**The New Covenant**

I. Understanding how the old and new covenants relate to one another is a complicated matter

A. Consider these potential conversations

1. John: “You should be giving 10% of your money away to charitable causes because Deuteronomy 26:12 says, “set aside a tenth of all your produce to give to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless, and the widow.” Bob: “Yes, but now that Jesus has come we are no longer under law but under grace. God isn’t asking for obedience to commandments, he’s asking for faith.”

2. John: “You need to pursue celibacy, because Lev 20:13 says, ‘If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.’” Bob: “Yah, but Lev 19:19 says, ‘Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material,’ and I noticed the shirt your wearing is 60% cotton and 40% polyester.”

3. John: “I’m sad that America seems to be losing its power and influence in the world lately.” Bob: “That’s because we’ve disobeyed the Lord. If we would repent and obey, we would find that power and influence again because Deuteronomy 28:1 says, ‘If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.’”

B. Consider the different kinds of commands in the Old Covenant

1. Moral commands

-These commands reflect the moral fabric of God’s universe as he created it. They are built into the way God created reality. They were implicit from the creation, but they are made explicit in the Mosaic covenant (as an example, consider the last 5 of the 10 commandments)

2. Ceremonial Commands:

-These include everything connected with the worship structure of Israel (e.g. tabernacle, priests, animal sacrifices, religious festivals) as well as laws designed to make Israel a “peculiar people” who look different than the surrounding nations (e.g. circumcision, kosher laws, and clothing requirements)

3. Civil Commands

-Laws that deal with Israel as a nation-state: a political, economic, and judicial entity

II. Where is there continuity between the covenants and where is there change?

A. Continuity

1. Our temptation is to try to hold onto Jesus, pluck him out of the context of the Old Testament (which feels complicated, foreign, or even offensive to our modern sensibilities), but Jesus himself wouldn’t want us to do that since he held the Old Testament in such high regard and considered it a binding authority in his own life.

2. There is great continuity between covenants in their answers to two basic questions

a. Who is God?

1. A God of compassion, grace, and love

2. A God who is holy, just, and deals with sin

b. What does God desire from us?

1. Faith (consider Gal 5:6)

2. Obedience (consider 1 Cor 7:19)

III. Where is the new covenant genuinely new?

A. God’s gift of his son to do for us what we can’t do for ourselves

= perfectly obey the Torah

= offer a perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins

B. God’s gift of his Spirit to do in us what we can’t do in ourselves

= transform our hearts from the inside out so we begin to walk in the obedience of faith

C. This means the old covenant is rendered obsolete

1. The civil and ceremonial laws are no longer relevant to us

2. But those laws that reflect the moral structure of God’s universe continue to remain relevant, but we walk in them not to gain God’s approval but from a place of already having his approval

D. The ladder vs. the railroad track analogy: two ways to approach God’s commands

1. Ladder: you try to climb the ladder of God’s commands in your own strength hoping that God’s approval is waiting for you at the top.

2. Railroad tracks: you already have God’s approval, you are found in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the engine that drives you. God’s commandments are simply laying out the flourishing and healthy life he has for you that you might walk in it. (See Eph 2:8-10)