

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(Covenanting Enforced by the Grant of Covenant Signs and Seals 4)

“[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 sixth sign to be considered which the LORD bestowed?*

Answer.—The next sign, in accordance with the previous sign (*i.e.*, the priesthood), which is promised is that of the *new heart*, Jer. 31:31-33. This *new heart* is contrasted with the hearts of those of whom face the upbraiding of the prophet, so that the *heart* promised as a new covenant blessing, is essentially a *new heart*, Zech. 7:12. Unlike the adamant stone, resisting the engraver’s chisel, but made soft to receive impressions of truth, it sustains the character of an *heart of flesh*—substituted for the former, the *stony heart*, so that those blessed with it have had realized to them the promise, Ezek. 11:19.

Being a new covenant blessing, the new heart is a new covenant sign, Ezek. 36:26. A holy priesthood are a people set apart to the service of God, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; a new heart is the distinguishing feature of those so set apart, *cf.* Ex. 28:3. Though not palpable to the men of the world, it gives evidence of its own existence, not equivocal, Eph. 2:10; and diffusing its stores, makes known the fountain whence it derived them, and proclaims the end for which its own constitution was given, Deut. 30:6. Like hypocrites in every age, many of the ancient Israelites brake God’s covenant, or, in other words, they gave evidence that in His covenant they never had an interest, 1 John 2:19. But the LORD’s covenant could not be allowed to fail, *cf.* 2 Chron. 7:18; Isa. 42:1, 4.

Various spirits may jointly or successively take possession of those in a state of sin, *cf.* 1 John 4:1. Yea, the common operations of the Spirit of the LORD, as when the conscience is aroused, and even sometimes His extraordinary operations, may be upon them, *cf.* Matt. 7:21, 22. But to them meanwhile may not be given the one enduring new heart, Heb. 6:4-6. To some, as to Balaam, for wise purposes, by the Spirit it may have been given to see a vision of the Almighty, Num. 23:4, 5; and to other may be given, as God gave to Saul, another heart, 1 Sam. 10:9; and still there may not be bestowed a new heart, *cf.* 1 Sam. 15:17-23. To seek this, however, that they may live, and hence, as a covenant people, serve the LORD, all are thus enjoined, Ezek. 18:31.

Under various aspects the new heart is presented as a covenant sign, such as a heart circumcised, Deut. 10:16; which is given along with the injunction to take hold of the true God by covenant, Deut. 10:20. So, too, along with the injunction to have a new, or circumcised, heart, Jer. 4:4; there is also given the promise of the covenant that such shall exercise themselves in swearing, Jer. 4:2. Thus, strangers brought into God’s sanctuary to pollute it, and charged by Him with having broken His covenant, are described as uncircumcised in their hearts and flesh, Ezek. 44:7. Moreover, in an evil age the house of Israel are classed with the uncircumcised heathen, as uncircumcised in heart, Jer. 9:26. So, to the unbelieving Jews the martyr Stephen applies the same character, Acts 7:51. But of those who are in covenant with God, as the Jews were, an apostle furnishes the delineation of their character, Rom. 2:29. Again, as a perfect heart, is the new heart obviously a covenant sign, 1 Kings 8:61. The new heart is that which believes, *cf.* Mark 16:14. That is the true heart; and those possessed of it, like Hezekiah, who walk before

the LORD in truth, manifest an integrity which distinguishes all who, being at peace with God, are in covenant for ever dedicated to Him, Isa. 38:3. Thus, before the LORD, David walked in integrity of heart, 1 Kings 9:4; and of a descendant who sat upon His throne, and who with His people entered into a covenant to seek with their whole heart, 2 Chron. 15:12; and he is left the record to his honor, 1 Kings 15:14. And finally, as one heart is this sign a covenant token, 1 Chron. 12:38. Contrasted with the heart in its natural sinful condition, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, it is constituted a reprove of those who, vowing to the LORD, swear deceitfully, *cf.* Ps. 24:4. Different from the double heart vainly attempting at once to do homage to God and mammon, it is wholly devoted to the LORD, *cf.* Matt. 6:24 *with* Lev. 27:28. And due to the operation of the Spirit of God, it is disposed to unite with others His like workmanship in faithfully resolving together, and jointly endeavoring to promote His glory, Acts 2:46. This the LORD Himself conferred, when, upon the occasion of Hezekiah commanding all Israel to keep the Passover, it was in his heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath might turn away from them, 2 Chron. 30:12. This the LORD also promised, Jer. 32:40. And this He has often made His people to experience, as on the day of Pentecost, when the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, Acts 4:32.

Question 2.—*What is the seventh sign to be considered which the LORD bestowed?*

Answer.—The seventh, and last, sign we must consider is Christ, Who was given as a sign of God's covenant, Isa. 8:18. And by an apostle, these words are represented as employed by the Saviour, having in union with the Divine nature the nature of man, Heb. 2:13. In mount Zion, the LORD of hosts dwells as a covenant God, Ps. 74:2, 20; 78:68. His children, a holy priesthood, are from Him as a covenant sign, Ex. 19:5, 6; Ps. 141:2; and from Him also, as the most distinguished covenant sign, is His Son—the great High Priest of our profession, Himself sanctified by suffering, Heb. 3:1. That all ends of the earth should see the salvation of God had been predicted, Isa. 52:10. On the record of inspiration, too, had appeared the promise to give Christ for a covenant, Isa. 42:6. That in Christ both were fulfilled, was attested by Simeon, to whom it was revealed by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen Christ, Luke 2:28-32. Moreover, in prophecy was delivered the message that Christ was given a sign, and in Jesus the promised Son is recognized, Matt. 1:23. When the birth of the forerunner John suggested that He should soon appear, an honored believer prophesied this to be the fulfilment of the covenant promise, Luke 1:67-73. And when John was prosecuting his ministry, then had been fulfilled the promise found in Malachi, *cf.* Mal. 3:1 *with* Matt. 11:10.

Of the existence of the everlasting covenant, Jesus was a token, Isa. 55:3. The OT economy, and that of the NT, were dispensations of the covenant of redemption, *cf.* Gen. 17:7 *with* Rom. 4:9-13. Under the former, Christ and His work were typified and predicted, 1 Cor. 10:1-4; and under the latter, these are commemorated, 1 Cor. 5:7, 8. Christ, appearing as the substance of the truth announced under both, was given a sign of that everlasting covenant whence they took their origin, Prov. 8:23; Isa. 9:6 (“father, or author, of perpetuity”). Had that covenant been but in theory, Christ had not appeared, His appearance declared it fact, 2 Tim. 1:10. As the Father's Servant, and consequently as in covenant with Him, He was promised, Rom. 16:25, 26. His mission to fulfill His Father's will, declared His obligations, John 6:38. The oath sworn to Him, as a priest after the order of Melchizedec, pointed out their nature, Heb. 7:17-23; and His manifestation in the

flesh, and the perfect righteousness which He wrought out, abundantly signified their covenant origin, and reality, and design, John 17:6.

Christ was given as a token of the covenant's ratification, *cf.* John 6:27. In His questions put to the Jews regarding a prophetic psalm, the Redeemer testified to the Father's oath, sworn to Himself as the new covenant Surety, *cf.* Matt. 22:41-45 with Psalm 110:1-4. And that, as on the part of the Father of mercies His covenant should be ratified, so, on His own part, it should not fail, He gave this sign, He magnified the law and made it honorable, Isa. 42:21. It was predicted of His work that He would accomplish the ends of the covenant, Zech. 9:11. He submitted to the injuries inflicted on Him by His enemies and, bearing the load of God's wrath, He laid down His life, to confirm this covenant, Heb. 13:20, 21. In heaven He stands as a Lamb slain, and receives the adoration of its hosts for upholding this covenant, as a sign of its complete confirmation, Rev. 5:9.

Christ was a sign of the dispensation of the blessings of God's covenant, for the LORD made promise to Abraham, that in his seed the nations would be blessed, Gen. 22:18; and this promise, illustrated by an apostle, refers to Christ, Gal. 3:16. Hence, when He assumed the nature of man, it was signified, that the spiritual experiences of the former saints on earth were not imaginary, but real, Heb. 2:17; their entrance into glory thereafter beyond dispute, 2 Pet. 1:11; and their title to immortal bliss secure, 2 Tim. 1:10. And also was betokened the certain glory in reserve for all others favored with increased heavenly light, and enabled to believe, 1 Pet. 1:20, 21. At His birth, there was commissioned to announce it an angel, and a heavenly host, and this appearance signified peace, His covenant provision, Luke 2:13, 14. Thus, if in Him the greatest of all benefits, peace with God, was freely conferred, Num. 25:12; and had there not been, through Him, and would there not be, bestowed the less? Rom. 8:32.

And He is a token that the duties of God's covenant had been performed, and that, moreover, they would still be discharged, Gal. 4:4, 5. He Himself fulfilled the conditions of that covenant, Matt. 5:17; and because of His righteousness alone, the services of His people in all ages, are accepted, Eph. 1:6. In faith in a Saviour to come, the saints in OT times, while they waited on God's ordinances, or were employed about the things of the world, endeavored to give obedience, Heb. 9:8-10; and in faith thereafter, His people looking to Him, still attempt to obey Him, Heb. 9:11-14. His work was approved, and hence their faith was not in vain, *cf.* 1 Cor. 15:14; and these services were received as faithful attempts to perform their obligations, Rom. 12:1. That the Saviour hath overcome, is a token to His people that they also shall overcome, John 16:33; 1 John 4:4; so, in imitation of Him who, as His Father's covenanted Servant, fulfilled His will, they put forth their efforts to perform what He requires, Phil. 4:13. To Him, for grace to give obedience, all are commanded, and many are privileged, to look, Amos 5:4, 5. To seek places where heathen deities were worshipped, was to sacrifice unto those idols, and to swear by them, *cf.* 2 Chron. 19:3; to seek the LORD, accordingly, was to wait upon His ordinances, in vowing or calling upon His name, Isa. 11:10, 12. Again, we find the command, to seek the LORD, and the nature of the duties which this includes pointed out, Ps. 105:4, 6-8. Where a most emphatic promise is made, that the duty of vowing and swearing to the LORD shall be discharged, it is joined to the declaration to seek Him, Isa. 45:19. And the man who, seeking God, shall ascend unto the hill of the LORD, and stand in His holy place, is described in language that certainly not merely refers to the oath as given to confirm testimony, but also as vowing other duties to the LORD, Ps. 24:4. For their apostasy, the Hebrew people were cast out of the good land that had been covenanted to their fathers,

Jer. 31:37; and for many ages they have been scattered among all nations, Ezek. 36:19. But as, for their breach of covenant, they were cast off, and the goodly heritage that had been given them became waste, *cf.* Jer. 3:19; 4:6, 7; so, at their restoration to the precious privileges which through unbelief they forfeited, to this glorious object they themselves, and with them the heathen nations, shall look as a covenant sign, Isa. 49:6, 8; Rom. 11:12, 25.

Jesus is a most glorious sign—Messenger of the covenant, Mediator of the new covenant, even Immanuel, God with us, Mal. 3:1; Heb. 12:24; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23. But for His covenant, He had remained unseen by the eye of man, John 1:14. The universe of material nature is glorious, a token of His glorious power, Ps. 19:1. More glorious is the intelligent creation, a token of His glorious wisdom, Ps. 8:4. However, in Christ alone is a token of the mercies of God and all His attributes toward the salvation of poor sinners, *cf.* Isa. 51:5. Thus, the Lord Jesus is given to denote the covenant that had been made for God's people, Matt. 26:28.