

NEW COVENANT CALAMITY

Dr. Renald E. Showers, associated with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., has just released *There Really is a Difference*, subtitled, *A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology*--published by The Friends of Israel, 1990, 225 pages.

The author begins by making clear the difference between Covenantism and Dispensationalism, but in the end his dispensationalism breaks down. There is marked failure to keep Israel and the Church rightly divided--the key to all true dispensationalism. [All emphases are ours.]

I - THE NEW COVENANT -- Dr. Showers, like most dispensational leaders today, insists upon relating the Church to Israel's New Covenant. He also continues to teach, as he did in his previous book, *The New Nature* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1986), that Israel's New Covenant law is written in the heart of the members of the Body of Christ.

The author first establishes the scriptural fact that Israel's New Covenant is for that nation alone.

Another significant biblical covenant which will determine important issues related to Israel and the future kingdom of God is the New Covenant. According to the OT, the parties of this covenant are God and the nation of Israel.

Three things in the OT indicated that God would establish the New Covenant with the people of Israel. First, the OT made clear statements to that effect. For example, Jeremiah 31:31 states, "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." Similar clear statements were made in Isaiah 59:20,21; Jeremiah 30:4,5; Ezekiel 34:25-39, and 37:21-28.

Second, God declared that He would establish the New Covenant with the descendants of those people with whom He established the Messianic Covenant (the Law). Since God gave the Mosaic Law only to the people of Israel (Lev. 26:46; Deut. 4:8) and not to the Gentiles (Rom. 2:14), and since He promised to establish the New Covenant with the descendants of those to whom He gave the Mosaic Law Covenant, then the New Covenant must also be established with the people of Israel, the physical descendants of Jacob.

Third, the OT associated the establishment of the New Covenant with the endless existence of the nation of Israel and with the rebuilding and permanent standing of the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 31:31-40). In the light of these OT factors, it is evident that God intended to establish the New Covenant with the literal people of Israel (pp. 99,100).

One has a right to expect a dispensational leader to at least hold firm to the key to dispensationalism--the scriptural distinction between Israel and the Church. Anything short of that is a move from the dispensational realm into the Covenant realm of merging Israel and the Church.

Dr. Showers clearly establishes the fact that Israel's New Covenant belongs to that nation exclusively. But his lack of dispensational mettle causes him to meddle. He falls short of the important principle: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

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In spite of the OT's silence concerning the relationship of the Church to the New Covenant, the NT seems to indicate that the Church is related somehow to it (p. 103).

It seems apparent that although the OT promised the New Covenant specifically to the literal nation of Israel, the Church also has a relationship to that Covenant. Believers who make up the Church partake of the spiritual blessings which God promised in the New Covenant in the OT (p. 104).

Church believers have [1] been regenerated (Titus 3:5); [2] received forgiveness of sin (Eph. 1:7, 4:32; Col. 1:14; 1 John 2:12); [3] been indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19); [4] received the new nature (a favorable disposition toward God consisting of the Law of God written in the heart) [Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 3:3; 2 Peter 1:4].

Dr. Showers here lists four "spiritual blessings" of Israel's New Covenant, and seeks to prove that the Church partakes of them. But nothing of Israel's can begin to compare with that of the Church, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ!

[1] In regeneration the Christian is recreated in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17); Christ is his Life (Col. 3:4); he is raised up and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6); and his life is "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

Israel's regeneration, on the other hand, is described in her New Covenant (Ezek. 36:26-28): "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep Mine ordinances, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God."

Israel's regeneration will be into "the regeneration" (Matt. 19:28), the regenerated earthly millennial kingdom, but never into the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2] Here Dr. Showers refers to "*the forgiveness of sin.*" The several references which he submits have to do with the forgiveness of sins. Sin has not been forgiven--it was condemned (Rom. 8:3). The one and only comparison between New Covenant Israel and the Church is the forgiveness of sins.

[3] There is no comparison between New Covenant Israel's future Spirit-indwelling, and that of the Church. The Spirit will indwell the kingdom Israelite to "cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep Mine ordinances, and do them" (Ezek. 36:27). The law will be put in their inward parts, and written in their hearts (Jer. 31:33).

Conversely, the Holy Spirit now indwells the Christian to maintain the life of the Lord Jesus within, and to manifest Him without (2 Cor. 4:11). The Spirit does not minister the law to the Christian, he being dead thereto, and alive unto God in Christ (Rom. 7:4; 6:11). "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).

[4] It is true that the new Covenant Israelite will receive regenerate life in the millennial kingdom. However, Dr. Showers says that Church believers have "*a new favorable disposition toward God consisting of the law of God written in the heart* (Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 3:3; 2 Peter 1:4)."

But that is not true of the member of the Body of Christ, who, by the indwelling Spirit, has the Lord Jesus Christ written in his heart! "Christ, who is our Life."

In his previous book, *The New Nature* (1986), Dr. Showers' thesis was that Israel's New Covenant law is written in the heart of the Christian. His theme was based primarily upon Jeremiah 31:31-34.

The most outstanding prophetic passage which relates to the new disposition (new nature) is Jeremiah 31:31-34. From what has been seen thus far it would be proper to conclude that the law of God in the heart is equivalent to a new disposition that God puts in the heart of man as an expression of His own holy nature. That the internalized law of Jeremiah 31:33 is a new disposition has been recognized by several writers (p. 31,38).

But in this present book [1990] the author's scriptural approach to the subject of law in the Christian's heart is somewhat modified. While he still insists that Israel's New Covenant law is written in the Christian's heart, his references now are from the NT--none of which is the least bit applicable.

Romans 7:22: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

This statement of Paul's certainly does not imply that the law of God is written in his heart--the one who said, "Christ liveth in me" and "for me to live is Christ" (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21).

2 Corinthians 3:3: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone [the Ten Commandments] but in fleshy tables of the heart."

The Christian is manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, not the law! "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus [not the law] might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:11).

2 Peter 1:4: "By which are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."

Since Dr. Showers teaches that the Christian is partaker of the spiritual aspects of Israel's New Covenant, he insists that the Christian's new life and nature are the same as set forth in Jeremiah and Ezekiel--the law written in the heart. But the Christian's position is infinitely above any law--kingdom or otherwise. He lives by, and when walking in the Spirit, manifests, not the law, but the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is his Head.

II - THE LAW -- Dr. Showers is to be commended for establishing the scriptural fact that the Christian is not under the law.

Several Scriptures indicate that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. Twice in Romans 6:14,15 Paul declared that Christians (including himself) are not under law but under grace. In Romans 7:4 Paul asserted that Christians have become dead to the law through Christ's physical death.

In Galatians 2:19 Paul declared that he died to the Law with the purpose that he might live to God. The implication is that a believer must be separated from a relationship with the Mosaic Law in order to experience true spiritual life.

In Galatians 5:18 Paul wrote that the person who is led by (controlled by) the Holy Spirit is not under the Law. Then he stated that there is no law

against the fruit of the Spirit, which is produced by the Spirit in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22,23).

Now, dear friend, be not lulled by impressive beginnings; but be on guard against enervating endings! Note closely what Dr. Showers does with the grace in which we stand. His stress is now upon moral absolutes.

From Mt. Sinai to the cross of Jesus Christ, God administered His moral absolutes over Israel through the Mosaic Law. Since the time of the cross, God has been administering His eternal absolutes over all of mankind in a way which is different from and superior to the Mosaic Law.

The moral absolutes have not changed, but the way of God's administering those absolutes has changed. For example, idolatry and adultery have been just as wrong in God's sight since the time of the cross as they were when the Mosaic Law was in effect.

Freedom from the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law does not involve freedom from the eternal, unchangeable, moral absolutes of God. It only involves freedom from one way of God's administering His absolutes--namely, through the Mosaic Law.

Also, there are more than two alternatives open to the Christian--either be under the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law, or be lawless. There is a third alternative--if one is under God's grace in administering His eternal, unchangeable, moral absolutes, one will not be lawless (pp. 188,189).

Dr. Showers seems bound to keep the Christian under law, even if he has to use grace to accomplish it!

It would appear that John was teaching the following in John 1:17: God established the Mosaic Law as a way of administering His eternal, moral absolutes through Moses, but Jesus Christ established grace as a new way of God's administering His moral absolutes (p. 196).

Paul implied that the form of grace which he had in mind had the same function as the Law. He did this by making law and grace the objects of the same preposition under [emphasis his].

To be under law or grace meant to be subject to the "power, rule, sovereignty, command" of law or grace as rules of life. It can be concluded, therefore, that Paul was referring to law and grace as ways of God's administering His moral absolutes over human beings (p. 197).

Paul indicated that as a rule of life, grace teaches Christians to reject a godless, worldly lifestyle and to practice a godly, righteous lifestyle. Since such a godly lifestyle would have to involve conformity to God's eternal, moral absolutes, and since as a rule of life grace works to produce such a lifestyle, it would seem that this grace rule of life is an administration of God's eternal, moral absolutes (pp. 198,199). ["Northerly" Showers.]

In summation, Dr. Showers equates Israel's New Covenant rule of life (law written in the Israelite's heart) with his NT "rule of grace" (law written on the believer's heart).

The promises of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 were specifically to Israel. These were [are] to be fulfilled as part of God's future New Covenant relationship with the nation.

However, as noted in an earlier treatment of the New Covenant, although the Church is not Israel and does not partake of the material and national promises of the New Covenant, it does partake of the spiritual promises.

Since the law of God in the heart (the favorable disposition) and the indwelling Holy Spirit were part of the spiritual promises of the New Covenant, one would expect the NT to indicate that Church saints have both of these factors of the grace administration of God's moral absolutes.

Several things in the NT demonstrate that Church saints have the law of God in the heart. First, in Titus 3:3 Paul taught that Church saints have been regenerated, and, as noted in Jeremiah 31, it is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit which places the law of God in the heart.

Second, in 2 Corinthians 3:3 Paul declared that Christ wrote something by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Church saints. He contrasted this writing in the hearts with the writing on tablets of stone of the Mosaic Law Covenant (vv. 3,7).

Paul was drawing the same contrast between the Mosaic Law Covenant and the New Covenant as was drawn by Jeremiah 31. Since the contrast is the same, the writing in human hearts of 2 Corinthians 3 must be the same thing as the law of God written in the heart of Jeremiah 31. [Have you been noting these MacArthur-like syllogisms along the way?]

Thus, Paul was teaching that through the Holy Spirit Christ wrote the law of God in the hearts of Church saints (pp. 202,203).

Just one sad, dual question.

How can a dispensational leader correctly assert that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 belongs to the nation of Israel alone, and then include the Body of Christ in any part of it?

How can a dispensational leader correctly assert that the Christian is in no way under the law--being dead to it--and then insist that the Christian has the law of God written in his heart?

The glorified Lord Jesus Christ is the Christian's Moral Absolute, and He is manifested as the believer's very Christian Life. The Christian is not governed by either law or grace as his "rule of life"--he lives by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

A kind warning should be rendered to all concerned--The Friends of Israel, the IFCA, the Church at large: Thanks to seminaries such as Talbot, Grace, and Dallas, along with leaders such as Dr. John MacArthur, Jr., Dr. Renald Showers, and Mr. Bill Gothard, to name but a few--with their law-bludgeons, the Covenanters are coming, the Covenanters are coming!

(May '90)

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