in Christ’s ministry and the outpouring of His Spirit, as the prophets foretold. To sum up the essence and nature of the Old Covenant, we observe it was a law covenant made with Israel through the mediatorship of Moses. It was conditional and temporary. It was a shadow of the better covenant to come. To that better covenant let us now turn our attention.

The essence and nature of the New Covenant

Jeremiah was the first to speak of the New Covenant. He wrote: “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., the Hebrew for “new

covenant” is *berith chadasha*. The LXX translates: *diatheke kainē*. This is the terminology which is used exclusively in the New Testament with only one exception: Heb. 12:24. There we find *diatheke nea*. A study of *neos* and *kainos* indicate that the New Covenant is viewed from two viewpoints.

According to Trench, *neos* refers to that which is new in regard to time, which has not been in existence before. *Kainos* represents that which is entirely different from anything that went before.^{xxiv} *Kainos* is used to describe the new heaven and the new earth. (Rev. 21) the new commandment of Christ (John 13:34), and the new covenant. (Heb. 8:8;-Luke 22:20) Applying this to the new covenant, we find the *diatheke kainē* to be a covenant essentially different from the Old Covenant. The *diatheke nea* is the new covenant in as far as it has taken its beginning in the fullness of time when Christ came. These two adjectives point out two different viewpoints from which we can view the New Covenant, new in time and new in quality.

What is the essence of the New Covenant, differing from the essence of the Old Covenant? In alluding to Is. 27:9 and 59:20-21, Paul states: “And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” (Rom. 11:27) This is a very concise definition of the New Covenant of which Jeremiah had also spoken: “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:34) According to both the Old and New Testaments the New Covenant is the forgiveness of sins. It is essentially a Gospel covenant. Whereas Paul called the covenant “the ministry that brought death...And condemned men” (2 Cor. 3:7, 9), he calls the New Covenant “the ministry of the Spirit that brings righteousness” (2 Cor. 3:8, 9). Paul calls the people of the Old Covenant “slaves” (Gal. 4:24) and the people of the New Covenant “children of promise” (Gal. 4:28).

Who, then, are the people of the New Covenant? The Old Covenant embraced all the physical descendants of Israel, believers and unbelievers alike. Jeremiah spoke of 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. (Jer. 31:32) The New Covenant is not made with a nation. With the abrogation of the Old Covenant we find that not a physical nation but the communion of saints are God’s covenant people. Jeremiah mentioned the “house of Israel” but stated “they shall all know me.” (Jer. 31:33-34) God’s New Covenant is not with the physical descendants of Abraham but with his spiritual descendants. Of then he wrote: I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jer. 31:33)

Paul elaborates on this in Romans. He states, “Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.” (Rom. 9:6) God had said to Abraham; “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” (Gen. 21:12) Thus, Ishmael, the son of the slave, was cast out. Paul referred to this in Galatians when he wrote: Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.” (Gal. 4:28, 31) Paul elaborates further in Romans: “In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. (Rom. 9:8) God intended to call His people of the New Covenant from all nations. Paul quotes Hosea 2:23: “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one.” (Rom. 9:25)

Not all Israel would be lost. Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22-23: “Though the number of the Israelites should be like the sand by the sea only the remnant will be saved.” (Rom. 9:27) God would save a remnant of Israel. Paul declared, “Did God reject His people? By no means! ...So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.” (Rom. 11:1, 5) Paul related how many in Israel were rejected because of their unbelief, and the Gentiles were brought into the church. They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith.” (Rom. 11:20) Paul concluded “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.” (Rom. 11:25-26) God’s spiritual Israel, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the elect they are the people of God’s New Covenant. Peter wrote, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God: once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10) To the Ephesians Paul wrote, “You were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise ...But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ ...who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations ...Consequently, you are no longer

foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household." (Eph. 2:12, 13, 14, 15, 19) In Revelation John exults that Christ has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." (Rev. 1:6) Paul summed it up beautifully by saying: "If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29)

In connection with this point it is important to note the transition of the use of the Old Testament Covenant terms *chesed* and *ahabah* to *charis* and *agape* in the New Testament. In the Old Testament *ahabah* was God's unconditional election love and therefore the cause of His covenant with Israel. *Chesed* was God's steadfast, perseverant covenant love for Israel, and therefore the means of the covenant's continuance. Both *ahabah* and *chesed* were essentially covenant terms and used only in relation to Israel, God's covenant people. *Chen* (grace, used of unmerited love where there is no bond between the two parties) was essentially not a covenant word. The LXX rendered *ahabah* with *agape*, a word invented by the LXX and not found before it. *Philia* (emotional love) did not properly represent the true scope of *ahabah*, so *agape* was used to stand for love uncaused in the sense that no reason for it can be found in the loved one. Snaith makes this transition clear when he states, "There is a difference in the New Testament, for the middle wall of partition is broken down. The Old Covenant has gone, and in its place is the New Covenant, sealed in the blood of Christ. *Agape* therefore is no longer God's election-love for Israel after the flesh; it is wider and includes men of every nation and tongue, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."^{xxv}

The LXX used the Greek terms *eleos* or *eleemosune* to translate *chesed*. The Greek *charis* was used for *chen*. Although *chesed* found entrance into the New Testament by way of the *eleos* of the LXX in both direct and indirect quotations, it still did not become the prevailing expression of the New Testament for God's great love for His people. *Charis*, used regularly by the LXX for *chen* and not for *chesed*, has superseded it. In the New Testament *charis* was felt to have a close relation to *chesed*. It is evident that the associations of that word have had its influence in moulding the characteristic New Testament use of *charis* which is different than any ordinary Greek use, and not quite identical with the LXX *charis-chen*. God's *chesed* for Israel was gone, in so far as it was confined to Israel after the flesh. *Charis* came to stand for God's covenant-love for His chosen, embodying also the concept describing favor where there is no recognized tie between the two parties, where there is no obligation upon the part of the superior to do anything at all.

God's covenant people of the New Testament are not ruled by any ecclesiastical or civil power. Israel's theocracy was both an ecclesiastical and a civil power. Under the New Covenant the Church is without these powers. The Christian, as a subject of two kingdoms, is subject to the civil authorities. In the Church, however, Christ and His Word alone reign supreme. Christians should be subject to one another, clothed with humility (1 Peter 5:5), in honor preferring one another as brethren (Rom. 12:10). They should not usurp either ecclesiastical or civic power to rule over their brethren. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26.) In the New Covenant the impossible is to become possible. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Matt. 23:11)

Before leaving this point, it is important to stress that no physical nation represents God's chosen people in the New Covenant. Those who hold that God is still bound to give Palestine back to the Jews or to convert all of physical Israel are grossly mistaken. The Hebrew word *olam* does not have the binding nature of "forever" as our English word suggests. Secondly, God's promises to Abraham centered in Christ, and the real seed of Abraham are the believers, as Paul states in Romans. Thirdly, if God were bound to give Palestine to Israel by virtue of their physical lineage from Abraham, the Arabs would have equal claim to it, for they too can trace their ancestry back to Abraham. Finally, God's selecting of Israel as His chosen people was consummated at Sinai on the basis of a law covenant requiring reciprocal obligations. When Israel crucified Christ in unbelief, the Old Covenant was fulfilled and finally broken simultaneously. Israel was no longer God's Covenant people. The remnant saved according to God's grace was joined with the fullness of the Gentile believers to form the people of the New Covenant - God's spiritual Israel, heirs of the promise. The Jews of today who have the "veil covering their hearts when Moses is read" (2 Cor. 3: 14, 15) do not possess either the Old or New Covenant, for Christ is the center of both.

Let us now turn to the Mediator of the New Covenant - the Fulfiller of the Old Covenant - Jesus Christ, The forgiveness of sins could not be attained without the shedding of the blood of a mediator. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Heb. 9:22) Already in the Old Testament Christ was designated as the *berith am*, "a covenant for the peoples", (Is. 42:6, 49:8). Malachi designated him as the Messenger of the Covenant (*malakh berith* Mal. 3:1). The author of Hebrews calls Jesus the *engyos* guarantee of a better covenant (7:22) and the *mesites* (the mediator of the covenant) (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Paul calls the "one mediator between God and men." (I Tim. 2:5) The *mesites* vouches for the truth of a promise while the *engyos* vouches for its fulfillment. Christ, then, as the surety of a better covenant and mediator of the New Covenant shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

A survey of the epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes this very point. After earnestly warning the readers in the first four chapters against falling away from the incomparable Christ, who as God is higher than the angels, higher than Moses, higher than Joshua, the epistle then continues with its main theme - Jesus is the one who fulfills all of the Old Testament. He is the one who is the reality of all the shadows and types of the Old Covenant. Jesus is higher than Aaron, the priest of the Old Covenant. He has opened the way to the real mercy seat of God. Whereas the old high priest was a sinner and thus needed to sacrifice first for himself, Christ was sinless. Even more, His one sacrifice of perfect love and true obedience to God was accepted, for it was perfect. Jesus received His office of priest and Victim directly from God, not the set up of the law covenant. The prototype of Christ's priesthood was Melchizedek, the king priest of Salem. Christ's Royal Priesthood was higher than that of the Old Covenant. Not only did Abraham assume a lowly position over against Melchizedek, but God even confirmed the high priesthood of Jesus with an oath, which was not the case with the Levitical priesthood.

With the establishment of Christ's high priesthood, the old priestly order was cancelled out. The perfect High Priest, Christ, is able to save to the uttermost and intercede on our behalf. The daily sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood were replaced by their fulfillment - the one Sacrifice which Jesus made once for all when He sacrificed Himself. The high priesthood of Jesus in heaven in the real tabernacle before the Father in heaven is far better than the Aaronic priesthood on earth. In Christ the true priesthood arrived and the True Sacrifice had come. In chapter 3 the author makes his main point, We have an ideal High Priest who serves in the true tabernacle set up by the Lord. His high priestly sacrificing is eternally valid in the heavenly Tabernacle. The Old Covenant was a direct shadow of the True Sacrifice. Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant - He is the Reality foreshadowed by all the types. Christ's life fulfilled all the requirements of the Old Covenant. His death initiated the New and completely fulfilled the Old. When the veil in the temple was rent in two at Christ's death, the way to God was opened so that all could approach God through Jesus.

In this connection we need to consider the Sacramental words of Jesus. Luther preferred to speak of the Lord's supper as a testament and of Christ as a testator. Lutheran theologians generally followed him. Undoubtedly the Vulgate's use of the word "*testamentum*" for *diatheke* throughout the New Testament influenced Luther. It is true that the institution of the Sacrament a day prior to Jesus' death argues for the concept of *diatheke* as the last will of our Lord. Yet, as Dr. Peters points out, we are nevertheless forced to compare the Lord's supper with the Old Covenant because our Lord Himself does just that. Note the names - 1 Cor. 11:20: 'The Lord's Supper', 10:21: 'The Lord's Table,' 10:16: 'The communion of the blood of Christ', and finally 1 Cor. 11:25 and Luke 22:20: 'new covenant'. These names have nothing in common with the idea of a will of a testator, but are drawn from the *Vorstellungswelt* of the Old Covenant and as such points to the new by the way of the old. "Communion of the blood of Christ." Certainly this word communion is the very core of the covenant idea. And *deipnon*, feast, reminds us of the sacrificial feast eaten in connection with the making of a covenant. Since the Lord's Supper followed immediately upon the gating of the Passover Luther and Lutheran theologians spoke of the Old and the New Sacrament and naturally compare one with another. The point, however, is that where such a comparison is made the idea of *diatheke* as the last will of a testator is dropped at least for the time being and the Old Testament covenant-concept is placed into the foreground.^{xxvi}

There is also a similarity between the words of Christ, "This is my blood of the New Covenant," (Luke 22:20) and the blood of the covenant (*dam habberith*) of Ex. 2: 3. Both Dr. Peters and Dr. Gehrke quote Dr.

Hoenecke in this area. Hoenecke wrote: "There is a definite parallelism between the Lord's Supper and the Law Covenant. There in the Old Covenant the covenant-relationship was established by the sprinkling of blood and in addition, to make the parallelism even more striking, by the eating and drinking, by the partaking of the sacrificial meal on the mountain (Ex. 24:11); here in the Lord's Supper the blood is distributed for our partaking and drinking. There in the Old Covenant the words were: 'Behold the blood of the covenant'; here in the New Covenant the words are: 'This is My blood, the blood of the New Covenant.'"^{xxvii}

Dr. Peters concludes, "Now since the new covenant is the better testament with the better promises, surely the sacrament cannot culminate in a mere symbolical or allegorical act, certainly it must give us infinitely more than the Old Covenant, namely the body and the blood of Christ. Christ giving us the communion of His body and blood in the Sacrament, makes us commensals of God. Yes, we can say that everything that God's covenant stands for is to be found in the Lord's Supper. Therefore the various interpretations of Roman Catholics and Reformed theologians are altogether out of place, and over against such misinterpretations of the last words of our Lord are not to do anything else but to rest in the simile and proper sense of the Sacramental words which become very concrete when comparing the Old and New Covenant with one another. It is then that we know that Christ is not using allegorical, but entirely proper, simple, indubitable and clear words." (Trig. 989). It is also then that we realize that the translation 'testament' as last will of a testator does not by far cover everything that is contained in the words of institution, but that *berith* of the Old Testament as a 'covenant and union' must come to its own. Only then are we able to do justice to that what Scripture tells us of the nature and substance of the New Covenant."^{xxviii}

The Lord's Supper preserves for us then the truth that the death of Christ was a real sacrifice. The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice brought by man to God but rather God's Sacrifice for man. The New Covenant also has its sacrifice - the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of all. In the Lord's Supper we have real communion with Christ. He gives us the very sacrificial means whereby He secured our salvation, His body and blood.

Since the essence of the New Covenant is the forgiveness of sins, it is therefore an unconditional covenant over against the conditional Old Covenant. No strings are attached. Without condition God declares "I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:33) The New Covenant does not ask man to fulfill certain terms. It depends entirely upon God for its functioning. God did not institute the New Covenant with an "If" and make the promises follow on condition of obedience. The New Covenant declares, "You have the forgiveness of sins because of the sacrifice of Christ." There is no "Are you saved?" quality about it. It announces: "Be of good cheer: your sins are forgiven." (Matt. 9:2) The New Covenant is unconditional from the viewpoint of God's faithfulness (1 John 1:9). It is unconditional from the viewpoint of Christ's redemption (Heb. 7:22).

It is important to appreciate the unconditional nature of the New Covenant, for men down throughout the ages have been attempting to attach conditions to what God has declared to be unconditional. Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, Semi-Augustinians, Synergists, and Arminians all make man a partner to a lesser or greater degree in God's covenant. "This is what God did for you, and now all you have to do..." is the familiar theme we hear. Such preaching not only makes conditional what God has established as unconditional, but it also shoves man back into the bondage of a law covenant. From that Christ has set us free.

But is not faith a condition of the New Covenant? Absolutely not! Faith is the objective of the New Covenant. Christ is not a new lawgiver. "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) Even man's unfaithfulness cannot invalidate the immutable determination of God's purpose. Paul asked, "What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all!" (Rom. 3:3-4) Unbelief will exclude man from the benefits of God's covenant. Unbelief is a violation of God's unconditional covenant. It is no less than calling the covenant God a liar. Yet, man's unbelief can in no way invalidate the unconditional nature of the New Covenant. Jeremiah declares; "For they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:34) Faith or knowledge of God as the great objective of the New Covenant will be realized.

There are no commandments, legal requirements, or ordinances in the New Covenant. All that was part of the Old Covenant. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 10:4)

The Christian is not under the Law. The new man is in no need of the Law. "The Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless." (1 Tim. 1:9) Of course, the people of the New Covenant do fulfill the Law, for Jeremiah declared: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." (Jer. 31:33) As a result of the gracious operation of the holy Spirit, sanctification as the fruit of justification is worked. As Israel was hedged in by the Law, so the people of the New Covenant are constrained by the love of Christ. (2 Cor. 5:14). Thus Paul could write to the Corinthians: "You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts...He has enabled us to be ministers of the new covenant-not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor. 3:3, 6) Is it any wonder Paul urged the Galatians, "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1)

Our motivation is a Gospel motivation. "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again, but you received the Spirit who makes you sons. And by him we cry Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15) Thus, we can serve God without fear (Luke 1:74), dwelling in love, in which there is no fear, which even casts out fear (1 John 4:16 ff.)

Only by faith in Christ can we do justice to God's Law. Yet, this does not signify that our faith lays hold of Christ and the Law. Such would not be fair. No one can share in both the old and New Covenants. We can be sharers only in the New Covenant. If we are not heirs of the New Covenant, we cannot comfort ourselves by claiming to possess the promises of the Old Covenant. The Jews who claim to have the Old Covenant and the Law, have neither, for they reject the Christocentric nature of even the Old Covenant.

Lest anyone get the idea that the Christian has no use for the Law, let us briefly review the teaching of Scripture as summarized by Article VI of the Formula of Concord. The six points of the Affirmativa can be briefly summarized this way: 1) The Christian has been redeemed in order that he might exercise himself in the Law. The condemnations of the Law do not touch the believer, for Christ has fulfilled them. We are not under the Law, but we are not without Law. 2) The preaching of the Law is for believer and unbeliever. 3) The Law is to be preached to Christians because they still have their Old Adam. Why? Lest they invent things not pleasing to God, and that the Law may be a curb to the Old Adam. 4) Works of the Law are those done from coercion by the Law. 5) Fruits of the Spirit are works produced by the inner compulsion of faith worked by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the will of God. 6) the difference of obedience lies in man, the unbeliever doing the Law out of constraint (as also the regenerate according to the flesh), but the believer, as far as he is regenerate, without constraint.^{xxix}

The New Covenant is not temporary but eternal. The redemption is eternal (Heb. 9:12), the spirit through whom Jesus offered Himself unblemished to God is eternal (9:14), and the promised inheritance is eternal. (9:15) Jesus is eternal (7:16) and He is a priest forever (7:17). His sacrifice is the one and only eternal sacrifice that belongs to an eternal and absolute order as the sacrifice of the High Priest made so forever after the order of Melchizedek. (6:20) Therefore we can approach God with the full assurance of faith (10:20), tasting the good word of God and powers of the world to come (6:5). In the new heavens and the new earth we shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:2) and shall eat and drink at the Lord's table as His commensals (Luke 22:30).

The writer to the Hebrews concluded his epistle with a powerful warning to his readers not to forsake Christ and His New Covenant. He did this by pointing to the enduring nature of the New Covenant. He wrote, "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.'" (Hag. 2:6) The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things - so that what cannot be shaken may remain. (Heb. 12:25-27)

The argument is this: just because God's New Covenant is pure grace, no one should think he can refuse to listen in humble faith. If those who despised God's covenant at Sinai did not escape, how little chance is there for one who refuses to hear the voice of Christ as He speaks to us through His Word! At Sinai God's voice shook the earth, but Haggai promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The

quaking of the earth at Sinai was only an advance sign of what will happen again. Only this time, not only the earth but also the very heavens will be shaken. The Sinaitic Covenant was only temporary, and yet the earth shook when God established it. But God has promised that the day is coming when all of creation which now seems so permanent will be shaken. The world of created things will disintegrate. Then, when time ceases, when only eternity or timelessness exists, only the unshakable realities of Christ's New Covenant will remain. Thus, the writer concluded, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." (Deut. 4:24) (Heb. 12:2-29)

One final point needs to be covered. When Jeremiah states, "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," it seems as if he is saying there will be no preaching or teaching in the New Covenant. This is not true. Jeremiah is glorying in the means of grace of the New Covenant. St. John did the same thing when he wrote: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth...as for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you." (1 John 2:20, 27) Isaiah had also written, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." (Is. 54: 3) Jesus quoted this also: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the prophet and learns from him come to me." (John 6) God Himself is the Source of our teaching, not by a secret, divine revelation to each believer as enthusiasts believe, but through the administration of the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. The anointment of Christ bestowed upon us by the Holy Ghost in Word and Sacrament characterizes us as *theodidaktoi*. (1 Thess. 4:9), as taught by God. This does not exclude the giving of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Yet, they are only ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God. The Holy Spirit does His work through their ministrations.

Concerning the Sacraments, let us remember that as circumcision in the Old Testament established the Abrahamic covenant of grace with the individual and admitted him into communion with God and His Church, so Baptism does now in the New Testament. "For all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ ...For you are all one in Christ Jesus...Abraham's seed...heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:27-29) As the Passover proclaimed and strengthened the covenant bond, so also does the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.

Let us never forget our glorious privilege as heirs in the New Covenant, members of the "Church of the firstborn". Under the Old Covenant the tribe of Levi represented the first-born. (Ex. 13:2; Numb. 3:12ff.) Israel itself was called God's firstborn (Ex. 4:22), and as such was the heir of the Promise. In the New Testament the believers are called in Christ to be the first-born sons and heirs of eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:14). Christ Himself is the First born, the eternally Only-Begotten. With reference to creation, He who is visible expression of the invisible God is the First-born of every creature. (Col. 1:15) He existed before creation began, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, being thus the true First-born, His priesthood is perfect. After His death He entered life as the First-born from the dead. (Rev. 1:5) Thus, by virtue of our covenant union with Him, we possess all the covenant rights and privileges of the first-born, the rights of primogeniture. Our names are enrolled on the lists of the heavenly city. We enjoy the privilege of direct access and the right of inheritance.

Remember well what the writer to the Hebrews says: "You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words, that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.' The sight was so terrifying that Moses said 'I am trembling with fear.' But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." (Heb. 12:18-24)

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper, let us remember our glorious privilege as heirs of the New Covenant when we join "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven to laud and magnify His glorious name "in the words of the three-fold Sanctus."

As "ministers of the New Covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6), let us also remember the glorious privilege that is ours to proclaim, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. 3:9) May God in His steadfast covenant love and grace preserve us and all His own until the day when the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and consummation of His covenant promises are fully experienced. "Now the dwelling of God is with men." (Rev. 21:3)

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ⁱ Peters, Paul. "Diatheke in the Old and New Testament", *Theologische Quartalschrift* Vol. 39, No. 4 (October, 1942), p. 257.

ⁱⁱ Ibid, p. 255.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kittel, Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, v. 2. Delta-Eta, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, p. 110-111.

^{iv} Ibid, p. 120.

^v Kretzmann, Paul E. *Popular Commentary of the Bible; The Old Testament*, Vol. I, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1923, pp. 147-148.

^{vi} Pieper, August. *The Glory of the Lord*, An English Translation of the German article appearing in the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol. 29, Nos. 2-4, and Vol. 30, Nos. 1-2. Published by Seminary Mimeo Company, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon Wis. Translation by John Schaudt and Carl Lawrenz, p. 39.

^{vii} The Hebrew word translated "forever" is *olam*. Its root meaning as described by Gesenius is a hidden time, long, the beginning or end of which is either uncertain or else not defined. Frequently it points to a future time in such a manner that what is called the

terminus ad quem is always defined from the nature of the thing itself. When applied to grace (dynasty) or people, it comprehends all the time until their destruction. Thus, the English rendering “forever” in the sense of “eternal” is misleading. A better rendering would be “into the uncircumscribed future.” The true nature of eternity is found in this word in those passages which speak of the eternal nature of God Himself. (cf. Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 612-613).

^{viii} The Greek word here is *ilasterion*, used by the LXX of the lid of the ark of the covenant, which was sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering on the day of atonement. (cf. Exodus 25:17ff).

^{ix} The LXX translated *ba’alt* with “I ceased to care for them.” Perhaps they read *ga’al* instead of *ba’al*. Heb. 8:9 retains the LXX translation. Perhaps the LXX translation was faulty. Laetsch and Peters hold this to be the case. Gesenius seeks to favor the LXX rendering.

^x Pieper, August. Op. cit. p. 45.

^{xi} Ibid, p. 46.

^{xii} Cited by Dr. Peters, op. cit. p. 276. Taken from a synodical paper entitled *Die Lehre von Anterschied des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, (comp. *Verhandlungen der Elften Jahresversammlung des Norlichen Districts der deutschen ev. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u.a. Staaten*, AD 1865).

^{xiii} Op. cit. pp. 277-278. “*Es war von Gott beabsichtigt dass die Glaubigen in AB sich in wert hoheren Mass furchten vollten als die Glaubigen in Diese Furcht war bei ihnen oft bis zum tiefsten Schrockongesteigert...Dass ihnen nichtalle Froudigkeit des Glaubens abzusprochen war. Ist gewiss; waren ihnen doch die herrlichen Vorheissungen zugesagt, welcheise frohlich nachten und das Joch dos gesetzes linderten.*”

^{xiv} Cf. 2. Cor. 3, Gal. 3-4, Hab. 8-9.

^{xv} Gehrke, Ralph, “The Church of the Firstborn”, *Quartalschrift*, Volume 51, Jan. 1954, p. 38.

^{xvi} Brown, John *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Evansville: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1957) p. 172.

^{xvii} Peters, op. cit. p. 260

^{xviii} Lawrenz, Carl, *The Abrogation of the Mosaic Law*, a supplemental sheet prepared for Middler Isogogics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI. Received 1967.

^{xix} Pieper, Franz. *Christian Dogmatics*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 1950, Vol. 1, p. 352. See also Luther, St. Louis, XX, 146 ff. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, NT, Vol. II, pp. 259-260. For information concerning the 3rd Com., see the Augsburg Confession, *Triglotta*, 91-92, 53-64; *The Large Catechism*, *Triglotta*, 603-609, 78-102.

^{xx} Snaith, Norman, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 1944, p. 94.)

^{xxi} Ibid, p. 102.

^{xxii} In the OT, there are 43 cases where *chesed* is linked by means of the copula with another noun. Such a construction can be used only when the two nouns thus joined together are almost synonomous. The breakdown is as follows: *emeth* and *emunah* (fidelity, firmness, truth) – 23; *benth* – 7; *tsedegah* and *mishpat* (righteousness and judgement) – 4; *tob* (prosperity) – 1; *metsudah* (stronghold) – 1; *chen* – 1; *rachamim* (compassion) – 6; The majority of the associations are with fidelity and loyalty.

^{xxiii} Of all the ancient translations only the Targum seemed to have caught the meaning, translating *chesed* with the steadfastness idea. The LXX and the Syro Hexapla translated *doxa* (glory); the Vulgate *gloria*; the Syriac Peshitta “beauty.”

^{xxiv} Trench, R.C. *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1880, pp. 219-220. Cf. p. 225; “*noos ad tempus, kainos ad rem refertur.*”

^{xxv} Snaith, op. cit. p. 175.

^{xxvi} Peters, op. cit. p. 269.

^{xxvii} Hoenecke, *Dogmatik IV*, p. 109, as quoted in Peters, op. cit. p. 269 – German; Gehrke, “The Church of the Firstborn,” *Quartalschrift*, Vol. 51, April 1954, p. 115. English.

^{xxviii} Peters, op. cit. p. 270.

^{xxix} Triglotta, *Formula of Concord*, Epitome, pp. 805-807.