

The Church & Doctrines

Introduction To The Lord's Supper as a Suzerain Covenant

In The Old and New Testament - Part 1

Introduction

In the last few days I have asked a number of people, "When was the last time you heard or studied the New Covenant?" For those I asked the answer was almost identical, "I heard it mentioned years ago". The question was not, "When did you hear it mentioned?", but when did the individual hear it ministered and expounded on? Because we are included in this wonderful blessing, it seems to me that there has been a great loss to the saints, especially of this generation. Due to the lack of knowledge concerning it, we shall start with the simplest considerations.

There are two sorts of covenants in the scriptures, a one party and a two party.

- a) A "one party" covenant the individual pledges to do certain things irrespective of the activities of the other, somewhat like a wedding vow.
- b) A "two party" covenant was similar to that which I made with the builder of my house. It was agreed that when he did so much work, getting the building to a certain stage, then I would pay him. If he defaulted in the building then I would not pay.

When God made the covenant with Abraham it was a "one party". It was an unconditional covenant given by the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and therefore cannot be revoked. When God made the law covenant with Israel (Ex. 20:2-17), it was not the same as the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 15:5-16). The covenant at Sinai was a two party covenant between God and Israel. Both parties had to fulfill their respective obligation. If either one broke the conditions of the covenant there would be consequences, namely cursing. However, if they both kept to the terms there would be blessing. Considering a little deeper, it is observed that there were two sorts of two party covenants:

- a) That which man made with his equal
- b) That which is called a Suzerain Covenant which was made between superior and inferior, for instance a king and the commoners.

The principles of a Suzerain Covenant:

- a) It was a Suzerain Covenant God made with Israel for the law was a covenant made between God, the Great King, and His vassal people Israel. There were several parts to it:
 - i) The Name and title of the great king
 - ii) The historical activities the great king had done on their behalf
 - iii) The future obligations to be placed on the vassals including the blessings if they obeyed, and the disciplines if they disobeyed.
 - iv) This was written in a book and put in a safe place and periodically taken out and read to the vassals. "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them" (Deut. 17:19; 31:11; Josh. 8:34; 2 Kgs. 22:8; Neh. 8:3, 8, 18; 9:3). The reason it was written was so that if there ever came a disagreement or a defaulting on the side of the vassal, then they could go back to what was written and the King could execute discipline accordingly. In a nutshell, it conformed the commoners into the character of the king.

The Great Suzerain Covenant Between God and His people (The Law)

It is my understanding that the Law between God and His people is given in two levels:

- a) The first is the truth of the judgments, and statutes given in micro (Ex. 20:1-17) then after some sundry details it is given in more precise details (Ex. 20:22 - 23:19) including the instructions for the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:1 - 27:21; 30:1-10); the priests clothing and inauguration (Ex. 28:1 - 29:46); the sacrifices (the five main sacrifices Lev. 1:1 - 6:7; ch. 16:1-28)

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- b) The second is the sundry laws, statutes and judgments as found in the balance of Leviticus, including the feasts of Jehovah (Lev. 23:1-44) and the recounting of it in Deuteronomy.

The obligations of Israel were divided into three groups:

- a) The civic laws which related to the daily life of the Israelites
- b) The ceremonial laws was related to their religious duties and observances
- c) The moral law which related to every aspect of the Israelite's life

The immediate historical background of the covenant between God and Israel began when they were in Egypt. After 400 years of affliction (Gen. 15:13) the Lord liberated them from the power of Pharaoh with an outstretched arm (Deut. 26:8) and on eagles' wings (Ex. 19:4) through the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:3-13). Not only were they liberated and redeemed but also delivered by the power of God at the Red Sea when the hosts of Pharaoh were killed and when God returned the waters to their former place (Ex. 14:5-31). For a short period of time they travelled through the wilderness until they came to Sinai and it was there the covenant was made when the Law was given to them. In Exodus 20:3-13 we read God's Suzerain Covenant with His people. Recalling the four principle parts of such a covenant we observe:

- a) The Name of the great King:
 - i) The covenant begins with the words, "I am the LORD thy God" (Ex. 20:2). They were to be a theocracy with God as the Supreme Ruler over them. The wording is, "I am Jehovah your Elohim" that is in brief, "I am the moral God of unrestricted power and authority". This gave the covenant a great solemnity for this was the moral Governor of the universe.

The historical and the basis for relationships between God and Israel.

- a) The Israelites or vassals part of the covenant:
 - i) "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 an holy nation" (Ex. 19:12). It is important to recognize that this covenant is the one that is spoken of when it comes to the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:3-9; Heb. 10:15-16; 1 Cor. 11:25-26). The Abrahamic Covenant for Israel to have the land is never the background for the Covenant the Lord instituted and ratified by His own blood.
- b) God's part of the Covenant:
 - i) That which God had done for them; "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). "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2).
- c) The agreement:
 - i) "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do" (Ex. 24:3).
 - ii) "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7).
- d) The ratification:
 - i) "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of

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the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (Ex. 24:4-8).

e) Written in a book:

- i) Exodus 34:27, 28, we read, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there (on the Mount) with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, The Ten Commandments." Forty years later, Moses reminded Israel, "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" (Deut. 4:13).

Why Have a Suzerain Covenant?

- 1) To teach the children of Israel that liberty did not mean freedom to do as they wanted irrespective of God.
- 2) They would live according to a covenant of righteousness, and since it was a holy law, therefore obedience to it resulted in conformity in all their relations to God. Conformity to the will of the Suzerain, that is God.
- 3) To give degenerate and distorted man the knowledge of what sort of a life pleases God.
- 4) To enable fallen man to be able to live righteously with fellow man, thus a harmonious state.
- 5) It manifested a people living by faith in the unseen God, therefore a testimony to the reality of God and His attributes.
- 6) To illustrate that when God is the moral governor and men live according to His will, the society becomes a perfectly functioning society.
- 7) To reveal to humanity their inability to live according to the standard of God.
- 8) To push people to the Messiah and His salvation.

It is a Will, a Testament and a Covenant

In Hebrews this covenant is also viewed as "will" when it speaks of the testator. Before it can be enacted the Testator (who is the Lord) must die" (Heb. 9:16, 17). This then begs the question, "What is the difference between a 'will' and a 'covenant'?"

- a) The difference between them is that a "covenant" is only valid while the covenanter is living, whereas a "will" is only valid after the death of the individual who made the will (Heb. 9:16-17).
- b) When our Lord died, when viewed as a will it came into effect, but by His resurrection, that which had been ratified, and He being alive, it comes into effect as a covenant. In Jeremiah 50:5 it is called a "perpetual covenant". The Hebrew word is "owlam" and is translated "alway" (2 times); "always" (3 times); "ancient" (5 times); "ever" (272 times); "everlasting" (63 times as in Jeremiah 32:37-41); and "perpetual" (22 times).

It is important to understand some of the distinctions between the Old and New Testament.

Old Testament	New Testament	References
Law	Grace	Rom. 6:14, 15
Condemnation	Righteousness	2 Cor. 3:9
Given by Moses	Given by Christ	Jn. 1:17

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Written on tables of stone	Written on the heart	2 Cor. 3:3
Sinai	Zion	Heb. 12:18-22
DO and do not	Finished	Ex. 20:1-17; Jn. 19:30
Administration of death	Administration of life	2 Cor. 3:6, 7
A fading glory	A glory that remains	2 Cor. 3:7, 11
No cleared conscience	A cleared conscience	Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:2

To Describe The New Covenant God Uses The Following Words

The Kings James uses one word to translate four Greek words translated “New”. Unfortunately the English word “new” fails to distinguish between the two Greek words most relevant to our study, “Kainos” and “Neos”.

- a) “Neos” indicates that which is new in age, and in such a way is used of “new wine” (Matt. 9:17); the “new man” (Col. 3:10); the “New Covenant” (Heb. 12:24). In this case it indicates the covenant the Lord ratified was not old because of the passing of time as the Mosaic covenant was.
- b) “Kainos” indicates a different nature or quality as “new bottles” (Matt. 9:17); “new tomb” (Matt. 27:60); “new heavens” (2 Pet. 3:13); and the “new testament/covenant” (Heb. 8:8; 9:15). The covenant we have been brought into is new in quality, being contrasted with that which is of lesser quality. It answers the question, “In what way is it better?” This will be considered in the next paper.

May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13

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