

A Look at Some Key Passages

Let me take up some of the core passages of Ezekiel's prophecy, passages in which the prophet sets out those new-covenant glories as they are experienced by the individual believer. I select these passages because they deal with matters of the utmost pastoral concern to believers, doctrines and principles which are under constant attack, truths of which many believers are woefully ignorant, or else upon which many hold unscriptural views. I am not speaking merely of the ignorance of the mind, but of the heart; indeed, above all, of the experience of the heart. In particular, I am referring to the believer's assurance and progressive sanctification. And on these vital themes, what a contrast there is between, on the one hand, the teaching of Scripture, and, on the other, Reformed theology, covenant theology with its hybrid legal-gospel derived from the mingling of the old and new covenants.²⁹

Take the believer's progressive sanctification. In the new covenant, the Spirit writes Christ's law upon the hearts of his people (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16); that is to say, in regenerating the elect, the Spirit gives them a new heart to appreciate, love and obey the law of Christ. Ezekiel addressed it (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27). Naturally, the prophets spoke of the law of Moses when announcing this; what else could they do? But the New Testament makes it very plain that the law of the new covenant, the law of the fulfilment, is not the Mosaic law but the law of Christ.³⁰ The Spirit gives his people a love of their Lawgiver - Christ (not Moses) - and a love for his law. More, Christ gives his people the Spirit in order to move and enable them to obey his law, and to do so with careful diligence, as well as with delight.³¹

But where is this law of Christ to be found? In the heart? Yes - in the sense that the Spirit enlightens and empowers the child of God, giving him a love for Christ and his law. But is that the finish of it? Far from it! The law of Christ is written in

²⁸ For 'if' read 'since'.

²⁹ See my *Assurance in the New Covenant; Fivefold Sanctification; Positional Sanctification: Two Consequences*.

³⁰ See my *Believers; Christ; 'Thoughts on James 4:11-12'; 'Thoughts on Isaiah 33:22'*.

³¹ Take Ps. 1:2; 119:14,16,35, and so on. David was a prophet, speaking of the believer in the days of the new covenant. See my *Psalm 119 and the New Covenant*.

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Scripture (see Matthew 5 - 7; John 12:47 - 16:33; 17:17, for instance).

How did Ezekiel address this? He was speaking of believers when he prophesied of those who would walk in obedience to God's 'statutes and rules'. Although they would not be under the law of Moses, nevertheless they would under the law of Christ, and thus would still keep God's 'statutes and rules'. Hence, Christ's law. Where are Christ's 'statutes and rules' to be found? In the hearts of believers, or in Scripture, or in both? Both! If the law of Christ were confined to the internal, something written on the heart of the believer, it is hard to see how there could be any verification of the believer's obedience, his walking in God's 'statutes and rules'. There must be an objective element to this. The very notion cries out for it. In other words, the believer's obedience to the law of his Lawgiver, Christ, is both inward and outward; it is the Spirit in the heart and the word in the hand; it is not either/or. In particular, it is not the Spirit above the word.³²

This needs constant underlining. It is always under attack. It is today. Take this, which was posted on Facebook, to make my point: 'The Spirit inside you is better than the Bible in your hand'. How false a dichotomy! How grievous, how dire, will be the consequences which must inevitably follow if such a view gains credence! It must not! It is the Spirit and Scripture.

All this is encompassed in Ezekiel's prophecy but, of course, laid out in fullest detail only in the New Testament. Of the many passages which could be cited, take Romans 6:14 - 7:6; 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:5-18; Galatians *passim*, but especially Galatians 2:16-21; 5:13 - 6:2; Philippians 3:3-16, and so on.

Of all the New Testament books, the one which draws most heavily on Ezekiel is the Revelation. That entire book, not least its closing couple of chapters, is full of allusions to

³² See my 'Words Have Power: How The Spirit/Scripture Balance Can Be Threatened'.

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Ezekiel's prophecy. One might almost say that John's vision of the heavenly, new Jerusalem is based on Ezekiel's prophecy recorded in his last nine chapters; indeed, it is an exposition of those chapters:

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day - and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Rev. 21:22 - 22:5).

Of course, the final consummation of this prophecy must await the eternal state. But in essence it is the condition of believers, even now, under the new covenant.

Such is a brief look at the new covenant brought in by Christ. As I say, the New Testament at large expands on the seminal statement in Hebrews 8:6-13, all having been foretold in the prophets; not least, by Ezekiel.

Some Annotated Comments from C.H.Spurgeon

Addressing believers, C.H.Spurgeon, preaching on Ezekiel 36:27, declared: