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A Covenant Restored

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The first thing one needs to do in order to enter into a relationship with God is to acknowledge, believe, and receive the free gift of salvation that God offers through Christ. Any true believer in Christ understands that faith in what Christ has done for us on the cross of Calvary is fundamental to our relationship with God; I am behind no one in declaring these truths for all who would believe. But there is a very important aspect of what Christ accomplished on the cross that has long been overlooked, ignored, and misunderstood. Before it could be offered for the atonement of sins for all of humanity, Christ's sacrifice on the cross had significant meaning and purpose that applied only to the nation of Israel and her covenants.

The covenants in Scripture flow along the path of God's plans for Israel and expand on the promises of previous covenants. Through the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to make of Abraham a great nation and to give her a land to dwell in. This nation would produce kings, be blessed by God, and in turn be a blessing to all nations, but few details as to how this would come about were given. (Genesis 12, 15, and 17.) After Israel's number had grown to millions while in bondage in Egypt, God heard the cries of His people and remembered the covenant He had made with Abraham. (Exodus 2:23-25.) God enters into another covenant with Israel through Moses. In it, God advances the Abrahamic Covenant by describing how He will make Israel a special treasure unto Himself above all people, that they will become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for His purposes. (Exodus 19:5-6.) The promise of a people, a land, and the blessings found in the Abrahamic Covenant are the foundation which God could now build through the Mosaic Covenant.

Israel was to become the conduit through which God would become known to the nations. This holy (set apart) nation of priests (mediators) would be the vehicle that God would use to manifest Himself to the world. (Zechariah 9:22-33.) **"Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (NKJV used throughout, Isaiah 2:2-4.) And all nations shall flow to it (God's government). Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain (government) of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations.** (Also see Isaiah 49:6 and 60:3.) But we all know what happened. Israel failed to keep the terms of the Mosaic covenant by sinning at the foot of Mt. Sinai. God bound Israel to the ten terms of the covenant now through the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses represented a broken covenant to Israel.

What is often overlooked in Christendom is the foundational purpose for Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the offer of forgiveness to Israel for a broken covenant. Christ came to fulfill the Law. (Matthew 5:17.)

He did this by becoming the required sacrifice for the New Covenant. (Hebrews 9:15.) **And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.** Covenants between God and Israel were always ratified with a blood sacrifice. (Genesis 15:9-21, Exodus 24:5-8, Hebrews 9:16-22, 13:20.) Restoring Israel's broken covenant secures their role as God's mediatory people for the purpose of enlightening the world to what and who Jesus Christ is: Jehovah God Himself.

The prophecies concerning Israel's role as a light to the world were all made hundreds of years after Israel's failure at Mt. Sinai. So how can any of the prophecies concerning God's plans for Israel's future be possible when these promises were connected to the covenant that Israel had already failed to uphold? It is because God is the God of all grace and He has promised to restore Israel's broken covenant through a new covenant. (Jeremiah 31:33-34.) **"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."**

The Old Covenant is the foundation upon which God will fulfill the New Covenant. The New Covenant explains how Israel will still be able to be God's light to the world. They will have their iniquity forgiven and God's Law will be placed in their minds and written on their hearts.

Most everyone agrees that the New Covenant did not become a reality in the Old Testament, but most expositors teach that it *did* become a reality in the New Testament. This is because of what Christ said during what is commonly called the last supper on the night of His betrayal. (Matthew 26:27.) . . . **this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.** (Also see Luke 22:20, I Corinthians 11:25, and Mark 14:24.)

There is no justification for taking the things taught in the book of Hebrews concerning Christ's sacrifice for the New Covenant and applying it to the "Christian church." Christ declared that He would become the blood sacrifice required to ratify the New Covenant. Jesus was celebrating the Jewish Feast of Passover with His disciples that night. He never said the New Covenant was at that time becoming a reality. Much effort is made to disconnect the New Covenant from Israel and apply it to the religion of Christianity. But by doing so, men have all but negated the importance and significance of the New Covenant. The New Covenant has *always* had *everything* to do with Israel.

Before Christ's sacrifice can be seen as having any meaning for the greater world, it first must be recognized as having immeasurable meaning for Israel and her failed covenant. If He had not restored this broken covenant, God's great name would not have been defended and upheld, Israel would not have the future she has always been promised, and those of us in the greater Gentile world would have no offer of salvation available to us. While everything God has done and will do through Israel has huge implications for the greater Gentile world, the significance of Christ's sacrifice to restore Israel's broken covenant through the finished work of the cross must not be ignored or neglected.

Christ's sacrifice restores Israel's broken covenant. Christ rises from the dead on the third day! Forgiveness for Israel is now available. The kingdom of God can now be offered to all Israelites living on the earth. This is exactly what we see transpiring in the Acts Period. With some Gentile exceptions, the gospel was sent (Gk.-*apostello*, authorized) primarily to the Israelites living at that time. (Acts 13:26.) This

was the kingdom in part, the “blade” stage as described in Mark’s parable of growing grain. (Mark 4:26-29.) The New Covenant realities described in Jeremiah’s prophecy will wait for the day when the Israel of God has been fully successful in shining forth God’s light to the world. At that time, it won’t be necessary any longer for Israel to teach their neighbors and brothers to know the LORD for *everyone will know Him!* This will be the kingdom of God in its “full grain in the head” stage of Mark’s parable. At this stage of God’s plans for the earth, Christ’s enemies have been made His footstool. At last, God’s will is being done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10.) The New Covenant is synonymous with the manifest kingdom of God on earth.

It is normal that we focus on what Christ has done for *us*. Any sincere believer recognizes how thankful we must be for all God has done in saving us from sin and bringing us into a relationship with Himself. But we must recognize that *all* aspects of what Christ accomplished on Calvary’s cross are awe-inspiring. Let us not forget that, before it could have any implications for us, Christ’s most excellent work on the cross restored Israel’s broken covenant. May God speed the day when every creature on earth will enjoy the benefits of that restored covenant.