

Covenant Fulfillment Chief

‘An Episcopal priest stands in the front of a church to begin a Sunday service. The sanctuary is large and full of people. Suddenly, his microphone breaks into pieces and a high shrill rings throughout the space. He lifts his hands and says, “Something went wrong with my microphone”, and the people respond, “And also with you”.’

Now, folks, don’t get any unsavory ideas from that joke! But, in a very general sense, *very* general, it illustrates how people, us, can very easily misunderstand, or just flat out get things wrong, sometimes deliberately. Teaching and doctrines from the Holy Bible are near the top of that list. Among them is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Now the word, “testament” shares the same root as “testify”, which means to declare, tell, as well as agree to, or a contract, a covenant. We’re all familiar with the phrase titling legal documents, “the last will and testament”, which declares how a person, upon their death, orders the arrangements, distribution and disbursement of their assets, effects and estate. In short, the Old Testament is the collection of 39 books in Protestant churches, or in Roman Catholic versions, 46, or still more in some other ancient Christian denominations. And as the title uses the word “testament”, the

overarching thrust of all these books is that they “testify” about all things relating to God and His purposes. In “contrast”, the New Testament “testifies” to all things relating to the Messiah come to earth in the flesh, Jesus the Christ, and His purposes.

Also frequently used to name these two main divisions of the Holy Bible is the word “covenant”, in place of the word “testament”. Thus, we then have the “Old Covenant”, and the “New Covenant”. The word “covenant” is also a legal term, meaning more specifically a contract, a legally-binding agreement between two parties. The term “covenant” is still widely used today, commonly in real estate arrangements in which persons “covenant” with others in their neighborhood or building to certain ordinances and rules regarding any number of various and sundry matters. Used in reference to the Holy Bible, the term explicitly refers to the Law of Moses, including the covenants preceding Moses drawn up and “signed” by Abraham and God, and before him, Noah and God, and before that, Adam and Eve and God. But in a general sense then, the Old Covenant refers to the whole Old Testament, and the two terms become interchangeable.

The same is true of the New Testament and New Covenant. The New Covenant specifically refers to the new “law” which Lord Jesus established and inaugurated with all of creation through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. In His death on the cross, Christ Jesus, the “Lamb of God”, uniquely offered Himself as the ultimate and final sacrificial Lamb which not only

covered all the sins of God's people for one more year, but this time, not just for a year but for all eternity. Thus, the entire system of Temple worship in Jerusalem with its continuous sacrifices of thousands and thousands of animals atoning for, that is, temporarily covering, the people's sins, is done away with. With the death of Christ Jesus, the shedding of His blood, all sins can now be forgiven, once and for all. Thus no more animal sacrifices. And not only did Christ's death and resurrection bring to an end the sacrifices enabling all mankind to be forgiven of all sin for all time, the entire creation has also been redeemed and delivered, saved, snatched out of the hands and control of the devil, again for all time and eternity.

Because of this, many mistakenly think that Lord Jesus has inaugurated a totally and completely new law, a new covenant which supersedes the old covenant, the old law. They think the New Covenant, the New Testament, cancels the Old Covenant, the Old Testament, rendering those 39 books null and void, of no more effect. Many who subscribe to this understanding, this view, do so with less than altruistic intentions. Since the most specific of laws regarding human behaviors and relationships to one another are found in the Old Testament, declaring that the Old Covenant is no longer valid, lets such people "off the hook" so to speak, regarding many of their modern-day actions and conduct. Furthermore, some think, since Christ has already paid the price for all sin, it no longer really matters how we live. For we're now

free from the law of sin and death! How great is that? We're essentially free now to do anything we want. Right? Wrong!!

People who deliberately think this way and claim to be believers are also deliberately ignorant of the Holy Bible in the entirety of its message. And the New Covenant, the New Testament goes to great pains, again and again, to refute such erroneous and truly deadly thinking. For what did our Lord Jesus Himself emphatically say, as recorded in Matthew 5:17-20: "I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"

That last sentence of our Lord's is pointed! For in those days, the supposed epitome of righteousness was that of the Pharisees and the teachers of religious law. They were the supreme experts, unapproachable and unquestionable. Just about everyone aspired, if even for a moment, to be as righteous as they, and thus be that much closer to God and thereby receive His favors and blessings, becoming as wealthy, "successful" and

respected as those exalted leaders were. But here the Lord says that even the highest, most righteous people who walked the earth would never enter Heaven. If that's the case, then absolutely no one would ever get to Heaven. And, as incomprehensible that thought was to those who heard it then, that is exactly the point the Lord was making. Without Him and His soon-coming transcendent act on the cross, no one could be saved. For this was not the purpose of the Old Covenant. It could not result in salvation because it was impossible to obey. It was meant to point to something, rather Someone, beyond itself. This is why our Lord Jesus announced, "I came to accomplish their purpose". The Old Covenant has not nor ever will be abolished, superseded or repudiated. On the contrary, it was and forever will be in full effect, written on our hearts. And one Man has made it so and fulfilled it completely and totally, doing what no other human being could ever do—our Lord and Savior. Because He did it, the Old Covenant, the Old Testament, forever stands fully accomplished and fulfilled. Truly our Lord is the "Covenant Fulfilling Chief"!

'Suppose you were given pen and paper, ten minutes, and this assignment. Describe the character of Jesus Christ in ten ... sentences. What would you write? Perhaps the simplest and most theologically correct answer would be to write the Ten Commandments. [They] ... flow from the character of God Himself and perfectly describe the Person of Christ. ... Jesus Himself fulfills the Law. He Himself is the embodiment of the Ten

Commandments, and thereby sinless. [The Ten Commandments] are more than archaic laws given to an ancient nation. [They] are a ten-sided description of the Lord and of His character—and by extension, they are descriptions of the character of Christ being reproduced in His followers by the Holy Spirit’.

Did you hear that? “The character of Christ Himself is “being reproduced in His followers by the Holy Spirit”. It means that as we first believe, then faithfully and obediently follow the Lord and His Old Covenant laws, summed up in the Ten Commandments, and the Two Laws of Love, to love God and love others, our characters are slowly transformed into Christ Jesus’ very character, becoming perfect, living in complete accord with the entirety of God’s law and word. For, as the Lord proclaimed He fully accomplished the purpose of the Law, the Old Testament, so too do we become perfect. Without really thinking about it. Without striving to obey the minutia of its every jot and tittle. Striving to in our own strength is an inescapable recipe for disaster and hell. Following blessed Holy Spirit in faith is what brings us to Heaven. We must never presume on God’s grace and blatantly sin. But while striving to live rightly, we must always keep our eyes on Him. For only by faith in Him are we made righteous, and are made capable of obeying the Old Covenant, and thereby, receive what God intended for us His children from the beginning of time—to blissfully live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven with Him. That is worth “striving” for! So, need to fulfill a covenant? See the Chief!!

