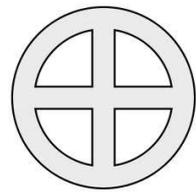


MAT-MAR-BON-CHRIST MISSION

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("Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest." -Mathew-11:28)

THE LAW AND THE COVENANTS

Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts. When man fell by transgression, the law was not changed, but a remedial system was established to bring him back to obedience. The promise of a Saviour was given and sacrificial offerings pointing forward to the death of Christ as the great sin-offering were established. But had the law of God never been transgressed, there would have been no death, and no need of a Saviour; consequently there would have been no need of sacrifices.

Adam taught his descendants the law of God, and it was handed down from father to son through successive generations. But notwithstanding the gracious provision of man's redemption, there were few who accepted it and rendered obedience. By transgression the world became so vile that it was necessary to cleanse it by the flood from its corruption. The law was preserved by Noah and his family, and Noah taught his descendants the ten commandments. As men again departed from God, the Lord chose Abraham, of whom he declared, "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws"(Gen. 26:5). To him was given the rite of circumcision, which was a sign that those who received it were devoted to the service of God,- a pledge that they would remain separate from idolatry, and would obey the law of God.

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. The law of God is as immutable as his throne. It will maintain its claims upon mankind in all ages.

Christ was the foundation and center of the sacrificial system in both the patriarchal and the Jewish age. Since the sin of our first parents, there has been no direct communication between God and man. The father has given the world into the hands of Christ, that through his mediatorial work he may redeem man, and vindicate the authority and holiness of the law of God. All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was he who revealed himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man's substitute and surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels.

Christ was not only the leader of the Hebrews in the wilderness,- the Angel in whom was the name of Jehovah, and who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host, - but it was he who gave the law to Israel. Amid the awful glory of Mount Sinai, Christ declared in the hearing of all the people the ten precepts of his Father's law. It was he who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone. The ceremonial law was given by Christ. The cloud of incense ascending with the prayers of Israel represents His righteousness that alone can make the sinner's prayer acceptable to God; the bleeding victim on the altar of sacrifice testified of a Redeemer to come; and from the holy of holies the visible token of the divine presence shone forth. Thus through age after age of darkness and apostasy, faith was kept alive in the hearts of men until the time came for the advent of the promised Messiah. In the plan of redemption, Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, - the First and the Last. Since the Saviour shed his blood for the remission of sins, and ascended to heaven "to appear in the presence of God for mankind light has been streaming from the cross of Calvary and from the holy places of the sanctuary above.

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that his care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that his people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow-men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected him, he was constantly seeking to reveal himself to them, and make them partakers of his love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others.

As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the fall, there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon, and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation. Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham in the promise pointed to Christ, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18), it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the "second", or new covenant.