

THE NEW COVENANT

by Boyce Mouton

For more than 40 years I have pondered with profound amazement the genius of God made manifest in the “New Covenant”. Like Paul, I stand in awe at the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and humbly acknowledge that His judgments are unsearchable and His paths beyond tracing out (Rom. 11:33). I believe the New Covenant is an integral part of God’s hidden wisdom kept secret from before the foundation of the world. It is so wonderful and profound that its full implications never entered into the heart of man. Even the angels were prevented from seeing it (1 Pet. 1:12). Yet, it has now been revealed to us by His Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10).

Please prayerfully consider the following:

THE OLD COVENANT

- God wrote the Old Covenant on tablets of stone in the day when He took His people by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt (Deut. 5:2, Heb. 8:9).
- God added nothing to this covenant and it was written on two stone tablets (Deut. 5:22).
- Moses put these stone tablets in a box he had made (Deut. 10:5); and that box was called the “ark of the covenant” (Nu. 10:33).
- Little children and strangers would have no knowledge of this covenant and thus it had to be taught to them (Deut. 6:7).
- Because God promised to meet with His people where the covenant was located (Ex. 25:22), there was only one place on earth where God’s people could worship Him (Deut. 12:5).
- The glory that was on the face of Moses when he received the Old Covenant, faded away (Ex. 34:29, 2 Cor. 3:7).
- That covenant, written in stone, was administered “without pity” (Deut. 13:8).
- When that covenant was given, the Levites, who administered that covenant, killed 3,000 people (Ex. 32:28).
- That covenant, written in stone, was called “the ministry that brought death” (2 Cor. 3:7).
- The high priest who ministered under the Old Covenant was prevented by death from continuing his ministry (Heb. 7:23).
- The Levites, who administered the Old Covenant, paid tithes to Melchizedek when they were yet in the body of Abraham (Heb. 7:10).
- That covenant from Mt. Sinai, like Hagar and Ishmael, represents slavery (Gal. 4:24).
- God found something wrong with the Old Covenant and decided to write a new one (Heb. 8:7).

THE NEW COVENANT

- God promised that the New Covenant would not be like the old one (Jer. 31:32, Heb. 8:9).
- The Old Covenant was written in stone but the new one was written in “minds” and “hearts” (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10, 2 Cor. 3:3).
- Since the New Covenant is in the minds and hearts of believers our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).
- This means that true worship no longer occurs at specific locations like the tabernacle or temple, but in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23).
- New Covenant people do not need to be taught to know the Lord, for from the least to the greatest they already know Him (Jer. 31:34, Heb. 8:11).
- The Old Covenant high priest administered the Law without pity, but the New Covenant has

- a “merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb. 2:17).
- When the New Covenant became a reality 3,000 people were saved (Acts 2:41).
- The New Covenant has a high priest who does not die and therefore ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).
- The high priest, under the Old Covenant, ministered in a man made tabernacle. Our New Covenant high priest ministers in the “true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man” (Heb. 8:2).
- The New Covenant priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, and is therefore superior to the priesthood of Levi (Heb. 8:6).
- The New Covenant is like Sarah and Isaac and represents freedom (Ga. 4:21 - 31).

THE NEW BIRTH

- Receiving the New Covenant involves being “born again”.
- The first mention of created life in the Scriptures involved seeds.
- On the third day God created seed bearing plants and trees (Gen. 1:11).
- Every seed reproduced after its own kind (Gen. 1:12).
- Jesus knew this and reminded Nicodemus: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” Spiritual life can only come from a spiritual seed!
- Our physical father planted a physical seed in the physical womb of our mother and we received physical life. From this physical seed we received the physical “image” or “likeness” of our earthly father. Every cell of our physical body contains the “likeness” or “DNA” of our earthly father. This physical “code” provides positive identification of what family we come from. The things we see, of course, like our earthly bodies, are only temporary (2 Cor. 4:18). In Adam all die (1 Cor. 15:22).
- The “new birth” comes from a spiritual seed. “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet 1:23) When we are born again God writes His laws in our minds and hearts, and this new code, or covenant, produces a new “image” or “likeness”. Jesus is called the “last Adam” because His seed produces a totally different genus, or family (1 Cor. 15:45) As long as His seed remains in us we are New Covenant people and our lives are different (1 Jn. 3:9).
- The implications of the New Covenant with regard to Christian unity are far reaching and profound. Brotherhood is based upon fatherhood. Fraternity is based upon paternity. We are not brothers because we agree on commandments written in stone, but because we have a common father. This is the reason Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” (Heb 2:11) We are inferior to Jesus in every way, but if God is our Father He is not ashamed to call us his brothers, for God is also His Father.

CONCLUSION

Because Ishmael and Isaac had the same earthly father, it is quite possible that they were similar in their physical appearance. They were, however, very different. In fact, they were “radically” different. The word “radical”, as you know, comes from the Latin “radix”, which means “root”. These brothers may have looked alike on the surface, but at the very root of their existence they were totally different. Ishmael was born after the flesh and Isaac was born after the Spirit (Gal. 4:29).

Their basic nature, of course, was reflected by their conduct. Ishmael and Isaac behaved differently. The name “Ishmael” means “God hears”. He was given this name because the Lord heard the cries of his anguished mother (Gen. 16:11). There is also another reason why his name

is appropriate. It is because he was constantly crying out and complaining about his brother Isaac. This is why the Scriptures say of Ishmael "He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers." (Gen 16:12) The hostile Ishmael would be constantly involved in controversy. Until Isaac was born he expected to inherit all the possessions of his father. When Isaac was born, however, Abraham decided to leave everything to him. The Scriptures are explicit! "Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac" (Gen. 25:5). Thus he that was born in the ordinary way persecuted the one born by the power of the Spirit (Gal. 4:29).

The name "Isaac" means "laughter". While Ishmael was hostile, Isaac was laughing. Isaac was not like a "wild donkey" with every man's hand against him. The smiling and happy Isaac was not born in an ordinary way. His mother was "past age" and had a "dead womb". If it had not been for a miracle from God he would never have been born. Remember that these two men and their mothers represent the Old and the New Covenants.

When we become New Covenant people, our conduct is so radically different that we are like living letters proclaiming the good news of God. Paul put it like this: **"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."** (2 Cor 3:2-6)

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