

Able Ministers

“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

—II Corinthians 3:5,6, New American Standard Bible

who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”—II Cor. 5:17-19, NASB

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OUR LOVING HEAVENLY

Father has never ceased to love his human family and he has made abundant arrangements to bring about their reconciliation from sin and death during the administration of Christ's future kingdom. In his letter to the brethren at Corinth, the Apostle Paul further proclaimed, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God,

Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”—

II Cor. 5:17-19, NASB

Through disobedience to the divine Law, our first parents, Adam and Eve, brought the entire

race under condemnation to the death penalty. As an illustration, or type, of the great work of reconciliation, Moses served as the Mediator of the old Law Covenant that God gave to the people of Israel. From the scriptural account, we read what happened next. "Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do."—Exod. 24:3

Having explained to the Israelites the order and judgments of God, the record then states, "Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."—Exod. 24:4-8

Part of Moses' work was to provide the blood that was necessary to sprinkle both "the book and the people." In the antitype of these instructions, the Scriptures inform us that our Lord Jesus will be the mediator of a new and better covenant which will be offered to all the people and that will provide the blessings of life to all mankind who will

be given opportunity to learn righteousness and Truth.—Heb. 12:24

THE NEW COVENANT

In preparation for his work as Mediator of the New Covenant, it was necessary that our Lord Jesus also provide blood. However, this was not to be the blood of animals which had been used as an illustration by Moses in the type, but by the shedding of his own precious blood. Thus does blood become a symbol of our Lord's sacrificed, or poured-out, life on behalf of the sin-sick world of mankind. We see that Jesus' sacrificial ministry was in preparation for mediating the New Covenant during his future kingdom.

We also learn from the Scriptures that Jesus will have associates in his great work of mediating the New Covenant. Concerning them, the psalmist long ago declared, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Ps. 50:5) In the antitype, the associates of our Lord Jesus are being called during this present Gospel Age, and are referred to by the Apostle Paul in our theme text as the "able ministers" of the covenant. He was speaking of the faithful followers of Jesus who have taken up their cross and have followed him into death. From the scriptural account, we read, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matt. 16:24

These dedicated Christian people are spoken of as epistles of Christ "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone,

but in fleshy tables of the heart.” (II Cor. 3:3) Paul is here comparing the epistles of Christ with the tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. The entire Gospel Age has been set aside in the plan of God for the preparation of these epistles, or representatives, of Christ, referred to as “able ministers” of the New Covenant. Not until all of these ministers have been prepared can the inauguration of the New Covenant take place. All of these were originally members of the sin-cursed and dying human race. Therefore the blood of Christ is essential to give them a standing before God and to make their sacrifice acceptable to him. Paul thus wrote, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”—Rom. 12:1,2, *NASB*

IMPORTANT ASPECTS

There are two aspects in connection with the ministry of the New Covenant. The sacrificial or first phase was begun by Jesus, and it is the privilege of the “able ministers” of the New Covenant to share with him in this work of sacrifice. This explains the reason why the faithful followers of our Lord are invited to take up their cross and follow him into death during this present age of acceptable sacrifice. The glory or second phase of the ministry of the New Covenant comes after the work of sacrifice has been completed. In his letter

to the church at Corinth, Paul pointed to the glory which was displayed when the Law Covenant was inaugurated. It served as an illustration of the greater glory which, under the administration of Christ's future kingdom, will be associated with the ministry of the New Covenant on behalf of the people.

Paul explained, "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."—II Cor. 3:9-12

Paul emphasizes that the great glory which will be attached to the ministry of the New Covenant is to be realized in the future. In his letter to the church at Rome, he speaks of it as our great hope. "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:24,25) We are now in the sacrificial phase of our ministry of the New Covenant. It involves trials and afflictions. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—II Cor. 4:17

The important work for all who have made a covenant of sacrifice concerns our willingness to accept the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and that the knowledge of the Lord and his Spirit may become a very part of our being. We must understand that

our trials are as light afflictions that are preparing us for the future work of the kingdom. Daily we must present our bodies as a living sacrifice in the service of the Lord. By doing so, we may rejoice that, if faithful even unto death, we will share as able ministers of the New Covenant and share in bringing blessings to all the families of the earth under the arrangements of Christ's future kingdom. ■