

The Two Covenants

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Our Bible contains two covenants, the Old Covenant (Testament), and the New Covenant (Testament). A covenant is like a contract – a binding agreement between two parties. The difference is that a covenant is much more intimate than a contract and a matter of life or death.

Three books of the New Testament are primarily concerned with the two covenants, what they mean, and the difference between them: Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. Although other books of the New Testament also contribute, these three are the foundation of the New Covenant, that is, the contract that we signed with God and He with us. Our lives are bound by that New Contract – as is God's.

Here is the first part of one of many of Paul's arguments and comparisons between the two covenants. Many Christians do not realize that the New Testament says a lot about both covenants, what they mean, and how they relate together.

"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants . . ." Galatians 4:21-24

Let's begin with the old. However, none of the apostles ever discussed the Old Covenant without contrasting it with the New Covenant. We also are bound by their example. We cannot study the Old simply by perusing the books of the Old Testament. The only way the Old Covenant can be understood is to see it through the New, that is through Christ.

Paul makes that requirement clear in 2 Corinthians 3:14-16. "But their (the people of the Old Covenant) minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

This requirement is clear, and always true. The moment a person steps aside from Christ to "study" the Old Testament, that veil of blindness comes upon his understanding.

God entered into a covenant with the children of Israel on Mt. Sinai. The terms of that covenant are simple and clear. They are best seen in Deuteronomy, chapters 5-8.

Moses said, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb (Mt. Sinai)." 5:2

A contract is very simple. Two parties sign an agreement together, let's say Bill and Joe. Bill agrees to build a porch for Joe on Joe's specifications. Joe agrees to pay Bill a certain amount of money AND to make it clear to Bill what his specifications are. Joe contributes his part – the specs for the job. Bill contributes his part, the work of constructing the porch by those specs. When the work of the contract is completed, both parties are rewarded. Bill receives payment in full from Joe, and drives off to enjoy what that payment can buy. Joe takes ownership of his new porch and throws a barbecue for his friends to celebrate.

Now, what if Bill refuses to complete his side of the agreement? Let's say he uses Joe's money to buy the materials, then builds half the porch, but his way, not Joe's, then leaves the job unfinished and a mess. Bill has broken his side of the agreement. Joe, therefore, will not keep his side of the agreement, but rather, will go after Bill to extract back from him all that Joe has lost – and more. On the other hand, if Bill fulfills all of his part of the agreement to full measure, but Joe refuses to pay, then Bill is thrust into a great difficulty. He has spent much time and now has nothing with which to feed his family. He must take

Joe before a court of law and expend much more effort and grief to get his due with a real possibility that he will end up with nothing.

Compare these two paragraphs. It is clear that when the contract is kept, everyone is happy and blessed. It is also clear that if either party fails to keep his side of the contract, misery and ruin are the only results.

This scenario is clearly the Covenant that God entered into with the children of Israel on Mt. Sinai.

God gave the specifications of exactly what He wanted Israel to do for Him. 5:1 – “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I (Moses) speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them.” 6:17-18 “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord . . .”

The children of Israel voiced their agreement in 5:27. “You (Moses) go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.” A better rendition of their statement is found in Exodus 19: “All that the Lord says we will do.”

Now, the contract had to be signed. God signed His name by the blood of the sacrificial lamb offered in the consecration of the tabernacle of Moses, as the Shekinah glory of God appeared. The children of Israel signed their name by the rite of circumcision.

Just as Joe, in our example, agreed to pay Bill a certain sum if he kept his side of the contract, to build the porch according to Joe’s specifications, so God agreed to pay the children of Israel a certain sum if they kept their side of the agreement.

Here is the payment, repeated over and over. 5:33 “. . . that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.” 6:18 “. . . that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the Lord swore to your fathers.”

Simply put, God agreed to pay the Israelites three things if they kept their side of the covenant: long life, blessing, and the land of promise. On the other hand, there are clearly two sides in this contract, blessing if Israel kept their side of the agreement, and cursing if they did not. In Galatians 3:10 Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26 concerning this curse: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

This curse is absolute. Paul says, “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.”

This is different from the simpler contract between Joe and Bill. Bill did not agree to come under incredible cursing and affliction, horror and waste, if he failed to keep his side of the agreement. If Bill did not do all that Joe required of him, then Joe was limited to what he could take from Bill within the scope of the agreement.

Not so with the Old Covenant.

The specifics of the curse that sits upon all those who attempt to relate with God by the terms of the Old Covenant are found in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. There is no horror story ever written, nor nightmare ever dreamed worse than this curse God pronounced upon ALL who come to Him on the basis of the Old Covenant.

Notice the requirements of the Old Agreement. “**ALL** that the Lord says we will do.” “Continue in **ALL THINGS** which are written.”

Did Israel keep their side of the agreement? NO!

Did one person in Israel keep his side of the agreement? NO!

Moses did not. David did not. Isaiah did not. Israel did not.

One half of the foundation upon which the Apostles built the New Covenant in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews is this utter failure of Israel to keep their side of the agreement. Let me give you an example. Paul quotes these words from David in Romans 4 as an essential part of the foundation for the New Covenant Paul was describing. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven; and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

Let's rephrase what David is saying, "It's a good thing God doesn't keep His side of the Old Covenant, because we sure can't keep our side. If God kept His side of the agreement, we would all be toast. I'm so glad God does not actually keep His promises (of cursing) in the terms of the Old Covenant."

Now in Galatians 3, Paul pulls in a statement of Moses in Leviticus 18:5 to set as the extreme CONTRAST between the Old Covenant and the New. "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man **DOES**, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." The New Covenant is 100% opposed to the Old Covenant. There is no agreement between the two from a human point of view. Here is the New: "The just shall live by faith."

Paul makes it clear in Romans 3 and 7 and in Galatians that it does no good to keep most of the law. It does no good to keep 99.99999% of the law. James says it this way in 2:10-11 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law."

To fail in one point of the law is to break the entire covenant.

Let's be specific on what that means. Let's pick a godly, anointed man of the Old Testament. Isaiah would be a good choice. Here is a good man, with a true heart. All of his life he seeks God, to know Him and to walk in His ways. God opens to him the glories of His kingdom and the revelation of Christ like no other Old Testament saint could see. His testimony to the eyes of man is impeccable. He is a shining light of all that God meant in the Old Testament. Or is he?

You see, once, when Isaiah was 16 (we are assuming here to make clear the terms of the Old Covenant), he saw his friend wearing a brand-new robe. Isaiah had never had anything but hand-me-downs all his life. He looked at that brand new robe and wanted it for himself. He spent an afternoon planning how he could get his hands on it. No, he did not follow through. But for one afternoon, during his teenage years, Isaiah coveted, he broke the tenth commandment. Let us assume, for the point of argument, that all the entire rest of his life, Isaiah kept the law of Moses to perfection.

That afternoon of his sixteenth year, Isaiah broke the covenant he had entered into with God when he was circumcised as a little boy. Isaiah was a covenant-breaker and now could expect nothing from God except all the ramifications of the curse laid out in Deuteronomy 28.

Now, before you cry, "No way," consider that it is this exact point that Paul lays out oh so very carefully in both Romans and Galatians as the FOUNDATION of the New Covenant.

Now we come to the beginning of Paul's argument in the book of Romans. 3:9 ". . . we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks (all gentiles) that they are ALL under sin." 3:19-20 "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Paul's argument about God's purpose for the Old Covenant through both Romans and Galatians is fantastic and almost too much to believe. Yet it is upon this argument of Paul that the entire New Covenant is built.

God gave the terms of the Old Covenant to the children of Israel for the sole purpose that, knowing they would break their side of the terms of that Covenant, they would thus pass under, in its entirety, the curse of that covenant spoken by God in Deuteronomy 28.

Because this claim of Paul is so radical and so beyond human reasoning hardly anyone takes it seriously. Let us not be among those who do not.

Paul claims that God's entire purpose for the Old Covenant was to bring, not just the Jews, but all of mankind under the curse of God, guilty before Him.

And so, appropriately, the Old Covenant ends with a curse, that is, the final single word of the Old Testament is the word "curse." "Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

But the Old Covenant does not end there, for the Lord Jesus Christ makes it much, much worse.

Here is what He says in Matthew 5:18 "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Do you see how terrible these words of Jesus are? The terms of the covenant are binding and cannot be set aside. David can talk all he wants about how nice it is when God does not deal with a man according to the terms of that covenant. Jesus says it's no good. Every jot and every tittle of that agreement must be pursued until its very end.

Not one descendant of Israel ever kept his or her side of the contract, not then, not now. Therefore, every element of Deuteronomy 28:15-68 must come upon, not only all Jews, but all humanity, as Paul so ably argues in Romans 1-3.

The curse of the law MUST be fulfilled. No one can escape.

Do you see the spirit of hatred flowing out of those who, in our day, would seek to place the Jews of today back under any part of the Old Testament? Every single person who attempts to relate with God under the terms of the Old Covenant must be brought through torment into death. To apply any part of the Old Testament to any Jew in today's world is true anti-Semitism. It is to condemn them to death and to all the curse of God.

Thank God that the terms of the Old Covenant are not its heart. Thank God that hidden in the depths of the Old Testament, hidden inside the agreement between God and the children of Israel through Moses, is a promise of something new. Thank God that there was a man with the seeing and anointing of the Apostle Paul and his protégé, the writer of Hebrews, that were able to seek out that "needle in a haystack." To set aside all the terrible pronouncements of the Old Covenant, the binding requirements that could not be kept, the curse, the death, and to find a phrase here and there, a part of a verse here, a tucked away handful of words there, and to discover the glorious revelation of Christ, to discover the New Covenant written all through the fabric of the Old.

Yes, Jeremiah did speak of the New Covenant that God would make with those same children of Israel. But it was Moses who placed the heart of that New Covenant right there inside the Old.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. I will raise

up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him.”

And so, right from the start, even as the initial terms of the Old Covenant were being hammered out on the slopes of Mt. Sinai, God had spoken something entirely different, something the children of Israel did not know about until almost 40 years later.

The writer of Hebrews wrote his argument, his contention for the New Covenant against the Old, specifically to the Jewish people scattered across the earth. The timing of the book of Hebrews is important.

In AD 64, the Jews walked out of Paul’s house in Rome in a final rejection of God’s covenant with them – the closing of the book of Acts. We will look a bit more closely at that later. The book of Hebrews is penned in AD 65. Paul and Peter are killed by Nero’s orders in AD 67. Jerusalem is destroyed in the bloodiest orgy of self-slaughter in the history of man, Jew killing Jew, the finality of the curse of the Old Covenant, in AD 70. Before that happened, every single one of the disciples of Jesus save John, and many of those followers of Jesus named in the New Testament, including Luke, who had just finished writing the book of Acts, have been martyred. All of this in the space of 6 short years.

The writer of Hebrews takes the words God spoke to Moses on the slopes of Mt. Sinai, right in the middle of the terms of agreement between God and the children of Israel and makes those words the birthing of the reality of God into the world.

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1:1-4

A massive shift has taken place for ALL who want to have any kind of relationship with God, whether Jew or Gentile. Through the Old Covenant, God spoke through Moses, through Isaiah, through David, through many different people in many different ways. Now, in our day, God speaks by His Son, God speaks by Christ.

As Moses said, “Hear Him!”

At the moment that God began to speak through Christ, ALL other voices ceased. To now read Moses apart from Christ, as Paul so clearly says in 2 Corinthians 3, is blindness and death.

Christ IS God speaking. “In the beginning was the Word.”

And so the real terms of the Old Covenant, the agreement God entered into with the children of Israel through Moses, had nothing to do, really, with the ability or the inability of the natural Jews to obey the terms of that covenant. Paul made it 100% clear that they did not do so. Rather, the real terms of the Old Covenant are this: “When Christ comes, He is God speaking to you, HEAR HIM! And each individual person among you, among the children of Israel, who does not hear Christ, is cut off from Israel and has no part in the promises of God.”

Let’s return, now, to this most horrifying of things that Jesus said, “. . . one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

The curse of the law CANNOT be escaped. No Jew will ever escape that curse. No Gentile will ever escape that curse. All are under its weight. All will suffer its horror. There is no other possibility.

Except one.

And oh, I would that all Christians, all Jews, all mankind would learn and take seriously the specific contrasts between the two covenants that Paul and the writer of Hebrews lay out side by side, hoping against hope that people will believe what they say.

Galatians 3:13 "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*") . . ."

The Lord Jesus Christ became the curse of God upon all mankind. The cross is the fulfillment of every jot and every tittle of the Old Covenant. There is the curse, there is the death, there is the end.

But the cross of Christ is very large. It is larger than all the children of Israel, it is larger than all the earth, it is larger than all of mankind.

In the cross of Christ every single human being descended from Adam DIED. We all died under the curse of God; we all died BECAUSE OF the Old Covenant. That Old Covenant cursed us and condemned us to death. Our death was cursed; our death was grisly and horrible.

And our death is finished.

"It is finished." In those words of Jesus as He died, are found the fulfillment of every jot and every tittle of that covenant that no human being could ever keep, especially the Jews.

Thus we come to the second covenant, to the New Covenant in His blood.

It is not my purpose in this paper to explore the purpose, the meaning, the extent of that New Covenant. Rather, my purpose is to set the two covenants in contrast to each other in the way the God does through Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and scattered here and there through the other books of the New Testament, and especially in the book of Revelation. This is a contrast that was once understood clearly by most true Christians, but that, in our day, has been almost entirely lost.

Let's begin with the strongest things God says in the New Testament about the terms of the Old Covenant, that agreement between God and the children of Israel through Moses on the slopes of Mt. Sinai.

Colossians 2:14 "Having wiped out the handwriting (the certificate of debt) of requirements that was AGAINST us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

The requirements that we could not keep, that ministry of death, as Paul calls it in 2 Corinthians 3, the Ten Commandments, all the ordinances spoken by God through Moses and written down in the Old Testament, ALL OF IT, was nailed to the cross of Christ.

The Old Covenant is wiped out.

Hebrews 8:7-8,13 "For if that first covenant (the Old Testament) had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them (all the terms of the Old Covenant), He says, 'Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . .' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Notice that God said through Jeremiah, "a new covenant with the house of Israel." That is so very important to understand reality in today's world; we will come back to it.

God Himself found fault with the Old Covenant and set it aside. Why did He find fault with it? Paul tells us clearly in Galatians 3:21 “. . . if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.”

No law, no statute, no ordinance of the Old Testament can ever give LIFE. All the Old Testament can ever do for anyone is to kill. That is why God found fault with it. God does not like the Old Covenant because all it ever did was kill everyone God wanted to bless.

In fact, God did not like the Old Covenant when He gave it. He entered into that covenant with the children of Israel for one reason and one reason only – to make the cross of Christ full and complete, so that the resurrection of Christ could be all that remains.

That's the only thing God wants. He wants all descendants of Adam dead, especially the natural Jew, so that the only ones who live are those who come up to Him through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That is the New Covenant.

Here is the picture God Himself gives us of the Old Covenant, of the Ten Commandments in the very day that He gave them. “And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand . . . Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets . . . So Moses anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.” Exodus 32:15-19

The first thing Moses did with the law was to shatter it upon the mountainside! That is and has always been God's estimation of the Old Covenant. Hebrews 8:8 says that He does not like it.

You see, God says all kinds of wonderful things, all of His promises to the Jews, all through the pages of the Old Testament. But the problem was that Old Covenant. It always kicked in; not one jot or tittle of it could ever be removed. Every individual member of the commonwealth of Israel violated the terms of that covenant, even Isaiah: the covenant kicked in, and they all perished under the curse.

All.

Not one promise of the Old Testament can ever come to anyone apart from Christ. The terms of the Old Covenant always kick in and kill everyone before any blessing can ever come their way.

The Old Testament is a curse and there is no way out of that curse.

The cross of Christ does not remove that curse. Every single Jew who lives or has ever lived DIED upon that cross. Every single Gentile died upon the cross. You and I died upon that cross. The cross is absolute and complete. Its work is finished. We are all cursed of God and dead.

That is the purpose and entirety of the Old Covenant.

And this is why the Jews hated Paul's gospel and why we must be born again.

The strong and overwhelming claim of Paul in Galatians and in Colossians is that all Jews are dead. There are no Jews in Christ. God does not accept even one of them. Neither are there any Gentiles in Christ. They are all dead. God does not accept even one of them.

A dear Christian Jewish woman said to me once in all earnestness, “I don't like all this talk of “salvation.” The Jews are wonderful people; they are God's gift to mankind; they do not need to “be saved.”

Paul damned every single Jew, and he placed them fully upon the cross of Christ, cut off from God, and dead. (There are Jewish Christians today who have cut Paul entirely out of their New Testaments.)

Paul said in Galatians 2:20 "I (the most zealous, law-keeping Jew out of all the Jews of Israel) am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live . . ." He said in Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 that there is not one Jew found in Christ, not one, ever, nor any Gentile.

If one Jew alive today has escaped the cross of Christ, then that cross is of no effect for anyone, we are all in our sins, cursed before God, and without hope. This is the full, powerful, and overwhelming argument of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews; it is the argument of the New Covenant.

So what else happened upon the cross of Christ?

Now we come to the most important thing Paul says in the New Testament regarding the natural Jew – and he says a whole lot, most of which most Christians in today's world try so very hard to ignore.

Ephesians 2:11-18 "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh . . . that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

Would that every believer in Jesus read these words over and over and over until they are no more words, but living, breathing reality all through the fabric of their souls!

There is NO SUCH THING as a "Gentile" church! The New Covenant is 100% an agreement between God and the children of Israel, just as Jeremiah said, "I will make a new covenant with the HOUSE of ISRAEL . . ."

But here's the deal. There is a little clause in this New Covenant, a little door, through which we who were once Gentiles can not only enter into the New Covenant, but actually become, ourselves, part of the commonwealth of Israel and inheritors of all of its promises. It was Paul who found it, grubbing around in the Minor Prophets.

Romans 9:23-26 ". . . that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: "*I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved.*" "*And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God.*"

Those who were once Gentiles have the privilege of also entering into this New Covenant, along with all those Jews who keep the real terms of the covenant God made through Moses and hear and receive the Son whom He sent.

More than that, the wall of separation that once existed as an impenetrable barrier between Jew and Gentile is abolished upon the cross of Christ, along with all the commandments, and we are together, both those who were formerly Jews and those who were formerly Gentiles, now one new man in Christ, ascending to God in Christ's resurrection.

One final thing before we look at the nation of Israel and the natural Jew in today's world through what God actually says in the New Testament.

What about all the promises, all the good things God wanted to give the children of Israel all through the Old Testament, but never could because of the terms of that covenant? Does the breaking of the agreement between God and Israel by every individual Jew mean that none of them ever get to know the good things, the blessings, the promises of God?

Not at all. Every individual Jew who accepts God's pronouncement that they are no good, that they can't keep their side of the covenant, no matter how hard they try, that they have no chance at one good thing God promises, and that they have perished under the curse of the law in the cross of Christ, can then come alive in Jesus Christ and there discover ALL of the promises of God fulfilled in fullness in Him.

And here's the secret – these are the promises God spoke to the natural Jew, all of them now found and experienced in Christ by all those Jews who do keep the real covenant God made through Moses – to hear Christ, and we Gentiles, having also perished in the cross, now we also get to share those same promises.

That is the whole argument of Paul in Romans 11.

2 Corinthians 1:20 "For all the promises of God (in the Old Testament, the New Testament was not yet written or compiled) in Him (Christ) are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."

Galatians 3:13-14 "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*", that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

And what is the blessing of Abraham? Paul says it here: the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Old Covenant places every Jew who ever lived under it under the curse of God without hope. The cross finishes them all off, whether they accept it or not. And in Christ alone they find all the blessing promised by God in the Old Testament, a blessing that we who were once Gentiles also get to share.

That's the New Covenant. That's the gospel according to Paul.

And that is why most of the Jews of Paul's day rejected it completely and why they still do so today.

There are three specific things the natural Jew hates about Paul's gospel. First, they despise Jesus and want nothing to do with Him. Second, they are deeply offended by Paul's claim that they must die upon the cross of Christ, that no Jewishness of any kind is acceptable to God, no Jew is found in Christ. And third, they can't stand the thought of sharing anything on any form of equality with the Gentiles.

The cross of Christ is to the natural Jew a deep, deep offense.

Let's return, now, to Paul's clearest contrast between the two covenants, Galatians 4:21-31.

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written:

"Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor!
For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband."

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh

then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

Let’s create a chart from this critical instruction Paul gives to the church.

The New Covenant	The Old Covenant
The Free Woman - Sarah	The Bond Woman - Hagar
Isaac, son of the free woman - Born through promise	Ishmael, son of the bond woman - Born according to the flesh
(Mt. Zion) Jerusalem which is above The Church of Christ – the mother of us all (Christians – formerly Jew and Gentile)	Mt. Sinai The city of Jerusalem in today’s world in bondage with her children (Natural Jews)
Formerly barren and desolate, yet filled with children	Married – has a husband, yet produces bondage
We, brethren, are children of promise.	Ishmael persecuted Isaac; The natural Jew persecutes the believer in Christ.
Commanded by God to cast out the Old Covenant and to cast out the natural Jew who rejects Christ.	Shall not be heir – shall not inherit the promises.

It is not permissible, by the terms of the New Covenant, for any Christian to contemplate relating with God within any part of the Old Covenant.

It is not permissible, by the terms of the New Covenant, for any Christian to accept any claim of the natural Jew, separate from Christ, to any part of the inheritance.

The Cross forbids it.

The only thing God accepts in the New Covenant is that which comes to Him through the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ is an entirely different world, an entirely different universe from the bondage of the Old Covenant and the striving of the natural man, sinners all, cursed of God and dead, to claim the benefits of a covenant they have never kept.

What if Joe promised to pay Bill \$1000 if Bill built the porch to Joe’s specifications? And what if Bill signed his name, but then did not build that porch? And what if Bill went around claiming that Joe owed him that \$1000 simply because Joe had promised to pay? And what if Bill attempted to sue Joe in a court of law to extract the promised \$1000 from Joe even though Bill had never kept his side of the deal?

We know that everyone would hold Bill in complete contempt; no one would regard his claims.

Now, understand this, the Old Covenant had hundreds of specific commandments concerning every part of life. Yet God requires of the natural Jew obedience to one commandment out of all of them – one commandment only. It is not a burdensome commandment; the yoke of Jesus is easy. If the natural Jew will simply obey the one commandment of the Old Covenant, the one commandment given through Moses, an easy command that the simplest child can obey, then God would gladly ignore all the other requirements of the covenant by the cross of Christ and receive that Jew with wide open arms.

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”

Hear Christ! “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” John 10:27

But no, the natural Jew, refusing to obey the only commandment of the Old Covenant that counts since the cross of Christ, turned the hundreds of requirements of that Old Covenant into thousands, turning a covenant no Jew ever kept into the fullness of bondage, as Paul said.

Here is the final contention between Paul and the Jews in the book of Acts. This is long after Paul had written Romans and Galatians. Acts 28:25-29

So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying,

‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;
And seeing you will see, and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull.
Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’”

“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.”

Paul obeyed the words spoken by the Spirit of God through him. He cast out the bondwoman and he cast out her son. And they did what they have done since, they argued between themselves.

In 1 Peter 2:8, Peter says that God appointed the natural Jew, the child of bondage, to stumble at the offense of Christ and to disobey the word of Moses to hear Christ.

In Romans 11:28, Paul states that the natural Jews, the children of bondage, are the enemies of the gospel during the church age, for our sakes. Yes, God loves them, and is always inviting them to hear Christ, but even in our world today, they continue to refuse the covenant.

In 1 John 2:22, John states that the natural Jew, the child of bondage, who refuses Moses’ command to hear Christ, who denies that Jesus is the Messiah, IS anti-Christ.

And that brings us to our world today in the 21st century.

It is impossible to understand our world today without the full impact and meaning of a little statement of Jesus at the end of one of His parables directing that understanding.

The issue is the inheritance – the issue of the inheritance rules today’s world.

Two sons claim the inheritance, the first born versus the second born. Ishmael versus Isaac. The natural Jew versus Christ living in His church.

At the center of one claim lies the natural city of Jerusalem, that Paul calls a city of bondage, and that John calls Sodom and Egypt. At the center of the other claim lies the true inheritance, the overflowing Spirit of God abounding in the heart of the believer in Jesus Christ out of which comes all abundance of provision from God.

At the center of one claim is violence, beating others into submission to itself. At the center of the other claim is a laid-down life.

Here are Jesus' words, exposing the thoughts filling the hearts of the Pharisees who, laying claim to Moses, broke completely the Covenant of Moses given upon Mt. Sinai – Matthew 21:38.

“This is the heir. Come, let us kill Him and seize His inheritance.”

The Beast versus the Lamb. The revelation of John on Patmos is simply a continuation of this conflict over the inheritance.

Now, here is what Jesus says in response to those who kill the Heir and seize the inheritance for themselves by violence – Luke 20:16. “He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others.”

These words of Jesus were fulfilled a first time in AD 70. But that claim of “right” to the inheritance did not end in AD 70. Oh, it was put to death all right. But 1,878 years later, 1,919 years after the cross of Christ wounded it to death, in AD 1948, that Beast crawled out of the pit again.

The natural Jew, Ishmael, the child of the flesh, once again seized the inheritance by violence, apart from the covenant of Moses, apart from hearing Christ.

This reality does not surprise us, of course, because it is all spelled out for us so clearly in the terms of the New Covenant, the covenant we signed with God and He with us.

Paul says so clearly inside the terms of the New Covenant, in Galatians 3:16, one of the central chapters of that New Covenant that God offered to the Jews after they had utterly broken the Old, there is one heir only of Abraham – Christ. There is one heir only of Moses – Christ. There is one heir only of the prophets – Christ. There is one heir only of all the promises of God – Christ.

And then Paul reveals this most wonderful of all truths in Galatians 3:28-29: There are no Jews in Christ; there are no Gentiles in Christ, but only one new man. “And if you are Christ's, then you ARE Abraham's SEED (singular – Christ), and heirs according to the promise.”

However, inside the terms of the New Covenant, revealed to us through the Apostle John, there is a terrible warning. John warns us that, during the time when that false claim to the inheritance rises again upon the earth, there will come a spirit into the Church of Jesus Christ.

That dark spirit will look like “Christ,” that is, it will look like a lamb. But on that lamb are horns, the power of natural flesh rebelling against the death of the cross, and it speaks the words of the dragon.

The Apostle John warned us, so very clearly, that this spirit of anti-Christ, this spirit that denies Christ come in the flesh, that rejects the covenant of Moses – to hear Christ, this spirit will send forth a teaching into the church of Christ.

Out of the mouths of those who will not heed the terms of the New Covenant, so clearly spelled out in Galatians, in Romans, in Ephesians, in Hebrews, will come an ungodly exaltation of the Old Covenant, there will come a claim that the natural Jew, the son of bondage, the child of the flesh, separate from the cross of Christ, separate from the only possible way any descendant of Adam can ever escape the curse of the Old Covenant, that that false seed IS the heir, and has the right to the inheritance.

And so the battle line is clearly drawn in the terms of the New Covenant, the Beast versus Christ, the Harlot versus the Bride. The nation of Israel and its government versus the elect of God.

The nation of Israel in today's world is NOT the Israel of God.

Christ alone is the Heir; there is salvation in no other – hear Him!