

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(Covenanting Provided for in the Everlasting Covenant, Part 3)

“[P]ublic, social covenanting, is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament.”—Fourth Term of Communion.

Question 1.—*What is the second way in which provision was made during the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations?*

Answer.—The second way in which provision was made was through the typology found throughout the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, Col. 2:17. Covenanting itself is not a type or shadow, but a substantial reality, Heb. 6:17. With many other things, however, which in some aspects of their character were types of good things to come, under other of their features it may be associated in presenting an emblem of what is spiritual, Heb. 7:21. Thus, Enoch, who clave to God, Heb. 11:5; Gen. 5:24; Noah and Abraham, each a covenant head, 2 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 4:11; Aaron and Phineas, each the representative of a covenanted priesthood, Jer. 33:21; Num. 25:11-13; and David, the federal head of a royal posterity, Ezek. 34:23; as individuals, they were emblems of many devoted personally and socially by covenant to the Lord, Ps. 115:12.

Many classes of persons who symbolized were explicitly engaged by covenant to the service of the LORD, such as: the Israelites, servants of God, Ex. 31:16; the first-born among these, dedicated to the LORD, Ex. 13:2; the Goel, or Kinsman-redeemer, under a descending obligation to interpose in behalf of a relative, Ruth 3:13; the voluntary bondservant, who, from love to his master and family, explicitly engaged himself to his service through life, Ex. 21:1-6; sojourning strangers, not Canaanites, allowed and encouraged by the Israelites to wait on all the ordinances of religion, Lev. 25:6; Num. 15:14; the Hebrew kings of David's family vested with rule according to perpetual covenant, 2 Sam. 23:5; the Nazarites, peculiarly set apart to the service of God, Num. 6:2; the Aaronic priesthood, under the bond of an enduring covenant, Num. 18:8, 19; and the Nethinims, a people employed with the sanctuary, descendants of the Gibeonites, who, though like Jacob they did not do well in the choice of means to obtain the blessing, were taken into covenant with God, Josh. 9:26, 27; Ezra 8:20.

The cities of refuge, true to their designation, are as emblems pointing out the facts of a covenant made on behalf of many, who by sin are exposed to ruin: Kedesh, a *holy place*; Shechem, a *part or portion*, as the lot of a covenant inheritance; Hebron, *society, friendship*, the end of a covenant; Bezer, *cut off and broken*, as the sinner is from all vain confidences; Ramoth, *eminences*, or *high places*, as the stronghold provided in the covenant to prisoners of hope; Golan, *exile*, as separation from every visitation of vengeance, Josh. 20:7, 8. The places where manifestations were made of God in covenant, all denote scenes, where His people, in every age, in giving themselves to the LORD, cleave unto Him: Canaan, a land of inheritance promised in the covenant, 1 Chron. 16:18; Jerusalem, *the vision of peace*, and city of God, Ps. 122:1-7.

The ark prepared by Noah was entered by him and his house, betokening the accession of men, in all ages, to the covenant of God by faith in the Redeemer, 1 Pet. 3:20, 21. The ark of the covenant, containing the book of the Law, Deut. 10:2; the table of shewbread, representing the means of exhibiting Christ, the bread of life, John 6:32-35;

the altar of incense, from which arose offerings, as of the praises and supplications of God's people, perfumed by the sweet incense of Christ's intercession, Rev. 8:3, 4; the golden candlestick, shedding forth light, as of the influences of God's Spirit, Zech. 4:2; the laver, for washing, representing the means of purification from all defilement, Ex. 30:18; the altar of burnt offering, from which arose the flame of sacrifice, that betokened the offering of Him who made His soul a propitiation for sin, Heb. 9:13, 14; were sacred utensils, all of which referred to the ratification of God's covenant, and the dispensation of its blessings to those who are enabled to lay hold upon it, Heb. 9:1-7.

All the seasons which pointed out the waiting upon the ordinances of that covenant which was ratified by the oath, are represented by the number of perfection: the Sabbath, returning every seventh day, Ex. 20:10; the periodic feast of unleavened bread for seven days, following upon the Passover, Ex. 13:6; the Sabbatic year, completing an interval reckoned by seven, Lev. 25:4; the year of jubilee, occurring always after seven times seven years were completed, Lev. 25:8.

Typical purifications were all of the nature of appeal to God: thus, the ordeal for freeing from the imputation of murder, conducted by slaying the heifer, and washing the hands over it, while there was made a protestation of innocence, that embodied an oath, Deut. 21:4-8; the means of removing ceremonial defilement of various kinds, 1 Sam. 14:24; and the bitter water which, according to the innocence or guilt of the party to whom it was administered, acted innocuously, so as to denote the effects of a lawful oath, or as the oath which, by being sworn falsely, is converted into a curse, Num. 5:18-22. The oblations in general, sin and trespass offerings, the burnt offering, the peace offerings, all of which were to be offered with salt, which is the emblem of the everlasting covenant, 2 Chron. 13:5. To these we might add all of the various sacrifices, which point to the covenant of God that must be laid hold of by faith in Christ, 1 Cor. 5:7.

Question 2.—What is the third way in which provision was made during the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations?

Answer.—The third way in which provision was made was through the miracles found throughout the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, Num. 14:22. There is the flame of fire, which appeared on many solemn occasions, all testified to the gracious nearness of God to His covenant people: so, the "flaming sword" that burns, displayed between the cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, Gen. 3:24; the flame of fire in which the Angel of the LORD appeared unto Moses out of the midst of the bush, Ex. 3:2; the flame of fire which appeared on the top of Mount Sinai when the LORD made a covenant with Israel, Ex. 19:18; the pillar of fire by night, which accompanied Israel during their journeying in the wilderness, Ex. 13:21, 22; and the fire which was wont to descend and consume, in token of the acceptance of them, the sacrifices laid on God's altar, 1 Chron. 21:26.

The dividing of the waters of the Red sea manifested the almighty power of Him who had covenanted to bring His people to a land of inheritance, 1 Cor. 10:1, 2. The provision of the bread from heaven, and water from the rock in the wilderness, showed in part how great were the resources of Him Whose promises are not in vain, Ex. 16:4; 17:6.

Question 3.—What is the fourth way in which provision was made during the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations?

Answer.—The fourth way in which provision was made was through the teachings of the prophets found throughout the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, Amos 3:7. That was addressed in the name of the LORD as God in covenant, Deut. 7:9; to Israel as a

covenant people, it was extended, Ps. 78:10; and it embodied only the revelations of the covenant, Ps. 25:14. This included sketches of the history of the covenant, including its unfolding of the relations subsisting between God and His privileged people, and speaking of the future history of the church, incorporated by solemn confederation, Rom. 9:4, 5.

Question 4.—*What is the fifth way in which provision was made during the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations?*

Answer.—The fifth way in which provision was made was through the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures progressively unveiled throughout the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, Rom. 3:2. So, for example, Christ is therein introduced as a Husband, Isa. 54:5; and, consequently, as the Head of His people, engaged to Him by vow, Jer. 31:32. He is exhibited as the Captain of the LORD's host, Josh. 5:15; and as the Leader and Commander to the people, Isa. 55:4. He is called the Branch in order to present Him at once of the lineage of David according to the flesh, as the Author of everlasting righteousness, as allied in the capacity of the Firstborn among many brethren to the church redeemed by His blood, and as the Builder and the Head thereof, Zech. 3:8; 6:12, 13; Jer. 23:5, 6. As the Covenant of the people, He is revealed, to denote that He is the Mediator of the covenant, and that in that capacity He received the gift of the people of the covenant, fulfilled its conditions by obeying the law and presented Himself as a covenant sacrifice, Isa. 42:6. As the Days-man, He is made known, to intimate that, by Him alone, and only in a covenant relation, men chargeable with sin can hold communion with God, Job 9:33. As the Ladder, He is spoken of, to point Him out as, in the natures of God and man, the only means of communication between heaven and earth, Gen. 28:12. As the Witness to the people, He is described to be given by the Father, and consequently according to His own voluntary engagement, Isa. 55:4. And as Shiloh, He was promised, and His people thus received Him as their Peace—provided in the covenant, Gen. 49:10; Eph. 2:13. And His Church is denominated His *Portion*, and the *Lot of His inheritance*, Deut. 32:9. In various passages she is described as *peaceable* or *perfect*, and is thus presented as in covenant, Isa. 32:18; 42:19. And as *Israel*, the *loved* of the LORD, she appears under promised protection, Deut. 33:12.

Finally, we must consider that throughout the Old Testament the Hebrew term for *atonement* and *reconciliation*, כָּפַר (*kāpar*), stands connected with the covenant state—but for the covenant, there had been no atonement and forgiveness of sin, propitiation and reconciliation are all connected to atonement, Job 33:23, 24. Thus, the atonement cannot exceed the comprehension of the covenant for the ratification of which it was effected, John 6:37. In reference to this, the blood of the atonement, the blood of the ancient sacrifices, was called the *blood of the covenant*, Ex. 24:8; while of His own, the Saviour testifies, this cup is the new testament in my blood, Mark 14:24. It is, therefore, the blood of Christ, not shed by accident, nor poured out at random, but as shed when He laid down His life by covenant that brought atonement and reconciliation to the elect, Zech. 9:11; 1 Pet. 1:2.