

# The Controversy Over The Covenants

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## Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

Greetings from my native city of Rome, Italy, where I am spending few days speaking to our fellow believers and visiting my godly mother who is celebrating her 88th physical birthday and her 65th spiritual rebirth through baptism. Being in Rome, I wish to greet all our subscribers with the words of Hebrews 13:24: "Those who come from Italy send you greetings."

## WARS AND RUMORS OF WAR

While in Rome, I have witnessed a most impressive anti-war demonstration, widely supported by people of all religious and political persuasions. I was surprised to hear our own Adventist church leaders encouraging our members to participate in this "peace demonstration" that was held on Saturday, February 15, 2003 in major cities around the world. The vast majority of Europeans—even in England, America's closest ally—oppose military action against Iraq. The major reason is that practically every country in Europe has experience first hand, not just the collapse of two towers, but the destruction of their cities and the decimation of their people during the two World Wars.

The impending war with Iraq causes us to reflect on the Endtime sign of the intensification of warfare predicted by Jesus: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, . . . all this is but the beginning of the sufferings" (Matt 24:6-8; cf. Mark 13:7-8). Jesus foretold the intensification of wars and other disasters by characterizing them as "the beginning of the sufferings" (Matt 24:6-8). The phrase suggests that there will be more and worse to come.

Some will argue that wars and disasters have been the sad reality in every period of human history. No one can dispute the fact that wars have plagued mankind in every age. They represent the most tangible evidence of the demonic influence upon this present world order. As such they have been a sign to believers in every age that "the strife will not be long this day the noise of battle, the next the victor's song."

## Globality and Destructiveness

The recognition of the presence of wars in every age must not obscure an equally self-evident fact, namely, their *globality* and increasing *destructiveness* in the last century. It is only in the twentieth century that two world wars have been fought which have no parallel in the annals of history as far as geographic extension and destruction of human lives and property are concerned.

World War II alone has caused far greater human and material losses than any other previous war. Theodore Ropp, author of *War in the Modern World*, graphically states that "World War II killed more persons, cost more money, damaged more property, affected more people, and probably caused more far-reaching changes than any other war in history."<sup>1</sup> More than 50 countries took part in that war which caused the death of over 55 million civilian and military persons.

No other war ever caused so much damage to key industries, transportation, and housing in so many parts of the world as World War II. Bombing, artillery fire, and street fighting devastated such major cities as Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, Budapest, Hiroshima,

Tokyo, London, Milan. Never before had mankind experienced such a global devastation on such a massive scale. The globality and destructiveness of the two world wars, which have caused more casualties and suffering than all the previous wars of history combined, represent in my view, an unparalleled fulfillment of the predicted intensification and expansion of war before Christ's Coming.

Could the impending conflict with Iraq be a prelude to another worldwide conflict (World War III), which could possibly usher in the final battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14-16)? The American media seems to dismiss this possibility, making people believe that this war will be local, short, and easily won.

For me it is hard to share this optimism, for two reasons. First, there are sharp political, religious, economic divisions among the nations today, as indicated by the fact that American policies against Iraq are opposed even by such leading NATO nations as France and Germany—countries that have been rebuilt from the ashes of WW II largely with American aid. It is a fact that America is becoming more and more isolated. Even Turkey—a long time supporter of the USA with American military bases—has refused to allow American troops on her soil for the war against Iraq, in spite of the generous financial compensation of 16 billion dollars by US government.

### **Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

Second, the threat posed by the possible use of weapons of mass destruction is not limited to Iraq. Recently the North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il kicked out the international inspectors, removed the monitoring seals and camera from his nuclear plant at Yongbyon, and has restarted his plutonium based nuclear programs. Sources tell us that North Korea already has come nuclear bombs in its arsenal and will be producing more during the coming months.

In a penetrating article "Who Is the Bigger Threat?" *Newsweek* poses this sobering question: "Isn't Kim [the North Korean Dictator] as much a menace—to his own people as well as his neighbors—as Saddam Hussein? And if so, why is Washington leading the world toward war in the Middle East, where Saddam is appearing to allow weapon inspectors free rein, while playing down the threat from the already armed and uncooperative Kim? If nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are the greatest threats facing mankind—and Bush will not wait on events while dangers gather,' as he declared a year ago—why now send a new message that North Korea can wait?"<sup>2</sup>

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses today unprecedented threats to mankind. Recently Iran has embarked in a nuclear program. China, Russia, India, and Pakistan already have nuclear weapons. About 30 developing countries have nuclear reactors that could be used to produce atomic bombs. The fact that nuclear fission is now in the hands of developing countries, poses an unprecedented threat to mankind.

The reason is that desperate people do desperate things. A small use of nuclear weapons in any of these areas could easily trigger an international military conflict. "Any use of nuclear weapons," warns an essay written by four winners of the Albert Einstein International Peace Prize, "carries with it a high and inescapable risk of escalation into the general nuclear war which would bring ruin to all and victory to none."<sup>3</sup>

In a scathing article published in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Jay Bookman argues with good reasons that the real issue "is not really about Iraq. It is not about weapons of mass destruction, or terrorism, or Saddam, or U.N. resolutions.

This war, should it come, is intended to mark the official emergence of the United States as a full-fledged global empire, seizing sole responsibility and authority as planetary policeman. It would be the culmination of a plan 10 years or more in the making, carried out by those who believe the United States must seize the opportunity for global domination, even if it means becoming the 'American imperialists' that our enemies always claimed we were."<sup>4</sup>

It is a fact that as a result of recent wars, America has established military bases in numerous countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Korea, Japan, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, to name a few. A war with Iraq, would soon add other military bases in that country from which to control the Middle East, especially Iran.

The ultimate American goal is not territorial expansion, but what Bookman calls “Pax Americana,” a world wide American-controlled peace. “Among the architects of this would-be American Empire are a group of brilliant and powerful people who now hold key positions in the Bush administration: They envision the creation and enforcement of what they call a worldwide ‘Pax Americana,’ or American peace.”<sup>5</sup>

The question is: Has America the resources to assume the sole responsibility and authority to serve as the “planetary policeman” in order to establish a worldwide “Pax Americana”? The current depressing American economy suggests otherwise. *Newsweek* reports that “U. S. stocks have lost almost \$5 trillion of value since Bush took office two years ago, a mind-blowing decline. . . . Unemployment is up more than 40 percent (to 6 percent, from 4.2) since Bush took office; gigantic projected federal budget surpluses have turned into deficits; the dollar has fallen against the euro.”<sup>6</sup>

It is becoming increasingly evident that America cannot police the world and export American style of democracy to such countries like Afghanistan or Iraq. Democracy presupposes the responsible participation of informed citizens—a condition that is absent in most underdeveloped countries where most people are illiterate and loyal to their local tribal chiefs. The present American attempt to disarm Saddam Hussein, could easily drag mankind in an unwanted worldwide conflict where America could find herself rather isolated. Such a conflict could well be the prelude to the apocalyptic battle of Armageddon that will usher in Christ’s coming.

Secular “prophets” see no light at the end of the tunnel. Biblical prophets, on the other hand, see in the final conflict not merely the End but also the Beginning of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1). The daily “rumors of war” are harbingers that the Lord will soon return to bring to an end present conflicts and wickedness and establish a new order where people “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Is 2:4).

## REFLECTIONS ON THE COLUMBIA TRAGEDY

On Saturday, February 1, 2003, on a picture-perfect Texas morning, the shuttle Columbia was heading home, when suddenly it disintegrated, snatching away seven astronauts and leaving people around the world wondering what went wrong. The second fatal flight in 17 years raises questions in the mind of thinking Christians: Should America invest enormous financial resources and risk human lives to explore the outer space and reach for the stars?

No one can dispute that the space program has fostered technological advancements that have benefited our lives here on earth. But the positive dividends of the space program, must be evaluated in the context of its ultimate goal, namely to reach for the stars with man-made space shuttles.

From a biblical perspective we need to ask: Is space exploration sanctioned by the Word of God? Does the Bible support the combined American/Russian efforts to build the International Space Station, which is to serve as a launching pad for space exploration? Should mankind attempt to establish human colonies in such remote planets as Mars?

### Human Habitation Limited to Planet Earth

In our search for a biblical answer to these questions, we need to consider two things. First, God created our planet earth with all the indispensable elements (air, water, light, vegetation) to support human life. We read in Isaiah 45:18: "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, *he formed it to be inhabited.*"

Other planets or stars were not created for human habitation. The recent exploration of the Moon has shown that our closest planet lacks all the essential elements needed to support human life. This means that if a human colony was to be established on the Moon, it would be totally dependant for supplies from the earth. What is true for the Moon is most likely true for others planets like Mars, were conditions appear to be even more prohibitive.

A second consideration is the limitation that God has placed upon human beings to live exclusively on this earth—not on other worlds. We read in Acts 17:26: " And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."

Scripture teaches us that God has determined the boundaries of our human habitation on planet earth. He created us to live on this planet. He wants us to be happy here, not elsewhere. The Plan of Salvation does not contemplate the repatriation of the redeemed in another planet, but restoration of this earth to its pristine conditions for the eternal habitation of the saints. Simply stated, God has confined human beings to Planet Earth, both for this life and for all eternity. To seek to establish human colonies beyond the boundaries of our planet, means to violate the limits placed by God for human habitation.

### A Previous Attempt to Reach for the Heavens

The Bible records a previous human attempt to reach for the heavens. We are told that after the Flood, some of the descendants of Noah migrated in the land of Shinar, said: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth" (Gen 11:4). Reaching for the heavens with a brick tower hardly compares to the reaching into outer space with shuttles like Columbia. Yet the intent is the same, namely, to establish "a name" or reputation by reaching for the heavens.

There is no question that the space program has made a name for the United States. After all America is the only superpower that has sent astronauts to the Moon. But could it be that the Lord does not approve such human ventures? Scripture tells us that God regarded the building of the Tower of Babel as an act of human pride to achieve the impossible: "Behold, they are one people . . .and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Gen 11:6).

To teach the builders of the Tower of Babel a lesson in humility and to remind them of their limitations, God confused their language so that they could not understand one another. Could it be that the bursting into flames of both the Challenger in 1986 and the Columbia in 2003, are designed to teach us a lesson in humility, reminding us that God is placing a limit on NASA's plans to reach for the stars? This is something worth pondering.

The Columbia tragedy raises a pertinent question: Should America redirect the scientific and financial resources of the space program toward making our planet a better place to live? When we think of the misery, pollution, starvation, crime, and epidemic diseases such as AIDS that are victimizing countless people in many parts of the world, we wish that the "space research" could be transformed into an "earth research," that aims at solving some of the pressing problems that threaten the survival of entire nations of the African continent.

Exporting our sin-related problems to outer space, will only expand the space of the human rebellion. God will not allow this to happen. He will soon come to implement His divine "space program" that consists in purifying and restoring our earthly space to its pristine conditions for the habitation of the redeemed.

#### **A NOTE OF THANKS**

Thank you for sharing this newsletter with your friends. As a result of your efforts over 20,000 people are now receiving this newsletter in many parts of the world. Let your friends know that they can receive this newsletter directly FREE OF CHARGE simply by emailing their request to <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER**

At the end of this newsletter you will find the following important announcements:

- 1) The date and location of my weekend seminars for March and April 2003
- 2) A special offer on my books, audio-cassettes, videos, DVDs, and CD-Roms
- 3) Information on how your church can purchase some of the best LCD VIDEO PROJECTORS, at a substantially reduced price through an Adventist dealer in Dallas, Texas.

## THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COVENANTS

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The inspiration for this newsletter comes from our current Sabbath School Quarterly (January, February, March 2003), which is devoted to the study of GOD'S EVERLASTING COVENANT. The authors of the quarterly avoid discussing the controversy over the Old and New Covenants that has been rekindled recently by former Sabbatarians who have rejected the Sabbath. Instead, they want to help our members to better understand the unity between the Old and New Covenants, the latter being a renewal of the former.

The problem with this positive confessional approach is that it leaves our church members in the darkness regarding the controversy over the covenants that is victimizing uninformed Adventists and Christian in general. In the light of this problem, this newsletter aims at clarifying the nature of the controversy over the covenants, especially as it relates to the Sabbath.

It is important to understand at the outset that much of the controversy about the covenants is directly related to the observance of the law in general and the Sabbath in particular. The stock argument is that the Old and New Covenants represent two methods of salvation. The Old Covenant offered salvation to the Jews through obedience to a package of laws, of which the Sabbath was the linch-pin, while the New Covenant offers salvation to the Christians *unconditionally* through God's unmerited grace.

### A Theology of Contempt for the Jews

The controversy over the covenants is not a phenomenon of our times. It can be traced back to the early church. It stems largely from the theology of contempt for the Jews that was fabricated by such second century Christian writers like Barnabas and Justin Martyr in order to sanction the Roman persecution of the Jews as a fulfillment of their divine rejection.

For example, Justin Martyr, a leader of the church of Rome in the middle of the second century, argues that the Sabbath and circumcision are the signs of the Old Covenant given to the Jews as the mark of the divine reprobation of the Jewish race. According to Justin, these signs were to serve "as a distinguishing mark, to set you [Jews] off from other nations and from us Christians. The purpose of this was that you and only you might suffer the afflictions that are justly yours."<sup>7</sup> These documents are examined at length in chapter 7 of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

The anti-Jewish stigma of the Old Covenant can be traced historically through much of the Christian literature. Traces of it can be found even in some Adventist publications. Few days ago I received the newly released book by Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, which consists of a series of articles the author published in *The Present Truth* during 1896-97. The book is published and highly recommended by the Glad Tidings Publishers (2002) in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

To my surprise I found that Waggoner explains that the Old Covenant was made at Sinai because of the Israelites' transgressions. "They had lightly esteemed the 'everlasting covenant' which God made with Abraham, and therefore He made this one with them, as a witness against them."<sup>8</sup>

To suggest that at Sinai God made a covenant with the Israelites "as a witness against them," that is, to reveal their disobedience, means to attribute to God evil intent. It means to perpetrate the theology of contempt for the Jews that plagued Christianity through the centuries. More important still, it means to fail to realize, as we shall shortly see, that God's covenant at Sinai reveals God's gracious provision of salvation just as much as the New Covenant does.

## The Influence of Dispensationalism

In recent years the controversy over the covenants has been rekindled by the adoption of what is known as “Dispensationalism” among most evangelical churches. The name “Dispensationalism” derives from the belief that redemptive history is divided into *distinct dispensations* or segment of time, in each of which God has been working with humanity in a different way.

Dispensationalism is taught in principle at the Chicago Moody Bible Institute and at an estimated two hundred Bible institutes in the United States. Its official magazine is *Bibliotheca Sacra* which was inherited by Dallas Theological Seminary in 1934. Other magazines such as *Christianity Today* supports some of the dispensational views of the End. Popular books like *Left Behind* and *The Late Great Planet Earth*, have influenced millions of persons to accept the dispensational End-time scenario of the Rapture of the Church followed by the tribulation of the Jews and unbelievers.

Dispensationalists interpret the Old and New Covenants as representing two different plans of salvation for two different people—Israel and the Church. In other words, God has not only two different plans of salvation, but also two different people. The destiny of each is supposed to be different, not only in this present age but also throughout eternity. “Throughout the ages,” writes Lewis Sperry Chafer, a leading Dispensational theologian, “God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives, which is Christianity.”<sup>9</sup>

What God has united by breaking down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14), Dispensationalists are trying to divide by rebuilding the wall of partition not only for the present age but for all eternity. It is hard to believe that intelligent, responsible Christians would dare to fabricate such a divisive theology that grossly misrepresents the fairness and justice of God’s redemptive activities.

## Former Sabbatarians Focus on the Distinction Between Law and Grace

For the sake of accuracy I must say that most former sabbatarians who have accepted the dispensational distinction between the Old and New Covenants, do not accept the application of such a distinction to two separate destinies for Israel and the Church. Instead they focus primarily on the alleged distinction between the Old Covenant based on a package of laws and the New Covenant based on principles of love. On the basis of this distinction—known as “New Covenant Theology”— they have renewed their attacks against the Sabbath.

The stock weapon of the New Covenant theology is the allegation that the Sabbath is an Old Covenant relic that terminated at the Cross. Their strategy is to make the Cross the line of demarcation between the Old and New Covenants, Law and Grace, the Sabbath and Sunday. Since they believe the Ten Commandments formed the *core* of the Old Covenant and the Sabbath is *central* to the Ten Commandments, by firing on the Sabbath they hope to destroy the validity and value of the Mosaic Law in general, and of the Sabbath in particular.

Recently this strategy has been adopted by the leaders of the Worldwide Church of God and numerous former Adventist pastors and Bible teachers. The *Proclamation* magazine, published by former Adventists, features articles and pictures of former Adventists who have joined their ranks. The lead article of the March/April 2002 issue of *Proclamation* is entitled “Transitioning to the New Covenant” and carries the pictures of two former Adventist pastors, Greg Taylor and Paul Vogt, who have recently accepted the call to serve in Protestant churches. A previous issue published an article by Jerry Gladson, Ph. D., who taught for several years at Southern Adventist University. In his book *A Theologian’s Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*,

Gladson devotes 22 pages to explain why he has rejected the Sabbath as an Old Covenant institution.

The most influential attack against the Sabbath by a former sabbatarian, is the book *Sabbath in Crisis* by Dale Ratzlaff. He served in the Adventist Church for 15 years, first as Bible teacher at Monterey Bay Academy and then as pastor in California. His major arguments will be examined in this newsletter and the next.

The recent attacks against the Sabbath by former Sabbatharians is a surprising development of our times, because never before in the history of Christianity has the Sabbath been attacked by those who previously had championed its observance. Ellen White predicted this development a century ago in *Great Controversy*, p. 608. The weapons used by former Sabbatharians in their attacks against the Sabbath are taken largely from the aging munition dump of Dispensational literature.

### **Importance of this Study**

The importance of this study stems from the popular perception that the Sabbath is an Old Covenant institution no longer binding upon "New Covenant" Christians. This thesis is espoused by most Evangelical churches and has been adopted recently by an increasing number of former sabbatarians.

The far reaching influence of the "New Covenant" theology is hard to estimate. The Worldwide Church of God has experienced a massive exodus of its members who have refused to accept the changes demanded by the "New Covenant" theology. It is estimated that out of the 200,000 members only about 30,000 are left. In the Adventist church, the "New Covenant" teaching has influenced numerous pastors and several thousand members to leave the church. For example, most of the members of the Damascus SDA Church left the church together with their pastor Richard Frederick, to establish a "New Covenant" oriented congregation.

This newsletter focuses on the major arguments adduced by the "New Covenant" theology to negate the continuity, validity, and value of the Sabbath for today. The material is largely excerpted from my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, which is Lord is using providentially to help many people, including pastors of different denominations, to accept the validity and value of the Sabbath. Readers interested in a fuller understanding of the controversy over the covenants, are urged to read this timely book. The information for ordering a copy is found at the end of this newsletter.

Out of consideration for those whose servers have a length limitation, this study is divided into two parts to be posted in two separate newsletters. This newsletter deals with the alleged distinction between the Old Covenant based on Law and the New Covenant based on faith and love. The fundamental question addressed in the first part is: Do the Old and New Covenants contain a different set of laws, or are they based on the same set of moral principles?

The next newsletter examines the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants as taught in the book of Hebrews. The fundamental question that will be considered here is: Does the book of Hebrews support the popular contention that the coming of Christ brought an end to the Law, in general, and to the Sabbath, in particular?



## A LOOK AT THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

A major characteristic of the “New Covenant” theology recently adopted by a significant number of former Sabbatarians is the dispensational emphasis on the radical distinction between the Old and New Covenants. To illustrate this point, we briefly examine two representative studies: (1) The *Pastor General Report*, entitled “The New Covenant and the Sabbath,” prepared by Pastor Joseph Tkach, Jr., Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God (WWCG); and (2) Chapters 5, 12, and 15 of the book *Sabbath in Crisis*, where Ratzlaff articulates his understanding of the distinction between the Old and the New Covenants.

### Joseph Tkach’s View of the Distinction Between the Two Covenants

In his *Pastor General Report* of December 21, 1994, Pastor Joseph Tkach, Jr., devotes 20 pages to explain to his ministers the fundamental difference between the Old and New Covenants. He argues that the difference lies in the fact that the Old Covenant was *conditional* upon obedience to a “package of Laws,” while the New Covenant is *unconditional*, that is, without obedience as a requirement.<sup>10</sup>

For Tkach, the Sabbath is part of the Old Covenant “package of Laws” and this is why “we don’t find the Sabbath commanded in the New Covenant.”<sup>11</sup> “Something was seriously wrong with the Israelite covenant. The people did not have the heart to obey, and God knew it (Deut 31:16-21, 27-29). Unlike Abraham, they did not believe and were not faithful (Heb 3:19). . . . Therefore, God predicted a New Covenant. He hinted at it even in the old . . . . There would be no need for a New Covenant, of course, unless the Old was deficient.”<sup>12</sup>

If it were true that “something was seriously wrong” with the Old Covenant, then why did God give in the first place a faulty covenant that could not change the hearts of the people? Was something “seriously wrong” with the covenant itself? Or was it with the way the people related to the covenant? If the human response was a factor with the Old Covenant, could it also be a factor with the New Covenant?

**Superiority of the New Covenant.** “The New Covenant is superior to the Old, because it is founded on better promises (Heb 8:6).”<sup>13</sup> Tkach argues that the New Covenant is the renewal of the Abrahamic covenant which was based on God’s *unconditional* promises. “God didn’t say, I’ll do this *if* you do that. Abraham had already done enough. He had accepted God’s call, went to the land as God had commanded, and he believed God and was therefore counted as righteous.”<sup>14</sup> Like Abraham, “New Covenant” Christians accept salvation by faith and not by works of obedience.

Tkach writes: “In the New Covenant, faith is required . . . . Christians have a relationship with God based on faith, not on Law. . . . We are saved on the basis of faith, not on Law-keeping, . . . . In other words, our relationship with God is based on faith and promise, just as Abraham’s was. Laws that were added at Sinai cannot change the promise given to Abraham . . . . That package of Laws became obsolete when Christ died, and there is now a new package.”<sup>15</sup>

The problem with this statement is the gratuitous assumption that salvation was possible in the Old Covenant through Law-keeping. This is completely untrue, because obedience to the Law represented Israel’s response to the gracious provision of salvation. Law-keeping has never been the basis of salvation.

According to Tkach, the Old Covenant did not work because it was based “on a package of Laws” that “could not cleanse a guilty conscience.”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the New Covenant works because it is based on the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. “The Holy Spirit changes their [believers] hearts. The people are transformed, and they grow more and more like Christ. . . . The New Covenant affects our

innermost being. The blood of Jesus Christ changes us. . . . His sacrifice sanctifies us, makes us holy, sets us aside for a holy purpose.”<sup>17</sup>

Does this mean that the blood of Christ has some kind of magic power to automatically change people, whether or not they are willing to obey God’s commandments? To attribute such magic power to the Spirit and/or to Christ’s blood reminds one of the magic power the Jews attributed to the Law. Isn’t this another form of legalism? Does the atoning sacrifice of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit render obedience to God’s commandments unnecessary or possible?

The WWCG acknowledges that “no New Testament verse specifically cites the Sabbath as obsolete.”<sup>18</sup> But since WWCG believes that the Sabbath is part the Old Covenant terminated by Christ’s coming, the Sabbath also is no longer required. “There are verses that say that the entire Old Covenant is obsolete. The law of Moses, including the Sabbath, is not required. We are commanded to live by the Spirit, not by the Law inscribed in stone. The Sabbath is repeatedly likened to things now obsolete: temple sacrifices, circumcision, holy bread, a shadow.”<sup>19</sup>

This statement contains several glaring inaccuracies. We shall see that the New Testament distinguishes between the continuity of the moral law and the discontinuity of the ceremonial law (1 Cor 7:19). In the book of Hebrews, especially, we find a clear contrast between the Levitical services which came to an end with Christ’s coming (Heb 7:18; 8:13; 10:9) and Sabbathkeeping “which has been left behind for the people of God” (Heb 4:9).

### **Evaluation of the “New Covenant” Theology**

A detailed analysis of “New Covenant” theology presented in the literature of the Worldwide Church of God would take us beyond the limited scope of this newsletter. Consequently, I make only a few basic observations.

One fundamental problem of the “New Covenant” understanding of the Plan of Salvation is the faulty dispensational assumption that, during the course of human history, God has offered salvation on different bases to different people. God started out by offering salvation to Abraham *unconditionally* on the basis of faith; but at Mt. Sinai He agreed to save the Israelites *conditionally* on the basis of obedience to His commandments, or what Tkach calls “the old package of Laws.” When God discovered that such an arrangement did not work—because the Law “could not make anyone perfect. It could not change their hearts”—He reverted to the “faith arrangement” He had with Abraham. To make things easier, in the New Covenant, God did away with most of the old package of laws, including the Sabbath, and decided this time to work in the heart through the Holy Spirit.

If this scenario were true, it would surely open to question the consistency and fairness of God’s saving activities. It would imply that, during the course of redemptive history, God has offered salvation on two radically different bases: on the basis of human obedience in the Old Covenant and on the basis of divine grace in the New Covenant. It would further imply, presumably, that God learned through the experience of His chosen people, the Jews, that human beings cannot earn salvation by obedience because they tend to disobey. Consequently, He finally decided to change His method and implement a New Covenant plan where salvation is offered to believing persons exclusively as a divine gift of grace rather than a human achievement.

Such a theological construct makes God changeable and subject to learning by mistakes as human beings do. The truth of the matter, however, is that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Salvation has always been in the Old and New Covenants, first and foremost a divine gift of grace and not a human achievement.

Obedience to the Law provided Israel with an opportunity to preserve their covenant relationship with God, not to gain acceptance with Him. This is the meaning of Leviticus 18:5: "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live." The life promised in this text is not the life in the age to come (as in Dan12:2), but the present enjoyment of a peaceful and prosperous life in fellowship with God. Such a life was God's gift to His people, a gift that could be enjoyed and preserved by living in accordance with the principles God had revealed.

### **Sinai Covenant: Law and Grace**

Part of the problem of the "New Covenant" theology is the failure to realize that the Sinai Covenant reveals God's gracious provision of salvation just as much as the New Covenant does. God revealed to Moses His plan to deliver Israel from Egypt and to set her up in the land of Canaan (Ex 3:7-10, 16) because Israel is "His people" (Ex 3:10). God's deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt reveals His gracious provision of salvation just as much as does His deliverance of New Testament believers from the bondage of sin. In fact, in Scripture, the former is a type of the latter.

What Tkach ignores is the fact that the Israelites responded with *faith* to the manifestation of salvation: "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians . . . and the people feared the Lord; and they *believed* in the Lord and in his servant Moses" (Ex 14:30-31). When the Israelites *believed*, God revealed to them His covenant plan: "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5).

These words show the gratuity of the divine election of Israel. God chose Israel without merit on her part (Deut 9:4ff), simply because He loved her (Deut 7:6ff). Having separated her from pagan nations, He reserved her for Himself exclusively. "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Ex 19:4). Through the Sinai covenant, God wished to bring people to Himself by making them a worshipping community dedicated to His service, living by the principles of His Law. This divine plan revealed at Sinai was ultimately realized at the Cross when types met antitypes.

The prophets appeal to the Sinai Covenant with emotional overtones drawn from human experiences to explain the relationship between God and His people. Israel is the flock, and the Lord is the shepherd. Israel is the vine, and the Lord the vinedresser. Israel is the son, and the Lord is the Father. Israel is the spouse, and the Lord is the bridegroom. These images, as Pierre Grelot and Jean Giblet bring out, "make the Sinaitic covenant appear as an encounter of love (cf. Ez 16:6-14): the attentive and gratuitous love of God, calling in return for a love which will translate itself in obedience."<sup>20</sup> All of this hardly supports Tkach's contention that "something was seriously wrong with the Israelite covenant."

### **Faith Is Not Alone**

The obedience called for by the Sinaitic covenant was meant to be a loving response to God's provision of salvation, not a means of salvation. Unfortunately, during the intertestamental period, the Law did come to be viewed by the Jews as the guarantee of salvation, just as faith alone is considered by many Christians today as the only basis for their salvation. But a saving faith is never alone because it is always accompanied by loving obedience (Gal 5:6). Can a person truly obey God's laws without faith? Is there such a thing as a saving faith that is not manifested in obedience to God's commandments? Is the problem of legalism resolved by changing packages of laws? Such distortions can only serve to make both the Old and New Covenants ineffective for many people.

At Sinai, God invited His people to obey His commandments because He had already saved them, not in order that they might be saved by His laws. As George Eldon Ladd affirms in his classic work, *A Theology of the New Testament*, "The Law was added

(*pareiselthen*) not to save men from their sins but to show them what sin was (Rom 3:30; 5:13, 20; Gal 3:19). By declaring the will of God, by showing what God forbids, the Law shows what sin is."<sup>21</sup> Ladd continues noting that "the line of thought in Galatians 3 and Romans 4 is that all the Israelites who trusted God's covenant of promise to Abraham and did not use the Law as a way of salvation by works were assured of salvation."<sup>22</sup>

### **Principles and Provision of Salvation at Sinai**

Another point overlooked in the *Pastor General Report* is that at Sinai, God revealed to the Israelites not only *principles* of moral conduct but also *provision* of salvation through the typology of the sacrificial system. It is noteworthy that when God invited Moses to come up on the mountain, He gave him not only "the tables of stone, with the Law and the commandment" (Ex 24:12), but also the "pattern of the tabernacle" (Ex 25:9) which was designed to explain typologically His provision of grace and forgiveness.

The major difference between the Old and New Covenants is *not one of methods of salvation*, but of *shadow versus reality*. The Old Covenant was "symbolic" (Heb 9:9) of the "more excellent" redemptive ministry of Christ (Heb 8:6). Consequently, it was necessary for Christ to come "once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26).

Greg Bahnsen rightly notes that "If we allow the Bible to interpret itself and not infuse it with a preconceived theological antithesis between the Old and New Covenants (Law and Gospel), we are compelled to conclude that the Old Covenant—indeed the Mosaic Law—was a covenant of *grace* that offered salvation on the basis of grace through faith, just as does the Good News found in the New Testament. The difference was that the Mosaic or Law-covenant looked ahead to the coming of the Savior, thus administering God's covenants by means of promises, prophecies, ritual observances, types, and foreshadowings that anticipated the Savior and His redeeming work. The Gospel or the New covenant proclaims the accomplishments of that which the Law anticipated, administering God's covenant through preaching and the sacraments [baptism and the Lord's Supper]. The substance of God's saving relationship and covenant is the same under the Law and the Gospel."<sup>23</sup>

The Old Testament does not offer a way of salvation or teach justification differently than the New Testament. Justification is grounded in the Old Testament in "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer 23:6). The saints of the Old Testament were people of *faith*, as Hebrews 11 clearly shows. Abraham himself, the father of the Jews, was a man of faith who trusted God's promises (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6). The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified" (Is 45:25; KJV). Paul came to understand that in the Old Testament "the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written [in Hab 2:4], 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'" (Rom 1:17. cf. Gal 3:11).

The result of Christ's coming is described as "setting aside" (Heb 7:18), making "obsolete" (Heb 8:13), and "abolishing" (Heb 10:9) all the Levitical services associated with the Old Covenant. It is unfortunate that these statements are interpreted as meaning that Christ by His coming abrogated the Mosaic Law, in general, including the Sabbath. This interpretation, which is at the heart of much misguided thinking about the Law today, ignores the fact that the *termination* statements found in Hebrews refer to the Levitical priesthood and services of the Old Covenant, not to the principles of God's moral Law which includes the Sabbath Commandment. Of the Sabbath the Book of Hebrews explicitly states, as we shall see below, "a Sabbathkeeping is left behind for the people of God" (Heb 4:9).

## Dale Ratzlaff's View of the Distinction Between the Two Covenants

In many ways Ratzlaff's view of the distinction between the Old and New Covenants is strikingly similar to that of Joseph Tkach, Jr. Consequently, there is no need to repeat what has already been said. Ratzlaff's aim is to show that the New Covenant is better than the Old because it is based no longer on the Law but on love for Christ. Like Tkach, Ratzlaff reduces the Old Covenant to the Ten Commandments and the New Covenant to the principle of love in order to sustain his thesis that Christ replaced both the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath with simpler and better laws. For the purpose of this analysis, I focus on the major contrast that Ratzlaff makes between the Old and New Covenant in terms of Law versus Love.

### Law Versus Love

Ratzlaff's fundamental thesis is that there is a radical distinction between the Old and New Covenants because the former is based on laws while the latter is based on love. Though he acknowledges that an important aspect of the Old Covenant was "the redemptive deliverance of Israel from Egypt,"<sup>24</sup> he concludes his study of the Old Covenant with these words: "We found that *the Ten Commandments were the covenant*. They were called the 'tablets of the testimony' (Ex 31:18), the 'words of the covenant,' the 'Ten Commandments' (Ex 34:28), the 'testimony' (Ex 40:20), the 'covenant of the Lord' (1 Ki 8:8, 9,21)."<sup>25</sup>

"We also found that the other Laws in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy were called the 'book of the covenant' (Ex 24:7) or 'the book of the Law' (Deut 31:26). We saw that these Laws served as an interpretation or expansion of the Ten Commandments."<sup>26</sup> Again Ratzlaff says that "The Ten Commandments were the words of the covenant. There was also an expanded version of the covenant: the Laws of Exodus through Deuteronomy."<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, for Ratzlaff the essence of the New Covenant is the commandment to love as Jesus loved. He writes: "Part of this 'new commandment' was not new. The Old Covenant had instructed them to love one another. The part that was new was 'as I have loved you' . . . In the Old Covenant what made others know that the Israelites were the chosen people? Not the way they loved, but what they ate and what they did not eat; where they worshipped, when they worshipped, the clothes they wore, etc. However, in the New Covenant, Christ's true disciples will be known by the way they love!"<sup>28</sup>

Ratzlaff develops further the contrast between the two covenants by arguing that as the Old Covenant expands the Ten Commandments in "the book of the Law, so the New Covenant contains more than just the simple command to love one another as Christ loved us. We have the Gospel records which demonstrate how Jesus loved. . . . Then, in the epistles we have interpretations of the love and work of Christ. . . . So the core, or heart, of the New Covenant is to love one another as Christ loved us. This is expanded and interpreted in the rest of the New Testament, and also becomes part of the New Covenant."<sup>29</sup>

According to Ratzlaff, the distinction between "Law" and "Love" is reflected in the covenant signs. "The entrance sign to the old Covenant was circumcision, and the continuing, repeatable sign Israel was to 'remember' was the Sabbath. . . . The entrance sign of the New Covenant is baptism [and] the remembrance sign [is] the Lord's Supper."<sup>30</sup> The distinction between the two sets of signs is clarified by the following simple chart:

"The Old Covenant:		The New Covenant:
Circumcision	<i>Entrance sign</i>	Baptism
Sabbath	<i>Remembrance sign</i>	The Lord's Supper." <sup>31</sup>

The above contrast attempts to reduce the Old and New Covenants to two different sets of laws with their own distinctive signs, the latter being simpler and better than the former. The contrast assumes that the Old Covenant was based on the obligation to obey countless specific laws, while the New Covenant rests on the simpler love commandment of Christ. Simply stated, the Old Covenant moral principles of the Ten Commandments are replaced in the New Covenant by a better and simpler love principle given by Christ.

Ratzlaff affirms this view unequivocally: "In Old Covenant life, morality was often seen as an *obligation to numerous specific Laws*. In the New Covenant, *morality springs from a response to the living Christ*."<sup>62</sup> "The new Law [given by Christ] is better than the old Law [given by Moses]."<sup>33</sup> "In the New Covenant, Christ's true disciples will be known by the way they love! This commandment to love is repeated a number of times in the New Testament, just as the Ten Commandments were repeated a number of times in the Old."<sup>34</sup>

### **Evaluation of Ratzlaff's Covenants Construct**

The attempt by Ratzlaff to reduce the Old and New Covenants to two different sets of laws with their own distinctive signs, the latter being simpler and better than the former, is designed to support his contention that the Ten Commandments, in general, and the Sabbath, in particular, were the essence of the Old Covenant that terminated at the Cross. The problem with this imaginative interpretation is that it is devoid of biblical support besides incriminating the moral consistency of God's government.

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that with the New Covenant God instituted "better commandments" than those of the Old Covenant. Why would Christ need to alter the moral demands that He has revealed in His Law? Why would Christ feel the need to change His perfect and holy requirements for our conduct and attitudes? Paul declares that "the [Old Testament] Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12). He took the validity of God's moral Law for granted when he stated unequivocally: "We know that the Law is good, if one uses it Lawfully" (1 Tim 1:8). Christ came not to change the moral requirements of God's Law, but to atone for our transgression against those moral requirements (Rom 4:25; 5:8-9; 8:1-3).

It is evident that by being sacrificed as the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7), Christ fulfilled all the sacrificial services and Laws that served in Old Testament times to strengthen the faith and nourish the hope of the Messianic redemption to come. But the New Testament, as we shall see, makes a clear distinction between the sacrificial laws that Christ by His coming "set aside" (Heb 7:18), made "obsolete" (Heb 8:13), "abolished" (Heb 10:9), and Sabbathkeeping, for example, which "has been left behind for the people of God" (Heb 4:9).

Why should God first call the Israelites to respond to His redemptive deliverance from Egypt by living according to the moral principles of the Ten Commandments, and later summon Christians to accept His redemption from sin by obeying simpler and better commandments? Did God discover that the moral principles He promulgated at Sinai were not sufficiently moral and, consequently, needed to be improved and replaced with simpler and better commandments?

Such an assumption is preposterous because it negates the immutability of God's moral character reflected in His moral laws. The Old Testament teaches that the New Covenant that God will make with the house of Israel consists not in the replacement of the Ten Commandments with simpler and better laws, but in the *internalization* of God's Law. "This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my Law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God" (Jer 31:33).

This passage teaches us that the difference between the Old and New Covenants is not a difference between “Law” and “love.” Rather, it is a difference between failure to internalize God’s Law, which results in disobedience, and successful internalization of God’s Law, which results in obedience. The New Covenant believer who internalizes God’s Law by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit will find it hard to break the Law because, as Paul puts it, “Christ has set him free from the Law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2).

### **Internalization of God’s Law**

The internalization of God’s Law in the human heart applies to Israel and the Church. In fact, Hebrews applies to the Church the very same promise God made to Israel (Heb 8:10; 10:16). In the New Covenant, the Law is not simplified or replaced but *internalized* by the Spirit. The Spirit opens up people to the Law, enabling them to live in accordance with its higher ethics. Ratzlaff’s argument that under the New Covenant “the Law no longer applies to one who has died with Christ”<sup>35</sup> is mistaken and misleading. Believers are no longer under the condemnation of the Law when they experience God’s forgiving grace and, by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, they live according to its precepts. But this does not mean that the Law no longer applies to them. They are still accountable before God’s Law because all “shall stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom 14:10) to give an account of themselves.

The Spirit does not operate in a vacuum. His function of the Spirit is not to bypass or replace the Law, but to help the believer to live in obedience to the Law of God (Gal 5:18, 22-23). Eldon Ladd notes that “more than once he [Paul] asserts that it is the new life of the Spirit that enables the Christian truly to fulfill the Law (Rom 8:3,4; 13:10; Gal 5:14).”<sup>36</sup>

Any change in relation to the Law that occurs in the New Covenant is not in the moral Law itself but in the believer who is energized and enlightened by the Spirit “in order that the just requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:4). Guidance by the Spirit without respect for the Law of God can be dangerous to Christian growth. This is a fundamental problem of “New Covenant” theology espoused by the WWCG, Ratzlaff, and countless Evangelicals today: it is a theology that ultimately makes each person a Law unto himself. This easily degenerates into irresponsible behavior. It is not surprising that America leads the world not only in the number of evangelical Christians (estimated at almost 100 million) but also in crime, violence, murders, divorces, etc. By relaxing the obligation to observe God’s Law in the New Covenant, people find an excuse to do what is right in their own eyes.

Perhaps as a reaction to the popular “abrogation of the Law” perception, there is a hunger today for someone to help the Christian community to understand how to apply the principles of God’s Law to their lives. To a large extent, this is what the Basic Youth Conflict seminars have endeavored to accomplish since 1968, drawing thousands of people to its sessions in every major city in North America. Referring to this phenomenon, Walter Kaiser writes: “This is an indictment on the church and its reticence to preach the moral Law of God and apply it to all aspects of life as indicated in Scripture.”<sup>37</sup>

### **No Dichotomy Between Law and Love**

No dichotomy exists in the Bible between Law and Love in the covenantal relationship between God and His people because a covenant cannot exist without the Law. A covenant denotes an orderly relationship that the Lord graciously establishes and maintains with His people. The Law guarantees the order required for such a relationship to be meaningful.

In God’s relationship with believers, the moral Law reveals His will and character, the observance of which makes it possible to maintain an orderly and meaningful relationship. Law is not the product of sin, but the product of love. God gave the Ten

Commandments to the Israelites after showing them His redeeming love (Ex 20:2). Through God's Law the godly come to know how to reflect God's love, compassion, fidelity, and other perfections.

The Decalogue is not merely a list of ten laws, but primarily ten principles of love. There is no dichotomy between Law and love, because one cannot exist without the other. The Decalogue details how human beings must express their love for their Lord and for their fellow beings. Christ's new commandment to love God and fellow beings is nothing else than the embodiment of the spirit of the Ten Commandments already found in the Old Testament (Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5).

Christ spent much of His ministry clarifying how the love principles are embodied in the Ten Commandments. He explained, for example, that the sixth commandment can be transgressed not only by murdering a person but also by being angry and insulting a fellow being (Matt 5:22-23). The seventh commandment can be violated not only by committing adultery but also by looking lustfully at a woman (Matt 5:28).

Christ spent even more time clarifying how the principle of love is embodied in the Fourth Commandment. The Gospels report no less than seven Sabbath-healing episodes used by Jesus to clarify that the essence of Sabbathkeeping is people to love and not rules to obey. Jesus explained that the Sabbath is a day "to do good" (Matt 12:12), a day "to save life" (Mark 3:4), a day to liberate men and women from physical and spiritual bonds (Luke 13:12), a day to show mercy rather than religiosity (Matt 12:7). Chapter 4 of *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, entitled "The Savior and the Sabbath," discusses how Jesus clarified the meaning and function of the Sabbath.

Ratzlaff's attempt to divorce the Law of the Old Covenant from the Love of the New Covenant ignores the simple truth that in both covenants love is manifested in obedience to God's Law. Christ stated this truth clearly and repeatedly: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me" (John 14:21). "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (John 15:10). Christ's commandments are not an improved and simplified set of moral principles, but the same moral principles He promulgated from Mt. Sinai.

Under both covenants, the Lord has one moral standard for human behavior, namely, holiness and wholeness of life. Wholeness of life is that integration of love for God and human beings manifested in those who grow in reflecting the perfect character of God (His love, faithfulness, righteousness, justice, forgiveness). Under both covenants, God wants His people to love Him and their fellow beings by living in harmony with the moral principles expressed in the Ten Commandments. These serve as a guide in imitating God's character. The Spirit does not replace these moral principles in the New Covenant. He makes the letter become alive and powerful within the hearts of the godly.

## **Jesus and the New Covenant Law**

The contention that Christ replaced the Ten Commandments with the simpler and better commandment of love is clearly negated by the decisive witness of our Lord Himself as found in Matthew 5:17-19: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (NIV).

In this pronouncement, Christ teaches three important truths: (1) Twice He denies that His coming had the purpose of abrogating "the law and the prophets"; (2) all of the Law of God, including its minute details, has an abiding validity until the termination of the present age; and (3) anyone who teaches that even the least of God's commandments



can be broken stands under divine condemnation. This indictment should cause “New Covenant” Christians to do some soul-searching.

There is no exegetical stalemate here. Christ gave no hint that with His coming the Old Testament moral Law was replaced by a simpler and better Law. It is biblically irrational to assume that the mission of Christ was to make it morally acceptable to worship idols, blaspheme, break the Sabbath, dishonor parents, murder, steal, commit adultery, gossip, or envy. Such actions are a transgression of the moral principles that God has revealed for both Jews and Gentiles.

Christ did not modify or replace the Law. Instead, He revealed its divine intent which affects not only the outward conduct but also the inner motives. The Law condemned murder; Jesus condemned anger as sin (Matt 5:21-26). The Law condemned adultery; Jesus condemned lustful appetites (Matt 5:27-28). This is not a replacement of the Law, but a *clarification* and *intensification* of its divine intent. Anger and lust cannot be controlled by Law, because legislation has to do with outward conduct that can be controlled. Jesus is concerned with showing that obedience to the spirit of God’s commandments involves inner motives as well as outer actions.

In Matthew, Christ’s teachings are presented not as a replacement of God’s moral Law but as the continuation and confirmation of the Old Testament. Matthew sees in Christ not the termination of the Law and the prophets but their realization and continuation. The “golden rule” in Matthew 7:12 is presented as being the essence of “the Law and the prophets.” In Matthew 19:16-19, the rich young man wanted to know what he should do to have eternal life. Jesus told him to “keep the commandments,” and then He listed five of them.

In Matthew 22:40, the two great commandments are viewed as the basis upon which “depend all the Law and the prophets.” Ratzlaff should note that a summary does not abrogate or discount what it summarizes. It makes no sense to say that we must follow the summary command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Lev 19:19; Matt 22:39) while ignoring or violating the second part of the Decalogue which tells us what loving our neighbor entails. We must not forget that when the Lord called upon people to recognize “the more important matters of the Law” (Matt 23:23), He immediately added that the lesser matters should not be neglected.

We might say that, in Matthew, the Law and the prophets live on in Christ who realizes, clarifies, and, in some cases, intensifies their teachings (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28). The Christological realization and continuation of the Old Testament Law has significant implications for the New Testament understanding of the Sabbath in the light of the redemptive ministry of Jesus. This important subject is investigated in Chapter 4 of this study, “The Savior and the Sabbath.”

It is unfortunate that Ratzlaff, the WWCG, and Dispensationalists try to build their case for a replacement of the Old Testament Law with a simpler and better New Testament Law by selecting a few problem-oriented texts (2 Cor 3:6-11; Heb 8-9; Gal 3-4), rather than by starting with Christ’s own testimony. The Savior’s testimony should serve as the touchstone to explain apparent contradictory texts which speak negatively of the Law.

In Chapter 5 of my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, entitled “Paul and the Law,” I examine Paul’s apparently contradictory statements about the Law. This study suggests that the resolution to this apparent contradiction is to be found in the different contexts in which Paul speaks of the Law. When he speaks of the Law in the context of salvation (justification—right standing before God), especially in his polemic with Judaizers, he clearly affirms that Law-keeping is of no avail (Rom 3:20). On the other hand, when Paul speaks of the Law in the context of Christian conduct (sanctification—right living before God), especially in dealing with antinomians, he upholds the value and validity of God’s Law (Rom 7:12; 13:8-10; 1 Cor 7:19).

## **Conclusion**

Our study has shown that there is an organic unity between the Old and New Covenants—a unity which is reflected in the continuity of the Sabbath. Both covenants are part of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20), that is, of God's commitment to save penitent sinners. In both covenants, God invites His people to accept the gracious provision of salvation by living in accordance with the moral principles He has revealed. Christ came not to nullify or modify God's moral Law but to clarify and reveal its deeper meaning. Christ spent much of His ministry clarifying how the love principle is embodied in the Ten Commandments, in general, and in the Sabbath, in particular.

## ENDNOTES

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## **UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS**

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of March and April 2003. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

### **FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1: MT. OLIVET SDA CHURCH, NEW JERSEY**

Location: 800 Chelton Avenue, Camden, New Jersey 08104  
For information call Pastor Frank Legette at (856) 374-8557 or ((609) 968-3148

### **MARCH 7-8: JUNIPER AVENUE SDA CHURCH, CALIFORNIA**

Location: 7347 Juniper Avenue, Fontana, CA 92336  
For information call Pastor Martin Howard at (909) 864-2151

### **MARCH 14-15: LEXINGTON SDA CHURCH, KENTUCKY**

Location: 968 Lane Allen Road, Lexington, KY 40504  
For information call David Parker at (502) 223-8020

### **MARCH 21-22: ORLANDO MARANATHA SDA CHURCH**

Location: 1400 Bear Lake Road, Apopka, FL 32703  
For information call Pastor O. H. Paul at (407) 290-1800 or (407) 425-7369

### **APRIL 4-5: LOS ANGELES: LANCASTER SDA CHURCH**

Location: 43824 North 30th StreetWest, Lancaster, CA 93536  
For information call Pastor Rockne Dahl at (805) 498-3382 or (661) 298-6148.

### **APRIL 11-12: LOS ANGELES: HOLLYWOOD SDA CHURCH**

Location: 657 West 18th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90016  
For information call Pastor Luis Pena at (714) 562-8928 or (714) 926-5028 or (213) 749-5190.

### **APRIL 18-19: HARTFORD, CT: FAITH SDA CHURCH**

Location: 500 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT 06112  
For information call Dr. Walton H. Rose at (860) 527-9085 or (860) 522-0625.

### **APRIL 25-26: LOS ANGELES; TEMPLE CITY SDA CHURCH**

Location: 9664 East Broadway, Temple City, CA 91780  
For information call Pastor Benjamin del Pozo at (626) 286-5437 or (626) 292-2249

## **SPECIAL OFFER FOR *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE***

During the past two years numerous Adventist churches have sponsored copies of *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE* to the local ministers of various denominations. The results have been very encouraging. Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Church of God, Salvation Army, and Messianic congregations have moved their services from Sunday to Saturday.

To support this outreach ministry, we offer *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE* by the case of 32 copies for only \$190.00, postage paid, that is, \$5.90 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$20.00. We supply a cover letter to be attached to copies mailed to ministers.

You can order single copies or a case of this book simply by calling us at (269) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

## **SPECIAL OFFER ON THE NEWLY RECORDED SABBATH SEMINAR**

To make it possible for Adventist churches in different parts of the world to benefit from my popular SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, few months ago the TEXAS MEDIA CENTER made a fresh recording of the seminar I presented at the First Fort Worth SDA Church in Texas. We spent several days preparing this new recording where I use about 100 PowerPoint slides for each presentation. The response has been very gratifying. Church leaders in different parts of the world are expressing appreciation for the blessings of these timely Sabbath messages. Your personal effort to share them with your congregation is much appreciated.

The new SABBATH SEMINAR consists of a total of 8 one-hour lectures covering the following topics: the gripping story of my search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University in Rome; the discoveries I made in Vatican libraries on how the change came about from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity; practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to experience Christ's rest and peace in our lives; an update report on the most recent Sabbath/Sunday developments; and a sacred concert with two outstanding tenors entitled THE SABBATH IN SONGS. The concert was recorded in a television studio in South Bend, Indiana.

This new SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR is now available in THREE FORMATS:

- 8 AUDIO cassettes,
- 4 VIDEO tapes,
- 3 DVD disks.

Each of them come in a nice plastic album with an artistically designed jacket. Your SPECIAL OFFER is as follows:

**1) SABBATH SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO CASSETTES** at the special offer of only \$30.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. The 8 audio cassettes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket.

**2) SABBATH SEMINAR IN 4 VIDEO TAPES** at the special offer of only \$60.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$120.00. The price is the same for both the American and the overseas PAL system. Specify which system you need. The 4 video tapes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket.

**3) SABBATH SEMINAR IN DVD DISKS** at the special offer of only \$70.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$170.00. The DVD disks are compatible with all TV systems overseas. No conversion is necessary. The 3 DVD disks come in a nice triple Jewel case with an artistically designed color jacket.

The easiest way to order the new AUDIO cassettes, VIDEO tapes, or DVD disks, is with your credit card. You can order by calling us at (269) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

## **AN INCREDIBLE OFFER ON ALL MY PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDINGS**

Until March 31, 2003, you can order all my books and recordings at special offer of \$280.00, instead of the regular price of \$825.00.

### **THIS IS THE LIST OF ALL THE ITEMS INCLUDED IN THIS SPECIAL PACKAGE**

1. All the 16 BOOKS: regularly retails for \$305.00
2. SABBATH SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO cassettes placed in an artistically designed album: regularly it retails for \$60.00
3. ADVENT SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO cassettes placed in an artistically designed album: regularly it retails for \$60.00
4. CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO cassettes placed in an artistically designed album: regularly it retails for \$60.00
5. SABBATH SEMINAR IN 4 VIDEO cassettes or 3 DVD disks: regularly they retail for \$120.00 and \$140.00 respectively. Both of them come in an artistically designed album. You need to choose either the VIDEO or the DVD for the package.
6. TWO CDS: one with all my BOOKS and ARTICLES and the one with all my SEMINARS. The two CDs retail for \$100.00 each.

Your special offer for the complete list of all my 16 books, 24 cassettes, videos or DVDs, and 2 CDs, is ONLY \$280.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$825.00.

You can order this SPECIAL PACKAGE by calling us at (269) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

## **IS YOUR CHURCH LOOKING FOR A GOOD VIDEO PROJECTOR AT A SPECIAL PRICE?**

If your church is looking for a good LCD video projection at a reasonable price, I would be glad to put you in contact with an Adventist dealer in Texas, who is able to offer your church several models of HITACHI video projectors at about half the price suggested by the factory.

I bought the HITACHI CP-S 370 with 2200 lumens myself, after I discovered that it outperformed my new IN-FOCUS 2200 lumens projector, which I had purchased few months earlier. I made this discovery in Gentry, Arkansas, where I was invited to speak. Tim Rosenberg, the church pastor, showed me the HITACHI projector that their church had just bought. In fact they bought four of them, for the youth, elementary school, and academy. We set up both projectors with the same lumens side by side and to my surprise I found that the HITACHI provided a much brighter and sharper picture. Pastor Tim Rosenberg placed me in contact with the Adventist dealer in Texas who buys these projectors directly from HITACHI for our churches.

If your church is planning to buy a video projector, I would be glad to place you in contact with our Texan brother. Just email to me your name and phone number and I will pass it on to him. He will contact you directly and you can made all the necessary arrangements with him.

During this past year I have tried a dozen of video projectors in the various churches I visited. None of them performed as well as the HITACHI CP-S 370, though in some instances they had 3000 or more lumens. It is gratifying for me to know that now I can travel around the world with a light video projector (less than 6 pounds) that performs exceptionally well even in large auditoriums.

## Contact Information

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