

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

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TITLE: THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NEW COVENANT AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST VIEWS ON THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

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In Christian theology, the doctrine of the Covenant seems to attract the most opposing views. The divergent views relate to the OT and NT Covenants. The purpose of the study is to assess and compare the views of New Covenant Theology (NCT) and Seventh-day Adventist Theology (SDAT) on God's covenant, the law, and the Sabbath in the light of biblical teachings about the redemption of humanity. The study demonstrates that there is a continuity of God's covenants. The idea of an everlasting covenant began with the Father and the Son and the promise to humanity in Genesis 3:15. This was renewed to Abraham (Gen 17:7), given to Israel as the old covenant (Exod 2:24; Luke 1:67-77), and renewed to believers as the new covenant. There is continuity of the Ten Commandments in the new covenant period. However, there is some element of discontinuity, which is based on God's perfect provision of

obedience through the Holy Spirit in the new covenant vis a vis the human effort of obedience in the old covenant.

In this vein, the study concludes that God's plan of salvation, which was made in eternity past was about Christ. It is the same Christ, who is promised as "the seed" to the patriarchs. Also, God's plan was for Christ to die for the sins of humanity. So God instituted temporal sacrifices pointing to the true sacrifice, which was Christ. Therefore, it could be said that there is continuity of God's everlasting plan in relation to the salvation of humanity. Salvation always comes by grace and never by works. The OT is so intertwined and connected to the NT. God's covenants are unified and function as phases of advancement in God's general plan of salvation throughout the OT era and on into the NT. There is one covenant of salvation in the OT and NT, which is called the everlasting covenant.

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Dedicated to the memory of my late wife, Victoria Ama Adesiwa Acquaah

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The subject of biblical covenants is an essential Christian doctrine. It is frequently mentioned in the Bible.¹ It is the basis of many biblical doctrines such as salvation, grace, faith, and law.² Biblical covenants outline the purpose of God's redemption through Jesus Christ.³ This truth is the foundation of all Bible covenant doctrines.⁴ Covenant is a treaty or agreement between two or more parties⁵ for the performance of some definite mutual, unified action.⁶ A covenant aims at achieving a purpose and it is a mutual agreement that makes such an achievement likely to succeed.⁷ In the Old Testament (OT), the Hebrew word *b^erit* and in the New

¹Gen 9:9; 17:7; Exod 6:5; Deut 7:9; Josh 2:16; Judg 2:20; 2 Chr 15:2; Ps 132:12; Jer 31:31-33; Ezek 16:62; 37:26; Luke 1:72; Acts 3:35; Rom 11:27; Gal 3:17; Heb 8:6-13. Also see C. H. Dodd, *Biblical Authority for Today* (London: SCM Press, 1951), 201.

²George E. Rice, "The Covenants and righteousness by Faith," *Ministry*, May 2007, 14-18.

³Hubert F. Sturges, *More Than a Promise: The Everlasting Covenant as Presented throughout History* (Ringgold, GA: Teach Service Inc, 2009), 13.

⁴Horton states, covenants are the overarching framework for understanding God's purposes in salvation and the explicit covenants mentioned in Scripture. See Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 78. Also, New Covenant is the bond between God and man, established by the blood of Christ. See Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 57

⁵Hans Ucko, *The People and the People of God: Minjung and Dalit Theology in Interaction with Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (London: LIT Verlag Münster, 2002), 51. See, Jean Swartz, *The Ultimate Love* (Bloomington, IN Xlibris Corporation, 2016), 245. See, Paul Procter, *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 316.

⁶Smuts Van Rooyen, "The Covenants: A Developmental Approach," *Ministry*, February 2004, 12-17.

⁷*Ibid.*, 12-17.

Testament (NT), the Greek word *diatheke* “covenant” is used to cover such agreement.⁸

In the Bible, there are a number of covenants between God and man, and phrases such as “My covenant” (Gen 17:19; Exod 6:5; 19:5; Jer 31:32), “His covenant” (Exod 2:24; Deut 8:18), “everlasting covenant” (Gen 17:7, 13, 19; Jer 32:40; Heb 13:20), “old covenant” (2 Cor 3:6, 14), and “new covenant” (Jer 31:31; Matt 26:28; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:13; 12:2) are found in the OT and NT.⁹ These phrases express God’s covenants of commitment in which humans agreed to come under His blessings and responsibilities.¹⁰ A covenant gives assurance to a relationship by calling on the two parties to make a commitment.¹¹ God’s commitment to the everlasting covenant is to save humanity and give them the assurance of His salvation. The faith response of humanity makes the blessings of God possible.¹² The Hebrew word *b^erit olam* and Greek word *diatheke aiōnios* are translated “everlasting covenant.” The phrase “the everlasting covenant” occurs sixteen times in the OT and once in the NT.¹³

⁸The Hebrew *b^erit* occurs 285 times in the Old Testament, while the Greek word *diatheke* appears thirty times in the New Testament. See J. A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern treaties and the Old Testament* (Cambridge: The Tyndale Press, 1964), 8.

⁹Also, Pettegrew adds that the New Covenant is revealed under other names and descriptions throughout the OT prophets such as the “everlasting covenant” (Jer. 32:40); “covenant of peace” (Ezek 37:26); “a covenant” or “my covenant” (Isa. 49:8). 3. See Larry D. Pettegrew, The New Covenant and New Covenant Theology, *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 18/1 (Fall 2007) 185.

¹⁰Greg Ogden and Daniel Meyer, *Leadership Essentials: Shaping Vision, Multiplying Influence, Defining Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 75. Also, see Merriam-Webster Inc, *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of Synonyms* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1984), 644.

¹¹Rooyen, “The Covenants: A Developmental Approach,” 12-17.

¹²Sturges, *More Than a Promise*, 11.

¹³Peter M. van Bemmelen, “The Everlasting Covenant,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 24 (2013):92.

The phrase ‘covenant’ in the Hebrew Bible is connected with the covenant relationship between God and His people.¹⁴ The sixteen occurrences of the expression ‘everlasting covenant’ are also connected with covenant relationship.¹⁵ The Bible expresses God’s covenant relationship with humanity in several ways: the old covenant (2 Cor 3:6, 14), and the new covenant (Jer 31:31; Matt 26:28; 2 Cor 3:6, Heb 8:13; Heb 12:2).¹⁶ The relationship between these covenants has created so many intricacies. Nevertheless, appreciating this covenant relationship is dependent on the understanding of the relationship between the covenants in the Old and New Testaments. This is linked with the relationship between grace and the law in the OT and the NT.¹⁷ The relationship between the Covenants in the OT and that of the NT is a central concern of Christian theology. Therefore, there is the need to assess the relationship between the covenants in the Old and New Testaments.

There have been various attempts to explain the relationship between the covenants of God in the Old and the New Testaments. These attempts have resulted in a number of theological works, which have been formulated to explain the relationship between God’s Covenants in the Old and New Testaments. The best known theological works include Covenant Theology,¹⁸ Dispensationalism,¹⁹ and

¹⁴Steven L. Mckenzie, *Covenant* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 2.

¹⁵Bemmelen, “The Everlasting Covenant,” 93.

¹⁶Rice, “The Covenants and Righteousness by Faith,” 14-18.

¹⁷Christo Lombaard, *The Old Testament and Christian Spirituality: Theoretical and Practical Essays from a South African Perspective* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Lit, 2012), 15-16.

¹⁸Covenant theology believes that God has structured his relationship with humanity by covenants. Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 235.

¹⁹Dispensationalism is an evangelical, futurist, Biblical interpretation that understands God to have related to human beings in different ways under different Biblical covenants in a series of “dispensations,” or periods in history. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Bridge Point, 1993), 127.

New Covenant Theology.²⁰ The current formulated opinion among the three views is the New Covenant Theology (NCT). The NCT believes in the relationship between God and man, instituted by the sacrificial death of Christ.²¹ It stresses that men are either in Christ or not in Christ.²² The NCT was formulated to oppose both Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.²³ The NCT views the relationship between the Old and New Covenants as primarily discontinuity.²⁴ It places much emphasis on the discontinuity between the testaments²⁵ and sees the OT Law as having passed away. Furthermore, it considers the Ten Commandments as belonging to Israel, and not for the NT Church.²⁶ They see the Sermon on the Mount given by our Lord Jesus as an alternative to the Ten Commandments.²⁷

²⁰New Covenant Theology is an Evangelical position, but within evangelicalism there are divergent views on how salvation history fits together, and the relationship of the covenants within salvation history. New Covenant Theology describes how the unfolding plan of salvation in Scripture is to be understood. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 43.

²¹Ibid., 57. Also, Lehrer asserts that The New Covenant is nothing other than the work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb 8:6-13; 10:11-18). By his death on the cross Jesus purchased both complete forgiveness of sins past, present, and future as well as a changed life or new heart for all those for whom He died. Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (USA: Steve Lehrer, 2006), 18, 19.

²²Kevin Hartley, *New Covenant Theology Defined: The History of New Covenant Theology*. Accessed 22 October 2013, <http://solochristo.com/theology/nct/KevinHartley/NCTDefined8TheHistoryofNewCovenantTheology.html>.

²³Reisinger describes Dispensationalism and Covenantalism as exaggerated and inaccurate: “Dispensationalism drives a wedge between the OT and the NT and never the twain shall meet as specific promise (OT) and identical fulfillment (N T); and Covenant Theology flattens the whole Bible out into one covenant where there is no real and vital distinction between either the Old and New Covenants or Israel and the Church.” See John G. Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds* (Frederick, MD.: New Covenant Media, 1998), 19.

²⁴Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 38.

²⁵Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 48.

²⁶Greg Gibson, *All Old Testament Laws Cancelled: 24 Reasons why Old Testament Law are Cancelled and all New Testament Laws are for our Obedience* (United State of American: JesusSaidfollowme Publishing, 2009), 7.

²⁷Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 48.

On the other hand, Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs) subscribe to one continuous covenant of grace to sinners, not on the basis of their merits but on the merits of Jesus that offered to all who claim them by faith.²⁸ According to the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, God's eternal covenant of grace is renewed in various phases of covenants in order to meet the needs of His people in different times and setting. Each form of the covenant plays its part in His unitary purpose of salvation.²⁹ The grace of Christ compels all humanity to live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts.³⁰

Within Christian theological cycles, the issue of Biblical covenants seems to pose considerable challenge resting on the theological landscape of the NCT and Seventh-day Adventist Theology (SDAT). The issue of the covenant is basically related to the relationship between grace and the law in the OT and the NT.³¹ Also, the controversy surrounding the continuity or discontinuity of God's covenant, God's law, and God's Sabbath in Christian theological cycles is basically due to varied hermeneutical approaches to the issue.³²

²⁸General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 107-109.

²⁹Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 276.

³⁰Mario Veloso, "The Law of God" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 483.

³¹Lombaard, *The Old Testament and Christian Spirituality: Theoretical and Practical Essays from a South African Perspective*, 15-16.

³²Gary D. Long, "The Grace of God and Departures" *Reformation and Revival*, 3(1994): 91.

The Statement of the Problem

The doctrine of “Covenant” forms part of Christian theology. Though this doctrine has varied opposing opinions, the divergent views are basically concerned with the relationship between the Covenants in the OT and the NT. The relationship between the Covenants has created difficulties in explaining the biblical theology of human’s redemption.³³ While NCTs oppose the continuity of anything in the Old Testament, SDAs are of the view that there is one continuous covenant of grace, which is called the Everlasting Covenant.

The NCTs accept the existence of God’s law; they however show disapproval of God’s Law in the Old Testament. They believe that none of the Laws of Moses or the Ten Commandments remain binding on Christians, however, they have been replaced by the Law of Christ which are the moral commands given by the writers of the New Testament. They further maintain that the Sabbath has lost its significance as a weekly holy day. They suggest that the Sabbath is now a continuous experience of rest from a life of sin, an ever-present realization of peace with God. On the contrary, SDAs affirm God’s law (Ten Commandments) as part of the everlasting covenant and posit that the standard of character presented in the OT is the same as presented in the NT and the Seventh-day Sabbath is still binding on Christians.

Despite the various studies into this issue, there are still some unanswered questions remaining. One question that demand interrogation is: Is there continuity or discontinuity of God’s Covenants in the OT and NT in relation to God’s Law, and the Sabbath? This study seeks to analyse the views of the SDAs and the NCTs in respect to this question.

³³Nan Duerling, *The New International Lesson Annual 2013-2014* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 50.

Purpose of the Study

In view of the problem identified above, the purpose of this study is two-fold. First, it seeks to assess the views of NCT and SDAT in relation to the covenants, the law, and the Sabbath. Second, it seeks to analyse the views of NCT and SDAT on God's covenants, God's law, and God's Sabbath in the light of biblical teachings about the everlasting covenant and its relationship to the redemption of humanity.

Justification of the Study

In view of the fact that the issue of the everlasting covenant is a vital concept in God's eternal plan of salvation for humanity, it is justifiable to clearly understand the relationship between the covenants in the OT and the NT. Besides, the study may not only resolve difficulties in the relationship between the covenants, but may contribute towards the reshaping of current perceptions about the law, and the Sabbath in the biblical covenants. In addition, clarifying the relationship between grace and law in the covenants is pivotal to understanding God's eternal plan of salvation. More importantly, it will add to the existing knowledge on God's everlasting covenant.

Delimitation

While the relationship between the covenants of God in the OT and NT needs analysis this study is, however, limited to the views of the NCT and the SDAT on the biblical covenants. The NCT and the SDAT have many views with regard to God's covenants. The study is restricted to the views associated with the discontinuity and continuity of God's covenants. This study seeks to concentrate on the discontinuity and continuity of God's covenants in relation to God's grace, His law and His Sabbath.

Methods and Procedure

This study employs theological and comparative methods, in a systematic way, to compare and contrast the views of the New Covenant Theology and the Seventh-day Adventist Theology in the light of their views on the biblical teachings on the everlasting covenant and its relationship to the salvation of humanity. The study is organized into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction to the study. The second chapter reviews the related literature. The third chapter analyses the New Covenant Theology and Seventh-day Adventist Theology on covenant and the final chapter is the summary, conclusion and implication.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The issue under review is the theological analysis of the New Covenant and Seventh-day Adventist views on everlasting covenant. This issue is organised under three main sections. The first section reviews historical background on the idea of covenants. The second section is the view of New Covenant Theology on God's covenants, which is reviewed under: discontinuity of God's covenants, discontinuity of God's law, change of God's Sabbath, and the summary of the section. The third section considers the views of Seventh-day Adventists on God's covenants, which are also discussed under: God's unified everlasting covenant, continuity of God's law, perpetuity of God's Sabbath, and a summary of the section.

Again, the two main sections are reviewed based on the biblical understanding of both New Covenant Theologians and the Seventh-day Adventists. Both biblical and theological references on the issue are presented in this chapter. Besides, this chapter presents the basis to compare and analyse the various views on the research problem and explains how these views are relevant to this study.

Historical Background on the Idea of Covenants

The idea of covenant is found in some writings of the church fathers. Covenant was considered as a unifying factor in the dealings of God with men

throughout OT and NT eras.¹ Justin Martyr (ca 100-165AD) explained that God's children in the OT obtained the spiritual circumcision of "the everlasting law and the everlasting covenant," which was proclaimed by the prophets.² Irenaeus (ca 130-202 AD) often mentioned two covenants, which include the old and the new covenants. However, there are evidences of unity and harmony in the covenants.³ Also, Clement of Alexandria (ca 150-215 AD) named four covenants in the OT, which include: Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses.⁴ Moreover, Augustine (ca 354-430 AD) emphasized on two covenants, the old and new covenant in Christ.⁵ He asserted that all people in OT and NT were all children of the promise and of grace.⁶ The new covenant was predicted in the old.⁷

In the medieval period (ca 500–1500 AD), the idea of covenant was linked to that of the early church fathers. They described the redemptive history in relation to the old law and the new law. However, Martin Luther (ca 1483–1546 AD) denied the old law and new law explanation of the redemptive history and asserted that the scripture has two ways, the law and the gospel. Johannes Oecolampadius (ca 1482–1531 AD) explained the covenant between the Father and the Son from all eternity. Heinrich Bullinger (ca 1504–75 AD) wrote a book on the covenant of grace. John

¹R. M. Grant, "The Decalogue in Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review*, 40 (1947): 1–17.

²*Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras* (ANF, 2.140, trans. Dods, Reith and Pratten).

³ Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 163.

⁴*Ibid.*, 165.

⁵Daniel Judah Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth: From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1996), 31.

⁶Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly*, 173-175.

⁷*Ibid.*

Calvin (1509–1564) mentioned a grace period for Adam, a promise of life for obedience, and the federal headship of Adam.⁸ Zacharias Ursinus (ca 1534–1583 AD) revealed the idea of covenant of creation with Adam. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Johannes Cocceius (1609–1669) and Herman Witsius (ca 1636–1708 AD) wrote on the idea of covenant theology.

Covenant theology is biblical concept which understands God’s redemptive plan and arrangement with humanity in relation to the various covenants. Covenant Theology has three structures of God’s Covenants in dealing with human’s salvation. These include: the covenants of redemption, works, and grace. The first covenant which is usually called the covenant of redemption is the agreement within the Godhead that the Father would appoint His son Jesus to give up His life for mankind. The second is called the covenant of works, made in the Garden of Eden between God and Adam, and it promised life for obedience, and death for disobedience. The third covenant, the covenant of grace, promised eternal blessing for believing in Christ and obedience to God's word.⁹

In addition, in the nineteenth century, John Nelson Darby (1800–1882 AD) developed another idea of covenant called Dispensationalism. This explains that God relates to humanity in different ways under different biblical covenants in a series of “dispensations,” or periods in history.¹⁰ There are basically three dispensations, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic or Jewish, and the Christian. But, there are seven stages in which God unfold His purpose of grace to humankind. These include: the

⁸ Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context, The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith*, 227–228.

⁹Ibid., 235.

¹⁰Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 127.

dispensation of innocence or freedom, prior to Adam's fall; the dispensation of conscience, Adam to Noah; the dispensation of government, Noah to Abraham; the dispensation of patriarchal rule (or promise), Abraham to Moses; the dispensation of the Mosaic Law, Moses to Christ; the dispensation of grace, the current church age; and the dispensation of a literal earthly 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom that is yet to come.¹¹

New Covenant Theologians' Views on the Covenants

The NCT is a Christian theological view of redemptive history.¹² It asserts that God's eternal purpose is progressively revealed in the promises of the biblical covenants in the OT and fulfilled in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.¹³ It is formulated to oppose both Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.¹⁴ It is a middle ground between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.¹⁵ The NCT is different from Dispensationalism,¹⁶ and probably has more in common with Covenant Theology.¹⁷ It rejects the idea of one covenant in two Administrations.¹⁸

¹¹Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 95.

¹²Theopedia New Covenant Theology, accessed 28 March 2016, <http://www.theopedia.com/new-covenant-theology>.

¹³Gary D. Long, *New Covenant Theology: Time for A More Accurate Way* (n.p.: Gary D. Long, 2013), 2.

¹⁴New Covenant Theologians reject the view of "one covenant in two Administrations" idea of Covenant Theology. Fred G. Zaspel, *A Brief Explanation of New Covenant Theology*, accessed 28 March 2016, <http://www.biblicalstudies.com/study/hermeneutics/nct.htm>.

¹⁵Ken Ham, Bodie Hodge, and Tim Chaffey, *Demolishing Supposed Bible Contradictions Volume 2: Exploring Forty Alleged Contradictions* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Publishing Group, 2012), 164. Also see, John G. Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, ii.

¹⁶Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 215.

¹⁷Michael J. Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared with Covenantalism" *The Master's Seminary Journal* 18 (2007): 201.

¹⁸Zaspel, *A Brief Explanation of New Covenant Theology*, 1.

The NCT articulates how Scripture harmonize.¹⁹ The NCT describes how God's plan of redemption in Scripture is to be understood.²⁰ It assumes the NT priority over the OT. It further asserts that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament.²¹ Admirably, there are various theologians who subscribe to NCT. Some of the adherents of the NCT include theologians such as Jon Zens,²² John Reisinger,²³ Fred Zaspel,²⁴ Tom Wells,²⁵ and Steve Lehrer, who are among the most notable

¹⁹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 36.

²⁰Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 4.

²¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 216-217.

²²Jon Zens is considered as the one who coined the term "New Covenant Theology" in 1981 in a compilation of articles, where he said, "it is my prayer that we will seek only the glory of Christ as we work towards a New Covenant Theology." John Zens, *Studies in Theology and Ethics* (Malin, OR: BREM, 1981), 1. Zens has published several articles and his major contribution to NCT was an article "Is There a Covenant of Grace?" *Baptist Reformation Review* 7/3 (1977):45-53.

²³John G. Reisinger is an influential individual in the NCT movement for many years. His book, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, is a seminal work for NCT. Two other important works of Reisinger are his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, *But I Say unto you* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Books, 1989), 1-173, and his discussion of the Ten Commandments, *Tablets of Stone*. John G. Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1989). 1-147.

²⁴Fred G. Zaspel Th.M. thesis, "The Status of Mosaic Law in This Messianic Age: A Theological and Exegetical Analysis of Matthew 5:17-20" in 1994 formed the basis of several chapters in his major contribution to NCT literature. Zaspel co-authored with Tom, the book, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, and Defense*. Zaspel was also the author of a pivotal article, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective." (Fred G. Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," in *Reformation and Revival* 6/3(Summer 1997):145-69. Fred G. Zaspel is an adjunct professor of systematic theology at Calvary Baptist Seminary in Landsdale, Pennsylvania. He speaks regularly at NCT conferences, is active in Internet discussion groups, and is very influential in NCT circles.

²⁵Tom Wells is a preacher and writer in West Chester, near Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A. He has spent his entire adult life in Christian ministry, including evangelistic work and various Bible teaching roles, latterly as a pastor for nearly thirty years of The King's Chapel in West Chester. In earlier years he was the regular speaker on several radio ministries originating in Cincinnati and Dallas, Texas. Though having a lower profile than the others mentioned, he is highly respected within the movement, and is a regular conference speaker for NCT events. Tom Wells is the author of numerous books and a frequent contributor to theological journals such as *Reformation & Revival Journal*. Wells has authored an article "What Is This Thing Called the New Covenant?" in *Reformation and Revival* 6/3(Summer 1997):2-13. Wells the co-author of *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* with Zaspel.

individuals within NCT.²⁶ Also, there are other important individuals within NCT, which include: Gary Long, Peter Ditzel, Geoff Volker, and Randy Seiver.²⁷ The writings of Douglas Moo, D.A. Carson, and John H. Armstrong²⁸ on the relationship between the Christian and the law reveal their sympathies with NCT.²⁹ The study, therefore, reviews the works (or writings) of the NCTs on the discontinuity of God's covenants. Also, it assesses NCTs' views on the discontinuity of God's law, and lastly reviews NCTs' view on the change of God's Sabbath.

The Discontinuity of God's Covenants

The NCT holds that God's plan of salvation is unfolded and administered in line with His eternal purpose through the revelation of biblical covenants in the flow

²⁶Steve Lehrer is one the pastors at New Covenant Bible Fellowship in Tempe, Arizona. For several years, Lehrer was the editor of The Journal of New Covenant Theology, which was published in printed form from 2003 to 2005 and then was transferred to an online publication. His recent book, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* has been a major work within NCT. His church and ministry also produced The New Covenant Statement of Faith, 20-page document which is the first real detailed positional statement to give at least an outline of a systematic theology from an NCT perspective. *The Elders of New Covenant Bible Fellowship*, "The New Covenant Confession of Faith" (online at <http://www.ncbf.net/PDF/confession.pdf>).

²⁷Gary Long has been an important theological writer for NCT. Also, Peter Ditzel is a writer, a proponent of New Covenant Theology and the Doctrines of Grace, and the founder of Word of His Grace Ministries. He is also the author of an article "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" In addition, Geoff Volker started a campus ministry called the Whitefield Society, which later became In-Depth Studies. His ministry teaches from the perspective of the doctrines of grace and New Covenant Theology. He is one of the elders at New Covenant Bible Fellowship in Tempe, Arizona. Lastly, Randy Seiver currently associated with an organization called Hispanic International Missions, Inc (H.I.M). He has written about issues relative to the New Covenant Theology.

²⁸New Covenant Theologians response to the essay by David Wendt entitled, The Problem with Radical Discontinuity in the In-Depth Studies suggest that there are many others who hold to a New Covenant Theology or Redemptive-historical approach to Scripture. Some of these would include Douglas Moo, D.A. Carson, and John H. Armstrong. Douglas Moo and D. A. Carson have made affirmative statements about some NCT works and spoken at their conferences. John H. Armstrong has summarized and presented the thoughts of NCT in the *Reformation and Revival*. Obviously, these individuals would differ to some degree on the implications of a new covenant theology. Mike Adams, Bill Knaub, Geoff Volker, and Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology and the Unity of the Bible*. Accessed 3 February 2016, <http://www.ids.org/pdf/controversy/unity.pdf>.

²⁹Dennis M. Swanson, Introduction to New Covenant Theology, *The Master's Seminary Journal* 18 (2007): 156.

of redemptive history.³⁰ The NCT explains that the Bible is structured around covenants in the Old and New Testaments.³¹ The NCT opines that there are two distinct covenants,³² namely, the old legal covenant at Sinai and the new gracious covenant that replaces it.³³ Fred Zaspel asserts that NCT recognizes “other covenants.”³⁴ Also, NCT rejects the idea of one covenant in the Bible, where there is no distinction between the Old and New Covenants.³⁵ However, John Reisinger stresses that there is one distinct and unchanging purpose of God being worked out for the salvation of humanity.³⁶ New Covenant Theologians subscribe to the unilateral nature of all biblical covenants.³⁷

The NCT opposes the description of God’s eternal purpose as covenant of redemption.³⁸ John Zens opines that God’s eternal purpose is nowhere in the Bible

³⁰Gary D. Long, *New Covenant Theology: Time for A More Accurate Way*, 2.

³¹New Covenant Theologians agree that the Bible is structured around two covenants. However, the two covenants that you keep talking about, namely, a covenant of works with Adam in the Garden of Eden and a covenant of grace made with Adam immediately after the fall, have no textual basis in the Word of God. They are both theological covenants and not biblical covenants. They are the children of one’s theological system. Their mother is Covenant Theology and their father is logic applied to that system. Neither of these two covenants had their origin in Scripture texts and biblical exegesis. Both of them were invented by theology as the necessary consequences of a theological system. Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 129.

³²Zens, “Is There a Covenant of Grace?” 52.

³³Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 129.

³⁴The other covenants includes: Noachic and Abrahamic Covenants. Wells and Tom, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 275, 276.

³⁵Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 19.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷The point is that a covenant given by God is imposed on men. It is entirely from God. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 5.

³⁸Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37.

referred to as a covenant.³⁹ Steve Lehrer declares that it is unwise to refer to God's commitments to save a people in eternity past as a covenant.⁴⁰ The NCTs admit that the persons of the Trinity had a plan for the salvation of humanity before time.⁴¹ Nevertheless, they see no evidence in the Bible that God's plan of salvation is specifically called covenant of redemption.⁴² Lehrer warns that there is the possibility of making something a basis of our theology, which is not prominent in Scripture and this will lead to an unbiblical theological system.⁴³

Moreover, the NCT asserts that there is no record in Scripture of God making a covenant with Adam before the fall in the Garden of Eden.⁴⁴ The NCT does not believe that it is wise to refer to God's relationship with Adam as a "covenant."⁴⁵ The NCTs allude that the biblical statement "and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall

³⁹Zens further ask, why must the "covenant" concept be called into service to describe the "eternal purpose" of God in Christ? Why not be satisfied with the Biblical delineation? As far as I can tell, the Bible nowhere calls the pre-creation commitments in the Godhead among themselves or to elect sinners a "covenant." Zens, "Is There a Covenant of Grace?" 48.

⁴⁰Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37.

⁴¹The NCTs are not asserting that the persons of the Trinity did not have a plan for salvation before time. But they see no evidence of a specific Covenant of Redemption. See Article 4, "God's Decree," *The New Covenant Confession of Faith*, accessed 23 April 2016, www.ncbf.net/PDF/confession.pdf.

⁴²Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴The NCT does not believe that it is wise to refer to God's relationship with Adam as a "covenant." New Covenant Theology holds that God gave Adam a command with a promise of punishment if broken. And because this situation is not called a covenant by the authors of Scripture, we must think twice about describing it by that name ourselves. The Elders of New Covenant Bible Fellowship, "The New Covenant Confession of Faith," accessed July 26, 2016, <http://ncbf.net/pdf/confession.pdf>. Also, see Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 40.

⁴⁵Ibid., 40.

surely die” (Gen 2:16-17, NKJV) is not a covenant.⁴⁶ The NCTs assert that God just gave Adam a command with a promise of punishment if broken.⁴⁷ Basically, NCTs conclude that this situation was not called a covenant by the authors of Scripture, and should not be described as such.⁴⁸

Also, NCTs reject the doctrine of covenant of grace.⁴⁹ Zens argues, “Where is ‘covenant of grace’ revealed in the Bible?”⁵⁰ The NCT asserts that God’s promise that “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15, NKJV) cannot be called covenant of grace.⁵¹ There is no covenant of grace made with Adam immediately after the fall.⁵² Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel explain that it is a mistake to describe God’s purpose after the fall as the covenant of grace.⁵³ Reisinger explains that this is not biblical covenant, but rather an invented theological system.⁵⁴ The NCT opines that the term “covenant” is explicitly used in the Bible to describe the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 41. Also, see Article 20, “The Law of God,” in the New Covenant Confession of Faith states, “There is no record in Scripture of God making a Covenant of Works with Adam.

⁴⁸See Article 20, “The Law of God,” in the New Covenant Confession of Faith. Also see Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 41.

⁴⁹Zens, “Is There a Covenant of Grace?” 52.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 129.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Nevertheless, it now seems clear that a mistake has been made in speaking of this purpose as “the Covenant of Grace.” We may agree in asserting the unity of God’s purpose through the ages, but the selection of the word “covenant” to describe this unity has lent itself to important misunderstanding. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 45.

⁵⁴Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 129.

Noachic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New, and other covenants.⁵⁵ These are actual biblical covenants that have been cut in history.⁵⁶ It is unwise to add any covenant that God does not designate as such.⁵⁷

The NCTs maintain that God made covenant with Abraham and his seed⁵⁸ for an everlasting covenant,⁵⁹ to be a God to him and to his seed after him.⁶⁰ Also, God promises to give the land of Canaan⁶¹ for an everlasting possession to the very same people to whom He promises that He will be their God and they would be His people

⁵⁵Jon Zens, "A Study of the Presuppositions of Covenant and Dispensational Theology." Accessed 23 April 2016, <http://www.gospelpedlar.com/article/s/Bible/prediscov.htm> l. See also Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 276.

⁵⁶Zens opines that "viewing the covenant of works or covenant of grace as the primary covenants in Scripture has had the effect of dehistoricizing the covenants revealed in the Bible as 'cut.' This occurs because the covenant of grace is a post-fall, yet a-historical covenant, which is said to be variously administrated in the historical covenants. . . . In this system, then, it is impossible to do justice to the 'covenants of promise' (Eph. 2:12; Rom. 9:4) which were 'cut' in history, because they are all flattened out, being contemplated as 'various administrations of the one covenant of grace'" (Jon Zens, "A Study of the Presuppositions of Covenant and Dispensational Theology," 1).

⁵⁷Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 45.

⁵⁸As the argument goes, "seed" has two different meanings (individual and corporate) in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12 and 15. Therefore, depending on which meaning one uses, that covenant can be read two different ways. For example, the promise that God would make of Abraham a great nation is fulfilled corporately and historically by Israel in Deut 26:5, but in Rev 5:9 that promise is fulfilled individually in Christ (the seed) and thus corporately in the Church. *Ibid.*, 285.

⁵⁹The NCTs explain that God's dealing with Abraham is not the establishment of a covenant of grace. However, God is announcing the gospel of grace, and it is this gospel promise of Christ that unifies all of Scripture around the Person and work of Christ Himself. The gospel of grace both precedes and continues after Abraham and circumcision. John G. Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 43.

⁶⁰The New Testament reveals two distinct peoples in the Abrahamic Covenant. These people include: Israel and the church, which would experience two kinds of redemptive histories with two covenants to guide them. They stand in typological relation to one another. One would experience a physical and national redemption, starting with deliverance from Egypt and guided by the Old or Mosaic Covenant. The other would experience a spiritual, transnational redemption, starting with deliverance from sin and guided by the New Covenant. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 277.

⁶¹Lehrer, speaking on behalf of NCT, declares that the land promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were already fulfilled historically "by the time of the conquest of the Land of Canaan under Joshua." Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 32.

(Gen 17:7-8).⁶² The NCTs opine that the Abrahamic covenant reveals God's plan to save a people and take them into His land. This contains both the Old and New Covenants and that one is a picture of the other.⁶³ That is, the Old Covenant was only a physical picture of what God was going to do in the New Covenant through the sacrifice of His only Son.⁶⁴ Thus, the Old and New Covenants are the physical and spiritual fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁶⁵ Abraham's real physical seed was the covenant sign of circumcision.⁶⁶

The NCT stresses that God made an old covenant⁶⁷ only with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai.⁶⁸ Reisinger asserts that the Tablets of Stone were given to ancient Israel alone, as a legal or works covenant.⁶⁹ He opines that the people of

⁶²According to Lehrer, when God told Abraham that He would be his God and the God of his descendants (Gen 17:7-8), it “was not a saving relationship in which the Israelites were spiritually redeemed (Heb 3:19), but the entire nation was physically redeemed and chosen to be the recipients of God’s love in a way that no one else was at that time.” Steve Lehrer, “Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology,” *Journal of New Covenant Theology* 2 (2004):7.

⁶³Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 23. Also, Lehrer sees no necessity for belief in order for one to be a recipient of the covenant’s blessings, since blessing materialized merely through being born into the physical line of Abraham. Lehrer, “Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology,” 5.

⁶⁴Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 23; Lehrer, “Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology,” 5; Volker and Lehrer, “Did Paul Misinterpret the Old Testament?” *Journal of New Covenant Theology* 2 (2004): 69.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 19.

⁶⁷The phrase “Old Covenant” will be used throughout as a synonym for “Mosaic or Sinai Covenant.” Zaspel adds that God entered a special covenantal relationship with nation of Israel. The covenant detailing the terms of the relationship was formally enacted. It is in this covenant that God's law to Israel through Moses is embedded. Zaspel, *Divine Law: “A New Covenant Perspective,”*147.

⁶⁸Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 19.

⁶⁹He wrote, “Because the Tablets of Stone were a distinct covenant, they were accompanied with a specific ‘covenant sign’ The Sabbath was the sign of the covenant and therefore it had to be part of the covenant of which it was the sign. Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 43.

Israel, under the old covenant, were Abraham's physical seeds but not spiritual seed.⁷⁰ Again, they were God's people in an external and nationalist sense.⁷¹ The NCTs claim that despite Israel's distinctive physical opportunities and promises, Israel failed to earn the blessings of God's promise to make them a kingdom of priests.⁷² The NCTs maintain that the old covenant was based on works with the intention to increase the sins of the Israelites.⁷³ The NCTs assert that the old covenant could not acquire forgiveness of sins for the people of Israel.⁷⁴ Again, the old covenant could not provide spiritual salvation for Israel as physical seed of Abraham.⁷⁵ But, NCTs maintain that the old covenant was only a picture of true spiritual salvation.⁷⁶ Also,

⁷⁰The NCT separates the physical and spiritual seed of Abraham and the special covenant blessings promised to each seed. Israel was primarily a nation of unbelieving people with whom God had dealings that marked them as special. However, being special had nothing to do with spirituality or being spiritually redeemed. *Ibid.*

⁷¹The NCT declares that God's redemption of Israel out of Egypt was only physical, not spiritual, since Israelites of that time were unbelievers (Heb 3:19). Lehrer explain that the people of Israel were really a unique nation but not a spiritual nation. They clarify that Israel was unique and diverse from all of the other physical seeds of Abraham, but they were at the same time as not unique and diverse when compared with Abraham's spiritual seed. He claims that the old covenant was conditional because it promised life and threatened death. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 46.

⁷²In the view of NCT, the Mosaic Covenant can only show people their sin, but it does not call them "to seek an eternal remedy." Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 279. Since God established the Mosaic Covenant with a "hard-hearted (unbelieving) people," Lehrer, "Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology," 17.

⁷³Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 55.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 62. Wells assert that salvation was not the immediate purpose of the Mosaic Covenant. "As a part of redemptive history this covenant contributed its part to the ultimate salvation of God's regenerated people, but as an immediate goal the covenant is virtually silent on this subject!" Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 278. See, also, Lehrer, "Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology," 25: "The purpose of the Old Covenant and God's dealings with Old Covenant Israel was not for the salvation of the Israelites of that time." In fact, Wells and Zaspel go on to declare, "There is not a word directly about eternal life anywhere in the legal code." Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 261.

⁷⁶In an attempt to support his point he explains, "The fact is, the vast majority of Israelites throughout history were physically redeemed but not spiritually redeemed." According to NCT, the OT context demands physical redemption, since the Mosaic Covenant is based upon works. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 49, 53.

the old covenant was types and shadows of Jesus Christ (Heb 10:1).⁷⁷ Lehrer opines that the old covenant was brought to an end and is fulfilled at the cross.⁷⁸ Moreover, NCTs assert that God's relationship with Israel is somehow associated to His one single intention of salvation of Abraham's seed.⁷⁹ However, the old covenant was certainly not under an eternal covenant of grace.⁸⁰

In addition, NCT asserts that God made covenant with David and said "when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom" (2 Sam 7:12). Reisinger believes that the NT Scriptures clearly establish that the Davidic Covenant was fulfilled in the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Acts 2:22-36).⁸¹ The Davidic throne is not waiting to be set up in the future, but it is already established." The NCTs maintain that the ascension of Christ to David's throne with glory and power was the fulfillment of the specific prophecy made to David.⁸² The kingdom was

⁷⁷The NCT, however, the nation of Israel "never truly became God's people in any spiritual and eternal sense whatever. They were never a true 'holy nation,' nor were they ever the true 'people of God.'" Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 28. They argue that, whereas the Old Covenant's purpose was to point forward to the work of Christ, the New Covenant is all about Christ's saving of sinners—offering them forgiveness of sins. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 61.

⁷⁸Ibid., 19.

⁷⁹Reisinger insists that "every single word like elect, chosen, loved, redeemed, son that describes Israel's relationship to God as a nation has a totally different connotation when the identical words are used of the church's relationship to God." Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 30.

⁸⁰Lehrer emphatically announces that the Israelites "were never recipients of God's special grace even though He 'bore them on eagle's wings.' Notice that according to the sacrificial system laid out for us in the book of Leviticus, if you sin you are to do a grocery list of things in order to receive God's forgiveness. This is a works-based arrangement that shows that the Mosaic Covenant is a works-based covenant. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 47, 50.

⁸¹Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 21. Also see Gary Long, "Chapter 8, Part 1: Summary," in "New Covenant Non-Pre-millennialism," accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.soundofgrace.com/v7/n8/ncprmlgdLL.htm>,

⁸²Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 21.

inaugurated on the day of Pentecost. The physical covenant of David was spiritually fulfilled at the enthronement of Christ as the King of the new covenant.⁸³

Besides, NCT asserts that God promised a New Covenant⁸⁴ to Israel at some point in the future.⁸⁵ God says that “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer 31:31). According to Lehrer the “New Covenant Scriptures” make it clear that “the promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah that was made to the picture of the People of God is actually fulfilled in the real people of God, that is, all believers through the work of Christ on the cross.”⁸⁶ The NCT opines that through the redeeming work of Christ, the new covenant is a ministry of life (Heb 8:10), evidence of God’s love and His forgiveness of sins and removal of guilt (Heb 8:11, 12). Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant (Heb 7:22, NIV).⁸⁷ The New Covenant is the spiritual fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁸⁸ The NCTs explain that in the New Covenant, the Church becomes the Israel of God and all her members are kings

⁸³The NCT maintains that the Davidic dynasty seems to inherit the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and follows the story line out further concerning the seed that will bless all nations. Barrick, William D. “New Covenant Theology and the Old Testament Covenants,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 18(2007): 168. Also see Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 49.

⁸⁴The NCT defines the New Covenant as “the bond between God and man, established by the blood (i.e. sacrificial death) of Christ, under which the church of Jesus Christ has come into being.” Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 57.

⁸⁵Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 170.

⁸⁶Ibid., 174.

⁸⁷Mike Adams, Bill Knaub, Geoff Volker, and Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology and the Unity of the Bible*, 1.

⁸⁸Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 32. As far as NCT is concerned, spiritual aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant deal with the ultimate fulfillment of the seed in the Messiah and the possession of the land is fulfilled in an ultimate spiritual rest, not a physical rest. Ibid., 36. Abraham’s spiritual descendants enter into a special relationship with God in which He “promises to love them forever and to never punish them.” Lehrer, “Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology,” 8.

and priests.⁸⁹ Christ, as our Surety (Heb 7:22), has kept the Old Covenant for us and earned every blessing it promised.⁹⁰

The NCT asserts that the new covenant has a distinctively new character.⁹¹ It is not a renewal of the old covenant but actually a new covenant (Heb 8:13). Wells and Zaspel maintain that the New Covenant is a brand “new” one which has totally replaced the Old Covenant.⁹² The NCT declares that Christ’s coming confirms that the new covenant was better than the Old covenant.⁹³ The NCTs claim that there is discontinuity between the two testaments. As a result, they stress on the discontinuity of covenants in the Old Testament.⁹⁴ Wells and Zaspel opine that there is discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.⁹⁵ They maintain that from the Old Testament there is but one covenant.⁹⁶ However, God’s Covenant with Abraham represents continuity and God’s Covenant with Moses represents discontinuity.⁹⁷ Tom Wells further states that NCT has come to declare the discontinuity that describes the change from Moses to Christ.⁹⁸

⁸⁹Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 37.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Zaspel, “A Brief Explanation of ‘New Covenant Theology,’” 1.

⁹²Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 5.

⁹³Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 37.

⁹⁴Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37, 41.

⁹⁵Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 10.

⁹⁶Ibid., 10.

⁹⁷Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 38.

⁹⁸Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 32.

The Discontinuity of God's law

The NCTs totally reject the continuity of the Old Testament laws.⁹⁹ They opine that it has no theological, legal, ethical, or binding influence on the Christian in the New Covenant era.¹⁰⁰ However, NCTs assert that God has a universal law that is called the divine law or eternal moral law of God.¹⁰¹ Moo refers to this as “God’s eternal moral will.”¹⁰² Wells and Zaspel explain that God’s moral law has its basis in the unchanging moral character of God.¹⁰³ The divine law reflects the very character and holiness of God. It is an eternal standard and binding rule of life.¹⁰⁴ Gary Long affirms that God’s absolute law is ethically and morally binding on all humanity prior to or after the cross.¹⁰⁵ He asserts that the law of God cannot be rightly understood unless a distinction between God’s eternal moral and covenantal laws are understood in their administration under the old and new covenants.¹⁰⁶ Reisinger opines that God’s divine law comes in diverse forms.¹⁰⁷ These include: the conscience and the created order; the Law of Moses; and the Law of Christ.

⁹⁹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 181.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁰¹Long, *The Grace of God and Departures From It*, 93.

¹⁰²Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 370.

¹⁰³Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 162.

¹⁰⁴According to Zaspel, God’s divine law is a standard of righteousness and sufficiently clear rule of life for all humanity. Furthermore, God’s divine law informs all human in terms of eternal principles of morality. Also, God’s divine law is eternal principles of righteousness that is binding upon all humanity. Zaspel, “Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective,” 146, 148, 153.

¹⁰⁵Gary D. Long, *In Biblical Law and Ethics: Absolute and Covenantal* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2008), 85-86. Wells and Zaspel explain that the moral law is essentially right and therefore binds all humanity of all times and location. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 162.

¹⁰⁶Gary D. Long, “The Grace of God and Departures from It,” 79.

First, NCTs assert that the divine law of God comes through conscience and the created order.¹⁰⁸ They believe that the divine law is grounded in creation and expresses God's character. As a result all humanity had knowledge of God's law before the fall of humanity. The divine law is naturally written on the heart of all humanity.¹⁰⁹ The NCTs make reference to Romans 2:14-15, where Paul writes, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness"(NKJV). Thus, all humanity has the work of the law written on their hearts and that God's divine law impresses within humanity an intuitive sense of right and wrong.¹¹⁰

Second, NCTs state that the divine law of God comes through the Law of Moses in the old covenant. They assert that the Law of Moses was given to an unbelieving people, who have no future and no promise.¹¹¹ The NCT view the nation Israel as only a picture of God's People who were only serving to be condemned.¹¹² Zaspel states that God's law was codified in specific ways to reflect the covenantal

¹⁰⁷Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 60.

¹⁰⁸Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," 368.

¹⁰⁹Fred G. Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," 145-48.

¹¹⁰New Covenant Theology asserts that neither knowledge of God and his character nor the reality of known sin began at Sinai. They stress that various kinds of sins were known from the beginning of human history. Sin such as murder, theft, idolatry, adultery, and others did not first become wrong when Israel was at Sinai. God's divine law gave the knowledge of sin from creation. *Ibid.*, 147.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 147, 148.

¹¹²Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 174. In terms of eschatology, no unified millennial position exists among NCT adherents. Though a millennialism is certainly dominant, pre-millennialism and postmillennialism are also represented. Long has created what he calls, "New Covenant Non-Pre-millennialism." Gary D. Long, *Context: Evangelical Views of the Millennium Examined* (n.p.: Gary D. Long, 2002), 293. However, NCT has unanimity that there is no future for the nation of Israel as a distinct entity. All OT promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church, the "real" people of God.

relationship between God and Israel. The principles of divine law which were both eternal and universal were embedded in the Law of Moses.¹¹³ Reisinger explains that the principles of the Law of Moses, except the Sabbath, were already revealed to humanity through the original creation.¹¹⁴ Also, NCTs assert that God's divine law is a standard of moral righteousness, which is independent of the Mosaic Law. The two laws are neither identical nor altogether different.¹¹⁵

The NCTs reject the continuity of the Ten Commandments and refute the eternal, unchanging nature of the Decalogue. Lehrer indicates that God did not reveal His Ten Commandments to Adam, Noah, or even Abraham. The NCTs do not accept the traditional divisions of the OT laws into moral and ceremonial.¹¹⁶ Lehrer stresses that the Old Testament Laws were given to the Israelites who were unbelieving

¹¹³Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," 149.

¹¹⁴Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 60.

¹¹⁵The relation between the law of God and the Law of Moses is one of foundation-extrapolation. That is, God's divine law formed the basis of the Law of Moses. Law of Moses required more than the Divine law. The NCTs assert that the divine law informs all humanity in terms of eternal principles of morality, while the Law of Moses gives specific privileges and responsibilities to Israel. Mosaic legislation gives specifics as to how those laws were to be carried out in that economy. The NCT explains that before Law of Moses, the requirement of humanity to worship God is intuitively identified (Rom 1:18-25). However, the Law of Moses gives specification such as the Sabbath and other holy days, festivals, the sacrifices, and the entire Levitical system. These specification were the expansions of the principles entrenched in the divine law of God. The two cannot be equated absolutely. The two are certainly related, but not exact duplication. The law of God in men's hearts from creation onward is nearly identical with the Ten Commandments which came by Moses. Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," 148-149.

¹¹⁶The NCT, though, views the Mosaic Law as a unit that cannot be divided. Thus, NCT rejects a functional distinction between moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic Law. Covenant Theologians divide the Mosaic Law into moral, civil, and ceremonial laws and consider the moral laws binding but the civil and ceremonial laws as having been fulfilled in Christ and no longer binding on believers today. But I don't believe this understanding is supported by Scripture. . . . It seems to me that dividing the Mosaic Law into different kinds of laws to arrive at an answer concerning which laws believers must obey today is misguided. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 24. In addition, Carson has argued that Scripture does not support the tri-fold distinction in law, which is often stressed in Covenant Theology: "Although this tripartite distinction is old, its use as a basis for explaining the relationship between the testaments is not demonstrably derived from the NT and probably does not antedate Aquinas." D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 143.

people with no future and no promise.¹¹⁷ The Ten Commandments were temporary and as a legal covenant, ended when the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom (Matt 27:50, 51). Long asserts that Christ has redeemed believers from the curse of the old covenant law (Gal 3:13).¹¹⁸

Third, NCTs assert that the divine law of God comes through the Law of Christ in the New Covenant.¹¹⁹ They claim that the Mosaic Law ended when Christ established the New Covenant.¹²⁰ Wells claims that the Decalogue as a unit has passed away forever.¹²¹ The NCTs state that there is a new law in the NT which is called “the law of Christ” (1 Cor 9:21).¹²² The NCTs further explain that the New

¹¹⁷The law of the Old Covenant was given to a people who did not have the work of the Spirit causing them to love God—motivating them to obey. Instead, they were spiritually dead people being confronted by God’s authority, which was revealed in the form of the Mosaic Law. This confrontation with God’s authority only served to stir up their sin and rebellion. Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 174.

¹¹⁸Long, “The Grace of God and Departures From It,” 81

¹¹⁹Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses,” 368

¹²⁰Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology* 19. Also, Geoff Volker writes, I understand that the Mosaic Law is tied to the Old Covenant and that the Old Covenant came to an end at the cross (Luke 23:45; Heb 8:7-13; Gal 4:21-31). Therefore, since the Old Covenant has come to an end the law of that covenant, the Mosaic Law, has also come to an end (Eph 2:14-16).³³ Geoff Volker, “Foreword,” in *New Covenant Theology* 14. “The Mosaic era is ‘done away’ with the establishing of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:11, 13)” (Zens, “Is There a Covenant of Grace?”).

¹²¹Wells explains that the Decalogue is not abolished but it has been transformed from the Ten Commandments as written in the Old Testament to the teaching of Jesus and the writings of the disciples. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology*, 184. Also see Tom Wells, *Is John G. Reisinger an Antinomian?* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2001), 6. New Covenant Theology sees the New Testament writers as referring to the Mosaic Law in its entirety.

¹²²The NCT embraces the law of Christ, which is the law that is applicable to believers today. The law of Christ includes the commands given by Christ and His Apostles.” Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 112. The New Covenant Confession of Faith declares, “The church is made up of both Jew and Gentiles and is not regulated by the Mosaic Law, but by the Law of Christ.” Article 24, “The Church,” The New Covenant Confession of Faith.

Covenant law of Christ stands in sharp contrast to the Old Covenant Law of Moses.¹²³ New Covenant proponents believe that God waited until the coming of Christ to reveal His perfect law. Christ has actually changed God's laws. The Law of Christ is actually different from the Law of Moses.¹²⁴ The Law of Christ are the moral commands given by the writers of the New Testament.¹²⁵ Long asserts that Christ has done away with the old covenant through the blood of the everlasting covenant.¹²⁶

The NCTs assert that although the Mosaic Law ended when Christ established the New Covenant, however, the unchanging ethical elements are just as binding on Christians as they were on the Israelites.¹²⁷ Jesus states that "you shall love the Lord your God . . . and . . . shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 22:36-40). Long opines that the two great commandments that Christ referred to in Matt 22:36-40 is the eternal moral law of God.¹²⁸ He adds that the eternal moral law of God rules all humanity being created in God's image.¹²⁹ The NCTs opine that the eternal, unchanging moral law is expressed in the law of Christ.¹³⁰ Lehrer stresses that whatever is repeated from

¹²³They opine that as Moses went to a mountain to get the Law, so Christ went up into a mountain to give the new Law (Mat 5-7; cf. 2 Cor. 3). Wells and Zaspel argue that Matt 5:17-20 teaches that the law reaches its eschatological fulfillment in Christ and points to Christ. They assert that the content of the law of Christ is clarified through Jesus' exposition of the law in Matt 5:17-20. They explain that Matt 5:17-20 points to discontinuity between the OT law and the NT law. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 123.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁵Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 112.

¹²⁶Long, "The Grace of God and Departures from It," 79.

¹²⁷Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 105.

¹²⁸Long, "The Grace of God and Departures from It," 92.

¹²⁹According to NCTs, humanity needs to love God and their neighbour as themselves and so doing they keep the royal law found in the Scripture (Jas 2:8). Gary D. Long, "The Grace of God and Departures from It," 92.

¹³⁰Tom Wells, *Is John G. Reisinger an Antinomian?*, 8.

the Old Testament in the New Testament is binding but if it is not repeated it is not binding.¹³¹ Again, since there is a discontinuity of the Old Testament, it makes it true that only those things from the Old Testament replicated in the New are still binding.¹³²

Concerning Christian lifestyle, the NCT affirms that the Christian is required to obey only the “Law of Christ,” which is detailed in the New Covenant Scriptures.¹³³ Zaspel opines that the church is not at all compelled to follow the old law in its older form but rather God’s children are required to follow the law only as it comes to us through the framework of Jesus Christ.¹³⁴ The law of life under the New Covenant is the “law of Christ.” Lehrer affirms that the law which is applicable to Christians is the law of Christ that includes the commands given by Christ and His Apostles.¹³⁵ Long opines that in relation to the issue of the moral or ethical and spiritual matters, the gospel of Christ is the norm or standard of measurement in the Christian life for all things under the new covenant.¹³⁶ He adds that with regard to the issue of new covenant believer’s rule of life, the cross of Christ forms its starting point, and the new creation forms its realization.¹³⁷

¹³¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 242.

¹³²Ibid., 174. Also, the righteousness of God codified, enshrined, and encapsulated in the old covenant has not changed and that this same righteousness is now codified and enshrined in the new law. Wells, *Is John G. Reisinger an Antinomian?*, 6.

¹³³Moo, “The Law’ Of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses,” 368.

¹³⁴Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 184.

¹³⁵Ibid., 112.

¹³⁶Long, *The Grace of God and Departures From It*, 89.

¹³⁷Ibid.

The Change of God's Sabbath

The advocates of NCT maintain that the Sabbath has lost its significance as a weekly holy day.¹³⁸ They deny that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance.¹³⁹ Lehrer maintain that the Sabbath was not instituted at creation.¹⁴⁰ He rejects the assertion that Genesis 2:2-3 is the theological basis of the creation Sabbath.¹⁴¹ Arnold, a proponent of NCT agrees that Genesis 2:2, 3 is not the theological foundation of the Sabbath.¹⁴² He explains that the seventh day in Genesis 2:2-3 was not even designated a Sabbath.¹⁴³ Zaspel asserts that the word "Sabbath" does not appear in the creation account.¹⁴⁴ According to Tom Wells, there is nothing in Gen 2:1-3 that commands a Sabbath for anyone.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, NCTs conclude that the Sabbath is not theologically founded on creation.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁸A.T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* D. A. Carson ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 400.

¹³⁹*Ibid.* 400.

¹⁴⁰Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 185.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.* Also, Dressler argues on the basis of literary structure that God's rest on the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3) is the capstone to the account of creation week, and concludes, further, that God's ceasing from work" on the seventh day to 'rest' and be 'refreshed' . . . can only indicate that the goal of creation is not mankind, . . . but that all creative activities of God flow into a universal rest period." Thus, for Dressler, "Gen 2 does not teach a 'creation ordinance' . . . ; the institution of the Sabbath for the people of Israel, however, was based on the creation account and became a sign of God's redemptive goal for mankind." Harold H. P. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 29, 30.

¹⁴²Thomas P. Arnold, *Two Stage Biblical Creation: Uniting Biblical Insights Uncovered by Ten Notable Creation Theories* (Arlington Heights, IL: Arnold, 2008), 360, 384-392.

¹⁴³Arnold, *Two Stage Biblical Creation*, 360, 384-392.

¹⁴⁴Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 211.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴⁶Arnold, *Two Stage Biblical Creation*, 364, 365.

The NCTs further assert that Genesis 2:1-3 points to God's rest. They claim that creation and human history find their goal in God's rest. God's rest is a rest in which creation itself is to enjoy and have a share.¹⁴⁷ Zaspel alludes that the closing formula "the evening and the morning" in the creation account is absent in the seventh-day and hence the day remains open. Genesis 2:1-3 gives anticipation of a universal rest.¹⁴⁸ Dressler opines that in Genesis, the goal of God's creative activity is not human, but rather all creative activities of God flow into a universal rest period.¹⁴⁹ Zaspel opines that the "rest" in Genesis 2:1-3 is more eschatological. The eschatological nature provides the interpretive clue to understanding the rest/Sabbath motif in divine revelation.¹⁵⁰

Lehrer asserts that God did not command human to keep the Sabbath from creation. But, the Sabbath was given later when humanity needed rest.¹⁵¹ Zaspel opines that the truth of toilsome restlessness is never absent in human history.¹⁵² He explains that the Bible reveals the toil of humanity and their need for rest in the course of human history (Gen 2:15; 3:16-17; 5:29).¹⁵³ Arnold asserts that the issue of Sabbath is first mentioned to the people of Israel at Sinai (Exod 16:23) several

¹⁴⁷Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 212.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 29.

¹⁵⁰Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 213.

¹⁵¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 185.

¹⁵²Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 213.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

millennia later.¹⁵⁴ However, this is in relation to manna.¹⁵⁵ This is to prepare Israel and to remind them that rest comes through God's provision.¹⁵⁶ God at last "made known His holy Sabbath" to Israel at Sinai (Neh 9:14).

Wells assert that Genesis 2:1-3 has no relationship with the Sabbath in Exodus 20.¹⁵⁷ The Sabbath in Exodus 20:8-11 is a covenant command. God's gift of "rest" to Israel is the very token of the covenant. The people of Israel are to honour and observe God's rest.¹⁵⁸ The breaking of Sabbath in any way resulted in death (Exod 31:14). No work was to be done (Exod 20:10; 31:14-15). Arnold insists that Genesis has no command for a workweek for human and no mention of 'Sabbath' requirements for man.¹⁵⁹ The workweek biblical idea is first mentioned in Exodus 20:8-11 in relation to God's rest for Israel. Zaspel claims that Sabbath observance was reminiscent of God's rest, which itself is prospective of a rest to come.¹⁶⁰ Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 is grounded in God's deliverance of Israel

¹⁵⁴Arnold, 364, 365.

¹⁵⁵Zaspel explains that the first record of seventh day/Sabbath observance by humanity appears prior to Sinai (Exod 16). In Exodus 16, God's people were given rest, but this is not yet the Jewish Sabbath. He points out that Jewish Sabbath is much restrictive than the manna rest. He further states that God particularly restricted the people to the manna and there is no prohibition from work of any other kind. Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 214.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 26.

¹⁵⁸Lincoln suggests that Exod 20: 11 has etiological features. For him, this portion of the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue is to be seen as explaining the newly introduced Sabbath "by reference to a past event, God's seventh-day rest after the creation, utilizing the terminology of Gen 2:3 and a play on words to make its point. A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," 349.

¹⁵⁹Arnold alludes that it is hermeneutically wrong to import workweek biblical ideas in Exod 20:8-11 is legitimate and right. The earlier event may serve as an example for a later command, but the later command may not be imported back into the earlier event. Thomas P. Arnold, *Two Stages Biblical Creation: Uniting Biblical Insights Uncovered*, 364, 365.

¹⁶⁰Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 214.

from slavery. It is not a human rest only but a divine rest in which man may one day share. The Sabbath speaks of grace, of divine provision, and of redemption.¹⁶¹

The NCT maintains that the seventh-day Sabbath is central to the old covenant.¹⁶² According to Arnold, the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant, which is a sign between God and the sons of Israel.¹⁶³ Reisinger asserts that the Sabbath was the sign of the covenant and therefore it had to be part of the covenant of which it was the sign.¹⁶⁴ The NCTs allude that the seventh-day Sabbath which is the sign of the old covenant is no longer in force. Hence, the requirement for keeping the Sabbath has been terminated.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the NCTs oppose the view that only the ceremonial features of the Mosaic covenant were abolished and that the moral elements of the law which is the Ten Commandments that include the Sabbath continue to this very day.¹⁶⁶ According to Steve Lehrer, the old covenant has passed away and none of the commands of the Mosaic Law is binding on believers today including the command to keep the Sabbath holy.¹⁶⁷ The NCT opines that the written code and its regulations have been nailed to the cross, not only are we declared innocent in the court of

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 30.

¹⁶⁴Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 55.

¹⁶⁵Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* 324. Dressler agrees, "As a sign of the covenant the Sabbath can only be meant for Israel, with whom the covenant was made. It has a "perpetual" function, i.e., for the duration of the covenant, and derives its importance and significance from the covenant itself. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 30.

¹⁶⁶Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 116.

¹⁶⁷Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology* 181. Also, According to Lincoln, the Decalogue is part of the Mosaic covenant in the sense that "what is true of the place of the covenant as a whole will also be true of the Decalogue." A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," 356.

heaven, but the Old Covenant law of God gives way to Jesus Christ, the One to whom it always pointed (Col 2:13-17; Eph 2).¹⁶⁸

The NCT claims that the new covenant believers are not under the Law of Moses, but Christ's law.¹⁶⁹ However, Moo asserts that all the content of the Ten Commandments is embedded in 'the law of Christ except the Sabbath.'¹⁷⁰ Reisinger affirms that the Sabbath is a temporary commandment, which points to the work of Christ.¹⁷¹ Carson asserts that though Jesus kept the Sabbath, however, this is not an evidence to enforce Sabbath observance on Christians today. If it is so then the same argument would require that Christians should continue to sacrifice in the temple.¹⁷² The Sabbath commandment finds its fulfillment in Christ.¹⁷³ Moo opines that Jesus does not clearly teach the abrogation of the Sabbath command, he redirects attention from the law to himself, the Lord of the Sabbath, and thereby sets in place the principle on which the latter church would justify its departure from Sabbath observance.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 146.

¹⁶⁹Gary D. Long, review of *In Defense of the Decalogue: a Critique of New Covenant Theology*, by Richard C. Barcellos, *Reformation and Revival* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 167.

¹⁷⁰Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," 376. Also, Long expound that the New Testament clearly takes up all the Decalogue, except the Sabbath, as part of "Christ's law" and thereby as authoritative for believers. Gary D. Long, review of *In Defense of the Decalogue: a Critique of New Covenant Theology*, by Richard C. Barcellos, *Reformation and Revival* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2001):167.

¹⁷¹John Reisinger, 54.13 min., Gospel in the Sabbath, Granted ministries sermon, audiocassette.

¹⁷²D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Gospels," in *From 10 Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene: OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 84.

¹⁷³Fred G. Zaspel, A Brief Explanation Of "New Covenant Theology,"1.

¹⁷⁴Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," 356.

The NCTs ascertain that Jesus exercises His authority over the Sabbath in relation to the actions of His disciples at the grain field. On a Sabbath day, while walking along the edge of a grain field, the disciples plucked some of the heads of grain to eat (Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; and Luke 6:1-5).¹⁷⁵ The NCT asserts that Jesus' response to the Pharisees gives insight into the nature of the Sabbath law itself.¹⁷⁶ The NCTs continue that if the Sabbath were part of God's "unchangeable moral law," it would be very difficult indeed to admit such an exception as this, especially given that this is an exception grounded in human concerns.¹⁷⁷ Jesus does not classify the Sabbath as unchanging moral law, and this brought him into conflict with the Pharisees. The Sabbath was not an end in itself, an absolute that admitted no exceptions.¹⁷⁸ Jesus says "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). It was intended for man's benefit, his well-being.¹⁷⁹

The NCT explains that Jesus possesses the authority to decide issues relating to the Sabbath. Jesus says that "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt 12:8). As Lord of the Sabbath, He claims authority over the day and has the right to decide what is and not acceptable behaviour on the Sabbath. The Son of man controls the Sabbath.¹⁸⁰ The NCT asserts that Jesus came to transform the Sabbath.¹⁸¹ He offers

¹⁷⁵D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," in *From 10 Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene: OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 84.

¹⁷⁶M. Max B. Turner, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," in Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 103.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 214.

¹⁷⁹Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," 64.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 65.

¹⁸¹Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 219.

“rest” to those who are weary (Matt 11:28), and it is in connection with this that Jesus asserts his lordship over the Sabbath. Matthew seems to imply that the “rest” which Jesus offers is that to which the Sabbath pointed. Zaspel opine that Jesus is the Sabbath because He is Himself the “rest” (Matt 11:28, 29) which the day typified.¹⁸²

The NCTs opine that the new covenant believers are not to observe the old covenant Sabbath.¹⁸³ Instead, the New Testament writers speak of the Sabbath in redemptive-historical categories.¹⁸⁴ Reisinger asserts that since Christ fulfilled it, humanity keep the Sabbath by enjoying salvation rather than by resting one day a week.¹⁸⁵ The Sabbath points to the eschatological rest believers have in Christ, and there is no need for believers to observe it today.¹⁸⁶ Wells and Zaspel explain that Heb 3:7 - 4:13 explicitly connects the rest which we enjoy by faith in Christ (4:2, 6), with God’s creation rest (vv. 3-4), with the rest of the land under Joshua (v. 5), and with the rest of the Sabbath (v. 9). All this is to say that the creation Sabbath portrays a rest which God intended to share with redeemed mankind. Therefore, the Sabbath is now a continuous experience of rest from a life of sin, and an ever-present realization of peace with God.¹⁸⁷

Summary

The NCTs advocate the discontinuity between the testaments. With regard to biblical interpretation, NCT subscribes to NT priority over the OT. They subscribe to

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³ Long, “The Grace of God and Departures from It,” 92.

¹⁸⁴ Zaspel, “Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective,” 159-160.

¹⁸⁵ Reisinger, 54.13 min., Gospel in the Sabbath, Granted ministries sermon, audiocassette.

¹⁸⁶ Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 324.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

the discontinuity of God's covenants. New Covenant Theology explains that the Bible is structured around two covenants, that is, the old and new covenants. The NCTs reject the doctrine of covenant of redemption; covenant of works; and covenant of grace. They allude that God's covenant with Abraham contains both the Old and New Covenants. The Old Covenant is physical fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant. The Old Covenant was based on works with the intention to increase the sins of the Israelites. The New Covenant is a spiritual fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is distinctively new character or is a brand "new" which has totally replaced the Old Covenant.

In the case of God's law, NCT rejects the continuity of the Old Testament laws. However, NCTs assert that God has a universal law, which is ethically and morally binding on all humanity prior to or after the cross. God's divine law comes in diverse forms. The divine law of God comes through conscience and the created order; the Law of Moses in the old covenant; and Law of Christ in the new covenant. They consider the Ten Commandments as belonging to Israel, and not for the New Testament Church. They claim that the Mosaic Law ended when Christ established the New Covenant. They add that the law of Christ includes the commands given by Christ and His Apostles. The NCT stresses that whatever is repeated from the Old Testament in the New Testament is binding but if it is not repeated it is not binding. The NCT affirms that the Christian is required to obey only the "Law of Christ," which is detailed in the New Covenant Scriptures.

With regard to God's Sabbath, NCT rejects the Old Covenant Sabbath. They deny that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. The word "Sabbath" does not appear in the creation account. However, the "rest" in Gen 2:1-3 is more eschatological. The Sabbath in Exod 20:8-11 is God's gift of "rest" to Israel only. The NCTs allude that

the seventh-day Sabbath which is the sign of the old covenant is no longer in force. The Sabbath points to the work of Christ. The NCT asserts that Jesus came to transform the Sabbath. The Sabbath points to the eschatological rest believers have in Christ, and there is no need for believers to observe it today.

Seventh-day Adventists Views on the Covenant

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant Christian denomination with evangelical root,¹⁸⁸ whose faith is based on the Bible and centred on Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁹ The SDAs advocate the Bible and the Bible only, the totality of Scripture, the analogy of Scripture, and spiritual things being spiritually discerned as the rule of faith and duty or as the standard of all doctrines and basis of all reforms.¹⁹⁰ This should be done with prayers, humility, and teachable spirit. All Scripture both Old and New Testament is God's word, and it is truthful, and sufficient.¹⁹¹ The SDAs accept all biblical interpretations which are consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures, which preserve its unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸Edward L. Queen, Stephen R Prother, and Gardiner H Shattuck. "Seventh-day Adventist Church," in *Encyclopedia of American Religious History*. Vol. 3 (New York: InfoBase Publishing, 2009), 913.

¹⁸⁹Nancy J. Vyhmeister, "Who are Seventh-day Adventists?" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 1. Also, Nancy Vyhmeister is Seventh-day Adventist with fifty years of experience in teaching. She was editor of *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*.

¹⁹⁰Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 60-63. Also, Richard M. Davidson is an Old Testament scholar at Andrew University and Seventh-day Adventist.

¹⁹¹Peter M. van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 53. Also, Peter M. van Bemmelen is a retired theology professor from Andrews University who has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a pastor, missionary, and theology teacher.

¹⁹²Ibid.

Much of the SDAT corresponds to common evangelical Protestant Christian teachings.¹⁹³ The SDAs view on the covenant is closer to covenant theology. The SDAT maintains that both the OT and NT present the same redemptive purpose of God in terms of the everlasting covenant.¹⁹⁴ This eternal covenant was successively proclaimed throughout the OT and NT. Again, salvation is only on the basis of the righteousness of Christ both in OT and NT. Since the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on May 21, 1863, the church has emphasized the principles of God's moral law and insisted on the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath as a requirement to "all people as a memorial of Creation."¹⁹⁵

This section of the study reviews the position of the SDAs on the God's unified everlasting covenant in series of covenants. Also, it assesses the Adventists' view on the continuity of God's law, and lastly reviews Adventists' view on the perpetuity of God's Sabbath.

¹⁹³Don West, *The Simple Road to Heaven* (Victoria, BC: FriesenPress, 2011), 103. Also, Don West is a teacher and professor, who had spent the past 40 years researching and studying religion and philosophy.

¹⁹⁴Gary Land, *The A to Z of the Seventh-Day Adventists* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 295. Also, Gary Land is professor of history and chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Andrews University. He is a member of the Conference on Faith and History and the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians. He is the author of *Teaching History: A Seventh-day Adventist Approach*.

¹⁹⁵Sergio L. Silva, "Creation and Covenant: A Hermeneutical Approach To The Correlation of the Seventh Day and the Biblical Sabbath," *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 17-42, 2015.

God's Unified Everlasting Covenant

The *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* posits that, there are several covenants in the Bible. However, there is only one basic covenant of salvation in the Bible.¹⁹⁶ The several covenants reveal how God renew His eternal covenant of grace in different ways to save humanity in different periods and locations. Each form of the covenant plays its part in His unitary purpose of salvation.¹⁹⁷ Walton opines that each covenant is a part of a single, unified plan of salvation.¹⁹⁸ He stresses that the ushering in of one does not invalidate the other one or makes the other inferior. None of the covenants replaces the one before it; instead, each complements what came prior to it.¹⁹⁹ Roy asserts that the phases of God's unified covenant conveys the plan of God's redemption throughout the OT era and on into the NT.²⁰⁰ There is one covenant of salvation in the OT and NT, which is called everlasting covenant of grace.²⁰¹

The SDAs assert that before creation the members of the Godhead had covenanted to save humanity if they should fall into sin.²⁰² According to the

¹⁹⁶Ivan T. Blazen, "Salvation" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 276. Also, Ivan T. Blazen holds Ph.D., and Seventh-day Adventists. He is a professor of biblical interpretation and theology at Loma Linda University, is a well-loved New Testament scholar and teacher.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 49. Also, John H. Walton (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 49.

²⁰⁰Roy Gane, "Justly Integrating Covenant, Law, and Sabbath," *Ministry*, February 2004, 6-11. Also, Roy Gane holds Ph. D., and Seventh-day Adventists. He is an associate professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near-Eastern Languages, Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

²⁰¹Sturges, *More Than a Promise: The Everlasting Covenant as Presented throughout History*, 9. Also, Hubert F. Sturges, M.D., is assistant professor of medicine, Loma Linda University and a Seventh-day Adventist.

²⁰²*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 107.

Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, the plan of salvation was not the result of a divine afterthought but a divine plan formulated before the foundation of this world and embodied in God's eternal love.²⁰³ This intention of God to save humanity is embedded in the everlasting covenant of grace.²⁰⁴ The focus of the covenant of grace was for Jesus to die a sacrificial death on Calvary for the salvation of humanity and the vindication of the justice and mercy of God.²⁰⁵ The suffering and death of Jesus is central to the plan of salvation. This redemptive purpose was not the effect of human choice but rather the basis of God's plan of salvation.²⁰⁶ The plan of salvation covers eternity past, the historical present, and eternity future.²⁰⁷ God's eternal plan to save humanity is revealed through history in the several divine covenants with Adam (Gen. 3:15), Abraham (Gen 12; 15; 17), Israel (Exod 19-34), David (2 Sam 7), and the promise of the "new covenant" to Israel (Jer 31; Ezek 36), can be viewed as successive stages of God's single covenant of redeeming grace that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.²⁰⁸

The SDAs opine that in a preliminary form, the everlasting covenant was made with Adam at the fall (Gen 3:15).²⁰⁹ God's covenant with Adam is the announcement of His plan of redemption. It is the revelation of God's grace to

²⁰³Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 275.

²⁰⁴*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 107.

²⁰⁵Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 76.

²⁰⁶Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 276.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Sergio L. Silva, "Creation and Covenant", 17-42.

²⁰⁹Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD)*, rev. ed. (1979), s.v. "Covenant."

humanity.²¹⁰ It is referred to as the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace was made between God and humanity.²¹¹ Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and positioned in an ideal environment. However, they became transgressors of God's law.²¹² God revealed the eternal covenant of grace in a promise, which gave them hope.²¹³ He said "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen 3:15, NKJV). The pronouncement of this covenant of grace is found in the promise of the "seed" of the woman.²¹⁴ This is the promise of the eternal covenant of grace.

The SDAs assert that God's eternal covenant of grace was instituted to bring a holy God into a close relationship with sinful humanity.²¹⁵ But since God's holiness and human sin cannot co-exist (Isa 59:2; Heb 12:29), the covenant had to find a way to deal with human sinfulness before the death of Christ on Calvary.²¹⁶ God instituted a temporary provision which requires humanity to demonstrate their faith in the coming sacrifice of Christ. This temporary provision was the animal sacrifices for sin offering.²¹⁷ Through the blood of every animal that will be sacrificed (Heb 9:2; 10:8), humanity looked forward by faith (Rom 3:2) to the blood of Christ which would atone

²¹⁰*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 107.

²¹¹*Ibid.*

²¹²"In our image" [Gen 1:27], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:216.

²¹³*Ibid.*, 233.

²¹⁴White, *The Faith I Live By*, 76.

²¹⁵*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 108.

²¹⁶Kim Papaioannou, "Sanctuary, priesthood, Sacrifice, and Covenant in the Book of Hebrews," *Ministry*, November 2014, 23-26. Kim Papaioannou holds PhD and a Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Cyprus.

²¹⁷Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophet* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1999), 364.

for the sins of the world²¹⁸ (1 Pet 1:18-20). Regrettably, humanity discarded this glorious covenant of grace both before and after the flood.²¹⁹

The SDAs affirm that the everlasting covenant was made later with Noah (Gen 9:12, 15, 16).²²⁰ In the days of Noah, the wickedness of humanity was great, and their heart was evil continually (Gen 6:5). God's only acceptable way of salvation in all ages was expressed in the statement "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8, NKJV). It is the evidence of God's saving grace. God established a covenant relationship with Noah.²²¹ He made him a vessel of His salvation in the era of human wickedness. Apostle Paul opines that Noah built an ark for the salvation of his household through faith and godly fear, when he received the divine warning. He became recipient of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb 11:7). Noah's faith was based on a respectful regard to the word of God's; it was the faith of godly fear. Noah and his family were saved by grace through faith in Christ but not by their works.²²²

The SDAs assert that God called Abraham a descendent of Noah to renew His covenant of grace in a promise.²²³ God said, "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (Gen 17:7, NKJV). The

²¹⁸J. A. Jefferson, *Old and New Testament: Blood Covenant* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2013), 3.

²¹⁹*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 108.

²²⁰Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (SDABD)*, rev. ed. (1979), s.v. "Covenant."

²²¹Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 51.

²²²"Noah walked with God" [Gen 6:9], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:252.

²²³*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 108.

promise being made was indeed a far-reaching one. It was not just a promise of children for Abram. God's promise reached beyond the dominion of sin to an earth full of saints.²²⁴ Also, God said "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Gen 22: 18). The seed of Abraham is not referring only to his countless descendants, but specifically to his one descendant. This descendant is Christ, through whom God will bless the world.²²⁵ Those who would be part of Abraham's seed, physically and spiritually, would find God to be their God, and they would be His people.²²⁶ Abraham had right relationship with God and He was blessed. In spite of the blessings conferred on him, Abraham was justified not by his own righteousness, but by faith in the promised Messiah.²²⁷ The everlasting covenant of grace renewed to Abraham is essential to the whole course of salvation history.²²⁸

According to the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, the Sinai covenant is a covenant of grace and a reiteration of major emphases in the Abrahamic covenant.²²⁹ The Sinai Covenant is none other than a renewal of the covenant given to Abraham.²³⁰ When the descendants of Abraham were in slavery, God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham (Exod 2:24). God

²²⁴Raymond H. Woolsey, "Jesus Our Covenant," *Ministry*, December 1974, 4-7. Also, Raymond H. Woolsey is an associate book editor, Review and Herald Publishing Association.

²²⁵Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 276.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, 276.

²²⁷Ellen G. White, *Amazing Grace* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1973), 131.

²²⁸Blazen, "Salvation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 276.

²²⁹*Ibid.*

²³⁰Edward Heppenstall, "The Law and the Covenant at Sinai," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, (1964):19-26

delivered them out of bondage.²³¹ Israel's redemption reveals God's grace for His people. The people of Israel were to smear the blood of the lamb at the lintel and doorposts of their house, which pointed to Christ our Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7, NIV).²³² The deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage was the greatest salvation event prior to the coming of Christ as Messiah.²³³ At Sinai, God gave to Israel a perfect covenant which offered power to live a holy life through grace.²³⁴ But the people responded by their human promises "All that the Lord has said we will do" (Exod. 19). This response was faulty because humans cannot keep the law of God without grace through faith. Remember, God's own work can never be described as faulty.²³⁵ However, God accepted this as "a covenant" but not as "my covenant" and allowed a ratification ceremony with animal sacrifices.²³⁶

The SDAs claim that the sacrifices in the sanctuary system pointed to the future redemption through Jesus Christ. The sacrifices typified the mysteries contained in the plan of redemption in Jesus.²³⁷ Wright opines that God's grace of forgiveness was extended to old covenant people because it was impossible for humanity to sacrifice enough to achieve justification.²³⁸ The sacrifices were fulfilled

²³¹"The house of bondage" [Exod 20:2], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:601.

²³²"Take of the blood" [Exod. 1:2], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:551.

²³³Blazen, "Salvation in Jesus," 10-13.

²³⁴Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 364.

²³⁵Edward Heppenstall, *The Covenant and the Law*, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/covenants/cov-redemp.htm>.

²³⁶*Ibid.*

²³⁷*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 263-277.

²³⁸J. Maurice Wright, *God's Covenant Plan* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2012), 40.

in Christ (Eph 2:15).²³⁹ Later, when Israel no longer wanted to be under the direct control of God through his prophets and judges but requested to be led by a king like the other nations, God confirmed his covenant with David (2 Sam 7:4–17).²⁴⁰ Again, as the monarchy was coming to an end, God indicated that the Jewish nation would no longer be his special covenant people, and access to the covenant would be extended to all nations on an individual, personal basis.²⁴¹

According to the SDAs, God proclaimed a “new” covenant with his people because of their failure to be faithful to Him, even though He was their “husband” (Jer 31:31–33).²⁴² The relationship between God and humanity in the new covenant was the same as that of the old covenant. The old covenant was not outmoded but rather it was broken.²⁴³ As a result, God predicted the renewal and ratification of His Covenant of Grace which became known as the New Covenant. The New covenant has come to be a descriptive term to describe the Covenant of Grace.²⁴⁴ Historically, this covenant was prophesied in Jer 31:31-34. God revealed a pre-existing covenant, which was called the Everlasting Covenant.²⁴⁵ Tiberius Rata argues that the word “new” in Jer 31:31-33 means “renewed” and not “brand new.”²⁴⁶ The view that the New Covenant

²³⁹Siegfried H. Horn, *SDABD*, rev. ed. (1979), s.v. “Sacrifices and offerings.”

²⁴⁰Blazen, “Salvation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 277.

²⁴¹Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. “Covenant.”

²⁴²*Ibid.*

²⁴³Blazen, “Salvation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 277.

²⁴⁴Sturges, *More Than a Promise: the Everlasting Covenant as Presented throughout History*, 209

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 103.

²⁴⁶Tiberius Rata, *The Covenant Motif in Jeremiah’s Book of Comfort: Textual and Intertextual Studies of Jeremiah 30-33* (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2007), 126.

is a renewal of the promised Everlasting Covenant is consistent with the Bible (Heb 13:20). The New Covenant agreement was to be ratified with the blood of Christ. Therefore, Christ died on the cross and God's Covenant was ratified.²⁴⁷

The Continuity of God's Law

The SDAs advocate that God's law is perpetual.²⁴⁸ God is love and love is the foundation of His government.²⁴⁹ His nature and His law is love (Ps 119:152, 153; Matt 22:37, 38; John 15:10; 1 John 5:3).²⁵⁰ The law is an external expression of God's character.²⁵¹ It is the transcript of God's character.²⁵² Also, God's law represents His righteousness and perfection, His goodness and truth.²⁵³ God's law is not only the revelation of God's will and grace but the revelation of His holiness. God calls all His creation to holiness because He Himself is holy (Ps 19:7, 8; 119:172; Rom 7:12).²⁵⁴ God's moral law is the standard of His government, which expresses the moral integrity of the Word.²⁵⁵ The law was present long before man was created. It was adapted to the condition of holy beings; even angels were governed by it.²⁵⁶ The Bible

²⁴⁷Ibid., 108.

²⁴⁸*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 270.

²⁴⁹J. David Newman, "Standards Define Relationships," *Ministry*, October 1989, 18-20.

²⁵⁰White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

²⁵¹Norman R. Gulley, "The Battle against the Sabbath and Its Endtime Importance," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 5/2 (Autumn 1994): 79-115.

²⁵²Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 12, 1896.

²⁵³Veloso, "The Law of God," 459.

²⁵⁴Ibid.

²⁵⁵*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 271.

²⁵⁶White, *Amazing Grace*, 131.

shows that Lucifer and his angels sinned (2 Pet 2:4), “for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). The principles of God’s law are eternal.²⁵⁷

The SDAs maintain that humanity had God’s law written upon their conscience.²⁵⁸ Humanity is created as moral beings with the capacity to give and to receive love.²⁵⁹ The Moral law explains how people should live because it is the expression of His character.²⁶⁰ Morality means the ability to choose right or wrong, good or evil. It is impossible for moral beings to live without the law.²⁶¹ When there was no sin, the principle of love ruled the universe. Everyone loved God as creator and others as itself. Love is the foundational principle of the moral law.²⁶² Laws that control our moral and spiritual lives find their origin in God. The law of God is the depiction of the very core of our moral character of what we were created to be.²⁶³ Adam and Eve had knowledge of the law of God before their fall, which was printed on their hearts.²⁶⁴ God’s test of obedience was communicated to Adam and Eve. However, humanity failed to demonstrate their obedience to God.²⁶⁵ The purpose of the moral law is to show how things really are concerning life, God, and sin.²⁶⁶

²⁵⁷White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

²⁵⁸“The tree of the knowledge of good” [Gen 2:17], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:225.

²⁵⁹*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 98.

²⁶⁰Veloso, “The Law of God,” 461.

²⁶¹Keith Burton, “Christ and His Law” *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, April-June 2014, 2-3.

²⁶²Veloso, “The Law of God,” 461.

²⁶³Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Christ and the Law,” *Ministry*, July/August, 1995, 54-57.

²⁶⁴White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, 131.

²⁶⁵Sturges, *More Than a Promise: The Everlasting Covenant as Presented throughout History*, 16.

²⁶⁶Veloso, “The Law of God,” 462.

Again, SDAs assert that the moral law existed before God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel.²⁶⁷ They argue that if the law did not exist, there could have been no sin before Sinai (Rom 4:15), “for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). Before Gen 9:9-6, while no explicit command against murder is recorded in Scripture, “Cain was held accountable for the murder of Abel” (Gen 4:6-11). Similarly, while no command against adultery is recorded in Scripture prior to Exod 20:14, “Joseph knew that adultery was ‘sin against God’” (Gen 39:9).²⁶⁸ Subsequently, the principles of the law were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition.²⁶⁹ The Ten Commandments stand high above all other moral and spiritual laws. It is comprehensive of all human conducts. It is the only law that can effectively control the conscience.²⁷⁰ The Ten Commandments stem from the universal principle of love ruling in the universe before sin.²⁷¹

The SDAs explain that the Bible reveals two laws: one everlasting, the other temporary.²⁷² The Everlasting law indicates human obligation to God and to his or her fellow humans and it is known as the moral law.²⁷³ The moral law of the Ten Commandments is an immutable expression of God’s character; it is the standard of all righteousness, and an expression of His will.²⁷⁴ The moral law of the Ten

²⁶⁷“God spake” [Exod.20:1], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:600.

²⁶⁸Skip MacCarty, “The Seventh-Day Sabbath,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, ed. Christopher J. Donato, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 12.

²⁶⁹White, *Amazing Grace*, 131.

²⁷⁰“God spake” *SDABC*, 1:600.

²⁷¹Veloso, “The Law of God,” 465.

²⁷²*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 263-277.

²⁷³*Ibid.*

²⁷⁴“God Spake,” *SDABC*, 1:600.

Commandments was not given by inspiration, but was written by God's own finger on tables of stone (Exod 24:12; 31: 18; 20:3-17).²⁷⁵ The fact that the Decalogue were written on two tables of stones, clearly emphasize their application to two classes of moral obligation.²⁷⁶ The moral obligation is the embodiment of two great principles: Love towards our Creator and love towards our neighbour (Matt 22:36-40).²⁷⁷ God has given His moral law for the welfare of humanity. God's Ten Commandments govern the moral life of all human beings in all times and places.²⁷⁸ The Ten Commandments has existed and will exist as long as God's character remains unchanged.²⁷⁹

The SDAs claim that the ceremonial law was given because of human's disobedience to God's requirements.²⁸⁰ The ceremonial or provisional law was added because of the transgression of the moral law.²⁸¹ The system of sacrifices was to teach an important truth about the atonement: that forgiveness could be obtained only through the shedding of blood.²⁸² The animal sacrifices symbolized the Saviour's atoning death on their behalf, they obtained forgiveness of sin.²⁸³ In the days of Moses, the ceremonial law consisted of ordinances, ceremonies, and sacrifices in the

²⁷⁵*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 263-277.

²⁷⁶"God spake," *SDABC*, 1:601.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*

²⁷⁸Veloso, "The Law of God," 465.

²⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 460.

²⁸⁰*Seventh-day Adventists*, 263-277. See also, Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Sacrifices and offerings."

²⁸¹*Seventh-day Adventists*, 263-277.

²⁸²Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Sacrifices and offerings."

²⁸³*Ibid.*

sanctuary system that pointed to the future redemption through Jesus Christ.²⁸⁴ This law typified the mysteries contained in the plan of redemption in Jesus.²⁸⁵ God's plan of salvation was seen in those ceremonies, and faith in them as a type of the "Lamb of God" would be accepted by God for the removal of the sins of the penitent; therefore they could hardly have been a yoke of bondage.²⁸⁶ After Christ's death, the ceremonial law was no longer to be observed (Col 2:14-17). The laws consisting in ordinances, typifying Christ's death was the one nailed to the cross (Eph 2:15).²⁸⁷

According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Handbook*, God has guaranteed in the new covenant, to place His law within the hearts of His people (Jer 31:33). This would bring about the intimate knowledge of God among all God's people.²⁸⁸ Even though, the Decalogue is written on stone, God wanted to position it in the hearts of His people so it could rule the entire life of every individual.²⁸⁹ The SDAs explain that all humanity is involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan concerning the character of God and His law.²⁹⁰ Jesus came to the world, not only to atone for sin but to be a teacher both by precept and example. He came to show man how to keep the law in humanity and how it was possible for all humanity to obey the laws of God.²⁹¹ Jesus asserts that He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to

²⁸⁴*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 274-275.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*

²⁸⁶Harold E., Carr, "Is the Ceremonial Law Enmity Against God or Man?" *Ministry*, May 1965, 8-10.

²⁸⁷Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jew Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1997), 91.

²⁸⁸Blazen, "Salvation," 277.

²⁸⁹Veloso, "The Law of God," 459.

²⁹⁰*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 113 -120.

²⁹¹White, *Selected Messages*, 139.

fulfill it (Matt 5:17, NKJV). Christ came to fulfill the ceremonial law, and to teach us the meaning of the moral law, which is engraved in our hearts.²⁹²

The Perpetuity of God's Sabbath

The SDAs claim that the seventh-day Sabbath was divinely instituted at the close of creation week (Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:8-11).²⁹³ The seventh-day Sabbath has not been changed, but rather all people are required to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.²⁹⁴ They maintain that the seventh-day Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of an eternal covenant between Him and His people.²⁹⁵ Again it is a sign that distinguishes between His loyal subjects and transgressors. It is a token of God's love to humanity.²⁹⁶ Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts.²⁹⁷ The seventh-day Sabbath is the "birthday of the world" which cannot be changed because it celebrates a historical event that occurred at the point of time in the past, long before the nation Israel existed.²⁹⁸

²⁹²White, *The Faith I Live By*, 106.

²⁹³Siegfried H. Horn, *SDABD*, rev. ed. (1979), s.v. "Sabbath."

²⁹⁴*Ibid.*

²⁹⁵"My sabbaths" [Exod. 31:13], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:662.

²⁹⁶General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 138.

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 16.

²⁹⁸Willmore D. Eva, "Why the Seventh Day?" *Ministry*, September 1999, 4-8. Willmore D. Eva is the editor of *Ministry* and an associate in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Furthermore, SDAs maintain that the seventh-day Sabbath is a memorial of God's Creation.²⁹⁹ The seventh-day Sabbath is linked with Creation.³⁰⁰ Gen 2:1-3 states that after God had ended His acts of creation in six days, He rested on the seventh day and then "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (NKJV).³⁰¹ Bacchiocchi opines that the very word "Sabbath" means rest, and to rest implies that you have laboured.³⁰² It's logical, then, for God to have designated the last day of the week a day of rest.³⁰³ Similarly, the fourth commandment points to the Creation Sabbath and indicates that the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it (Exod 20:11 NKJV). God put His Sabbath instruction in the center of the Ten Commandment.³⁰⁴ God said "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8). The phrase "remember" indicates that the Sabbath was instituted earlier and actually, it originated from Creation.³⁰⁵ "The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God" (Exod 20:10). God commanded that the seventh day be observed as the Sabbath.³⁰⁶ God intended that we observe the Sabbath a memorial of His Creation.³⁰⁷ The Sabbath commandment was engraved on stone as the rest of the Ten

²⁹⁹*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 251.

³⁰⁰Kenneth A. Strand, "The Sabbath" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 495.

³⁰¹"God blessed the seventh day" [Gen. 2:3], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:2.

³⁰²Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1998); 250-252.

³⁰³*Ibid.*

³⁰⁴Strand, "The Sabbath," 495.

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 496.

³⁰⁶Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, 250-252.

³⁰⁷*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 251.

Commandments by the very hand of God.³⁰⁸ The Sabbath is not a ceremonial order but a natural order of creation. He stresses that despite the fact that there are ceremonies connected with Sabbath observance, they do not affect the essential nature of the day.³⁰⁹

Furthermore, SDAs explain that the seventh-day Sabbath is a memorial of God's redemption.³¹⁰ When God delivered the Israelites out of bondage, He gave them His Sabbath (Deut 5:15).³¹¹ God said "remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut 5:15, NKJV). Though Deut 5:15 associates the Sabbath rest with freedom from the slavery of Egypt, the deliverance from Egypt motif is not new in Deut 5, for it had already occurred in conjunction with the giving of the Decalogue in Exod 20.³¹² God's redemptive Sabbath is a day to show goodness with the memory of liberation. God said "remember that you were a slave" (Deut 5:15) therefore, give your own servants a chance to rest.³¹³ God's liberation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt was the redemptive act that confirmed His earlier goodness and gave the foundation for the covenant relationship between Him and His people.³¹⁴ Therefore, God's prior goodness to the Israelites was foundational for their commitments to Him

³⁰⁸Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, 250-252.

³⁰⁹Ibid.

³¹⁰*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 251.

³¹¹"Thou wast a servant" [Deut. 5:15], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:2.

³¹²Strand, "The Sabbath," 495.

³¹³Ekkehardt Mueller, The Sabbath Commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 14/2 (Fall 2003): 148.

³¹⁴Strand, "The Sabbath," 498.

as stipulated in the Ten Commandments.³¹⁵ As in Exod 20:8-11, the Israelites were asked to walk in sanctity on the Sabbath because it is a sign of God's creation, Deut 5:12-15 admonished them to walk as free men in God because the Sabbath is memorial of God's deliverance.³¹⁶ Also, the Sabbath signified initial and ongoing sanctification through divine intervention (Exod 31:13).³¹⁷

Thus, SDAs claim that the gospel record shows that Jesus taught proper Sabbath keeping by word and deed.³¹⁸ The Sabbath was given prominence throughout His earthly ministry and His Sabbath miracles attest to that fact. Jesus claimed lordship over the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).³¹⁹ Furthermore, Paul's own practice proves his loyalty to the Sabbath (Acts 13:14; 13:42, 44; 16:13; 18:4).³²⁰ Bacchiocchi believes the New Testament supports the Sabbath's perpetuity: the New Testament portrays Christianity's basic continuity with Judaism; it alludes to the Creation origin of the Sabbath; it notes the redemptive meaning that Christ gave the Sabbath in His teaching and ministry; and it records the fact and manner of Sabbath observance.³²¹

Summary

To sum up, SDAs opine that the Bible is structured around one everlasting covenant of salvation. The several covenants in the Old and New Testaments reveal

³¹⁵Ibid., 498-499.

³¹⁶“Thou wast a servant” [Deut. 5:15], *SDABC*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:600.

³¹⁷Roy E. Gane, Sabbath and Sanctification, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 22/1 (2011): 14.

³¹⁸Strand, “The Sabbath,” 495.

³¹⁹Roy Gane, *The Role of God's Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the New Covenant* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 47.

³²⁰Ibid.

³²¹Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, 250-252.

how God renewed His eternal covenant of grace in different ways to save humanity in different periods and locations. God revealed His eternal covenant of grace in Gen 3:15 in a promise. The everlasting covenant of grace was renewed to Abraham in a promise. The old covenant is none other than a renewal of the covenant given to Abraham. The new covenant is a renewal of God's everlasting covenant.

Thus, SDAs advocate that God's law is perpetual. They assert that God's law is the foundation of His government, which was present long before man was created. They explain that the Bible reveals two laws: one everlasting, the other temporary. The everlasting law indicates human obligation to God and to his or her fellow humans and it is known as the moral law. The temporary or ceremonial law was added because of the transgression of the moral law. The divine moral law was printed on the hearts of Adam and Eve before their fall. Christ did not bring new law but He explains the meaning of the Ten Commandments.

Also, SDAs claim that the seventh-day Sabbath is the perpetual day of rest and worship; hence God's Sabbath has not changed. Genesis 2:1-3 is the theological foundation of the Sabbath, which is linked with Creation. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation. Thus, Exod 20:8-11 and 31:17 point to the Creation Sabbath in Gen 2:1-3. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. The seventh day Sabbath is a sign of spiritual rest from the bondage of sin and from one's own efforts at salvation. The weekly observance of the seventh day Sabbath is a symbol of the believers entering into gospel rest.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS' VIEWS ON COVENANT

The chapter is concerned with analysing the views of NCT and SDAT. The theological analysis is organised in three main sections. The first section examines views on God's covenants, which are analysed under: God's Covenant in the Old Testament; and God's Covenant in the New Testament. The second section considers views on God's Law, which are analysed under: God's Law in the Old Testament; and God's Law in the New Testament. The final section examines views on God's Sabbath, which are analysed under: God's Sabbath in the Old Testament; God's Sabbath in the New Testament.

The study analyses and compares the two views to determine how they are in conformity with the total unity of the biblical teachings on God's everlasting covenant in relation to biblical covenant, the Law, and the Sabbath. The study examines the similarities and differences in the opposing views.

God's Covenants

This section examines the theological argument between NCTs and SDAs on whether there is continuity or discontinuity of God's covenants in the Bible. However, the controversy surrounding the continuity or discontinuity of God's Covenants in the Old and New Testaments is mainly hermeneutics.¹ NCT subscribes to NT priority

¹Gary D. Long, *The Grace of God and Departures From It*, 91.

over the OT, and asserts that NT must interpret the OT.² According to NCTs, the OT is to be read and interpreted “through the lens of the NT Scriptures.”³ For NCTs, NT Scriptures supersede OT Scriptures. On the other hand, SDAs believe that all scriptures both OT and NT are God’s word, and it is truthful, and sufficient. The SDAs accept all biblical interpretations which are consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures that preserve the unity of scripture, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God. The SDAs are committed to the *sola, prima, and tota scriptura* principles of theological interpretation.

Thus, NCTs assertion appears to be right when it comes to issues relating to type and antitypes in the Holy Scriptures. It is true that one cannot understand many of the types and shadows of the OT without giving priority to the NT. However, it seems that there are NT passages that cannot be interpreted without the OT. For instance, the book of Revelation and its symbols cannot be accurately understood without giving the OT a sort of logical priority. Thus, for NCTs to subscribe only to NT priority over the OT, is problematic. If the assertion of NCT is wholly correct, then this assertion raises some serious questions. How can the reliability of the OT text be upheld? And can the OT text be authoritative? If, NCTs give priority to the testimonies of Christ and the Apostles, then it is appropriate to consider their responses to these questions.

Jesus often appealed to the Scriptures, and there can be no question that He considered the OT Scriptures as carrying divine authority.⁴ Jesus said “Have you

²Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 216-217.

³Ibid., 202.

⁴Lynn Gardner, *Christianity Stands True: A Common Sense Look at the Evidence* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 89-96.

never read in the Scriptures?” (Matt 21:42, NIV); ““haven’t you read?” (Matt 12:3, 5, NIV; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3); while resisting Satan in the wilderness He said, it is written (Matt 4:4, 7, 10); He refuted accusations of His opponents by quoting them the OT scripture (Matt 12:1-7); and He quoted Psalm 82:6 in John 10:33-35. Jesus believed that the OT is reliable.⁵ He said, the OT Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), the OT is the “Word of God” (Matt 15:6). He also indicated that it was indestructible: “Until Heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law, until all is accomplished” (Matt 5:18). In Matthew 12:1-8, Jesus affirms the truthfulness and reliability of 1 Samuel 2:16, Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5-9; Numbers 28:9-10; Hosea 6:6; Genesis 2:3. Furthermore, we have Matthew 19:1-6 where Jesus reaffirms the Genesis creation account, about God creating man and woman.

The apostles, likewise, accepted the Scriptures as being of divine origin. In what sense can the OT really be called an inspired word of God or God’s revelation? Apostle Paul said, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:14-17); and he referred to the OT as “the Holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:2; 2 Tim 3:15). Similarly, Apostle Peter argues that the Bible writers were led by Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). Jesus did not discredit the authority of OT Scripture.⁶ They never criticized any parts of Scriptures.⁷ Neither do we find the apostles doing so.⁸ Not once do they insinuate that parts of Scripture are not trustworthy or lack divine authority or less inspired. Jesus does not

⁵George Garner, *Marks of a Worthy Mentor* (Texarkana, TX: Bogard Press, 2009), 57.

⁶Dan Story, *Defending Your Faith: Reliable Answers for a New Generation of Seekers and Skeptics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1997), 58.

⁷Uuras Saarnivaara, *Can the Bible Be Trusted?: Old and New Testament Introduction and Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 35.

⁸See, *Ibid.*, 36-37. Eugene H. Merrill, *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 19.

abrogate the Law and the Prophets; He upholds them. Can we be more Christian than Christ Himself? Can we be more apostolic than the apostles?⁹

The hermeneutical approach of NCT casts doubt on the integrity of the OT texts. If the NT reinterprets the OT covenants, what were the relevance of the original OT revelations to the original readers?¹⁰ Kaiser asserts that Christians get the wrong impression about the OT revelation of God if they opine that most recent revelation of God is to be preferred or substituted for that which came earlier.¹¹ Surprisingly, NCTs want believers to accept that the OT passages should not become the basis for giving primary direction on any doctrines or truths that have relevancy for NT times. The SDAs accept both OT and NT as the basis of doing theology. Both SDAs and NCTs ways of doing theology affect their understandings of the entire Bible, especially God's Covenant. The study does a systematic analysis on the two opposing views on God's covenant, which is organised in two sub-sections, namely: God's Covenant in the OT, and God's Covenant in the NT.

God's Covenant in the Old Testament

In OT, the debate over the continuity or discontinuity of the God's covenant is related to the structure of God's covenant. The NCT explains that the Bible is structured around two distinct covenants in the Old and New Testaments,¹² namely,

⁹Frank M. Hasel, Christ-centered Hermeneutics: Prospects and Challenges for Adventist Biblical Interpretation, *Ministry*, December 2012, 7.

¹⁰Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 116.

¹¹Walter C. Kaiser, "The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6-12)," in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1998) 222.

¹²Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 129. See also, Zens, "Is There a Covenant of Grace?" 52.

the old legal covenant at Sinai and the new gracious covenant that replaces it.¹³ The SDAs opine that the Bible is structured around one everlasting covenant of salvation.¹⁴ The several covenants in the old and New Testaments reveal how God renew His eternal covenant of grace in different ways to save humanity in different periods and locations.¹⁵ The NCT rejects the idea of one covenant in the Bible, where there is no distinction between the Old and New Covenants.¹⁶ Roy Gane, an Adventist theologian, asserts that the phases of God's unified covenant convey the plan of God's redemption throughout the OT era and on into the NT.¹⁷ The assessments of both SDAs and NCTs seem to have disparity.

Basically, there are several explicit covenants in the Bible, which include: Noachic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant. Therefore, how can God's covenants be structured around one everlasting covenant, which represents continuity or how can God's covenants be structured around two distinct covenants in the Old and New Testaments, which represent discontinuity? These concerns may give the impression of a difficulty; however, there is coherency and clarity in the debate relating to the continuity or discontinuity of God's covenants.

The initial debate on the continuity or discontinuity on the structure of God's covenant begins with the question: How do SDAs and NCTs understand God's Covenant? The SDAs link all Biblical covenants to God's unitary purpose of

¹³Ibid., 129.

¹⁴Blazen, "Salvation," 276.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 19.

¹⁷Gane, "Justly Integrating Covenant, Law, and Sabbath," 6.

salvation.¹⁸ On other hand, NCTs connect God’s new covenant to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb 8:6-13, 10:11-18).¹⁹ Well asserts that it is “the bond between God and human, established by the blood of Christ.”²⁰ To some extent it may seem that both SDAs and NCTs relate God’s covenant with salvation in Christ. Nevertheless, SDAs connect all biblical covenants to salvation, and NCTs relate only the new covenant to salvation in Christ.

It appears that NCTs’ understanding of salvation to the new covenant era is problematic. In Revelation 13:8, Jesus Christ the sacrificial Lamb is portrayed as slain from the foundation of the world.²¹ The Apostle Paul opines that God chose us in Christ *before the foundation of the world* (Eph. 1:3, 4, NKJV; emphasis added). The everlasting plan of God was not an after-thought, but the fruit of an eternal counsel.²² The phrase “before the foundation of the world,” clearly means before the world was made.²³ This is an evidence of God’s eternal plan of salvation for all humanity before the work of creation. The eternal plan of salvation is not limited to the new covenant

¹⁸Blazen, “Salvation,” 276.

¹⁹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 18

²⁰Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 57.

²¹See also Rev. 17:8; Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; Heb. 9:26. Clarke opines that Jesus Christ agreed from the foundation of the world to save humanity through His blood. Adams Clarke, *Clark Commentary’s on the New Testament, vol. 2, Romans to Revelation* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1831), 1019. Jamieson et al. mention that Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Therefore, all atonements ever made were only effectual through the blood of Jesus. Robert Jamieson et al., *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 583. Barnes argues that it was not that He was actually slain from the foundation of the world, but that the intention to give him for a sacrifice was covenanted. Albert Barnes, *Barnes New Testament Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1949), 4807.

²²Ibid.,. 3043.

²³Ibid., 3044.

era but for all people in all generation. This eternal plan of salvation is expressed in several areas in the New Testament (Eph 1:3, 4; Rev 13:8; Acts 2:23).²⁴

Fundamentally, both NCTs and SDAs agree that there is one eternal plan of redemption. The NCT stresses that there is one distinct and unchanging purpose of God being worked out for the salvation of humanity.²⁵ The SDAs opine that God's eternal grace to humanity is traced before the foundation of the world and that it is called the plan of redemption.²⁶ However, there is disagreement, SDAs describe the plan of redemption as an everlasting covenant of grace made between the Godhead in eternity past in order to bring salvation to humanity.²⁷ The NCT agree that the persons of the Trinity had a plan for the salvation of humanity before time. Nevertheless, they assert that the eternal plan of God cannot be called a covenant.²⁸

Although, NCT's argument that the eternal plan of God is not explicitly found in the Bible as covenant may be correct,²⁹ however, there are evidences that the word

²⁴See John 6:37-40; Eph 1:4 ff.; 3:11; Phil 2:5-11; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9; Jas 2:5; 1 Pet 1:2; and Rev 5:9-10. This plan of redemption is also called the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20). Apostle Peter's sermon in Acts 2 makes reference to the eternal plan of God. He mentions that Jesus of Nazareth "being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2: 23, NKJV). This statement reveals that the death of Christ was ordained by God before He created the world (1 Pet 1:20). It was the determined counsel of His love, to redeem mankind from eternal death, by the death of his only-begotten Son. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Incorporated, 1986), 422. Therefore, the death of Jesus was in accordance with the fixed design of God. Barnes, *Barnes New Testament Notes*, 4159. This is the result of a voluntary agreement among the persons of the Trinity, so that their internal relations assume the form of a covenant life.

²⁵Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 19.

²⁶White, *The Faith I Live By*, 76.

²⁷*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 107.

²⁸Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37. Also, see Zens, "Is There a Covenant of Grace?" 48.

²⁹Robertson concurs that the eternal plan "To speak concretely of an intertrinitarian 'covenant' with terms and conditions between Father and Son mutually endorsed before the foundation of the world is to extend the bounds of scriptural evidence beyond propriety." Palmer, O. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 54.

covenant is implied in the plan of redemption. The Bible suggests the idea of a covenant between the Father and the Son in Luke 22:29. Jesus said “I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, (RSV). The phrase “assign” connotes the idea of a covenant. The Greek word *diatithêmi* which means to “assign,” “appoint,” or “testator” is derived from *diathêkê*, which means to assign by will, covenant or testament.³⁰ This indicates that the Father has covenanted to give Jesus a kingdom from the foundation of the world. This plan of redemption is embedded in the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20). Implicitly, the word *diatithêmi* is evidence that the everlasting covenant is biblical. The everlasting covenant articulates God’s plan to save humanity. It may be deduced that the everlasting covenant which God established before the foundation of the world is rooted in His grace.

Another debate on the continuity or discontinuity of God’s covenant is whether the promise of the seed in Genesis 3:15 is part of the everlasting covenant. The SDAs believe that God revealed His eternal covenant of grace in a promise.³¹ On other hand, NCT asserts that God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 cannot be called covenant of grace.³² Mainly, NCTs’ objection to Genesis 3:15 as the announcement of the covenant of grace is understandable, because the term “covenant” is not explicitly used in the text. Nevertheless, covenants are based on promises. In fact, it is possible to use the two terms interchangeably.³³ For instance, in Galations 3:15, 17 Paul gives the word “promise” the status of a *diatheke* (covenant). Certainly, when a covenant is

³⁰A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 513.

³¹*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 107.

³²Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 129.

³³Keith Burton, “Christ and His Law,” 115.

made, it is expected that the person who makes the promise or covenant has the ability to deliver what is promised or covenanted.³⁴ God has promised to give Christ for the salvation of humanity. Surprisingly, NCTs connect the new covenant with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.³⁵ This is evidence that the idea of the “everlasting covenant” is conveyed in the text. First, the promised “seed of the woman” refers to Christ as the redeemer of humanity.³⁶ It was the plan of God that Jesus Christ was to be born of a woman (Gal 4:4). The promise of the seed is the declaration of God’s everlasting covenant of grace.³⁷ The everlasting covenant of grace is the light of the gospel on earth, which is gradually amplified in the OT and the NT redemptive process.³⁸ God’s everlasting covenant of grace was instituted to bring a holy God into a close covenant relationship with sinful humanity through the seed of women, which is Christ Jesus.³⁹

Second, God’s everlasting covenant is His promise of redemption. The Apostle Paul states “that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the *covenants of promise*, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12, NKJV; emphasis is mine). God’s promises are fulfilled, both physical and spiritual.⁴⁰ God’s spiritual promises are His assurance of salvation.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 18.

³⁶C. Matthew McMahon, *Covenant Theology Made Easy* (Hollis, NH: Puritan Publications, 2009), 239.

³⁷R. Stienstra, “Contours of God’s Covenant,” *A Unity Committee Report*, Clarion, vol. 48, no. 16, Aug. 6, 1999.

³⁸Gane, “Justly Integrating Covenant, Law, and Sabbath,” 6.

³⁹Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 981.

⁴⁰Fred M. Jensen, *A Study of the Foundation of Justification* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 127.

However, there are necessary legal procedures that make God's promise to become a binding covenant. The legal procedure in both OT and NT is the blood of Christ on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. In the OT, God's spiritual promise of redemption needs temporal legal procedure to make God's promise of redemption to become a binding covenant. God instituted temporal sacrificial system that pointed to the great and perfect offering of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ This element of sacrifice is vital and continuous in all phases of human history of redemption.

In the commencement of the temporal legal procedure, the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed Adam and his wife right after the promise (Gen 3:21). Wesley explains that the skins used to cloth Adam and Eve were from animals offered as sacrifice to God, as atonement for their sins, which was pointing forward to the great atoning sacrifice of Christ.⁴² God demonstrated temporal sacrificial system to set an example to humanity as requirement to demonstrate their faith in the coming sacrifice of Christ.⁴³ Adam and Eve were saved by grace through faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice but not by their works of the law (Gal 3:11). This initial animal sacrifice which is temporal legal procedure that points to Christ ultimate sacrifice makes God's promise in Genesis 3:15 to become a binding covenant in prospective. Therefore, the announcement of God's plan of redemption in Genesis 3:15 can be considered as the continuity of God's everlasting covenant. Also, Cain and Abel were to demonstrate their faith in the coming sacrifice of Christ. Abel recognized his sin and offered animal sacrifice. God accepted his offering and was saved through faith in

⁴¹Bill Hamon, *Who Am I and Why Am I Here* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2005), 68.

⁴²John Wesley, *John Wesley's Notes on the Whole Bible: Old Testament, Genesis-Chronicles II* (Benediction Classics, 2010), 18.

⁴³White, *Patriarchs and Prophet*, 364.

Christ (Gen 4:3-4; Heb 11:4, NKJV). The bloodshed signifies Christ death, which mediate grace to humanity.⁴⁴ In contrast, Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Cain's bloodless offering without faith in Christ was rejected.⁴⁵ Therefore, it could be said that there is continuity of God's everlasting plan in relation to the salvation of humanity. It may be deduced that the everlasting covenant which God established with Adam and his seed is rooted in the grace of God.

One more issue on the continuity or discontinuity of God's covenant is whether the Noachic covenant is part of everlasting covenant. New Covenant Theologians recognise the Noachic covenant but do not consider it as part of two distinct covenants in the OT. They opine that the two covenants in the OT are Sinaitic and the new covenant.⁴⁶ The SDAs believe that the Noachic covenant is continuity of the everlasting covenant of grace.⁴⁷ Critically, it is strange for NCTs to recognise the Noachic covenant and still suggest two covenants in OT and NT. God's covenant with Noah reveals His everlasting covenant of grace. The Bible states that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8, NKJV). God promised Noah and his family of His saving grace.⁴⁸ God's everlasting covenant of grace was revealed when the

⁴⁴Sturges, *More Than a Promise: The Everlasting Covenant as Presented throughout History*, 3.

⁴⁵*Christian Victory* (Madison: The Company, 1982), 496. See, *Christian Faith and Life, Volume 38* (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1932), 43. See, Alva G. Huffer, *Systematic Theology, Restitution Herald, 1960*, 272.

⁴⁶Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 129.

⁴⁷Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Covenant."

⁴⁸Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 320. See, Susan L. Lingo, *Who's Who Object Talks That Teach about the Old Testament* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2003), 36.

flood was over.⁴⁹ God said “never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth (Gen 9:11, NKJV). The eternal purpose of God to save humanity was made long before the days of Noah. This purpose was reaffirmed in Gen 8:21 and His recommitment is assured (Gen 9:8-17).⁵⁰

Also, the sign of the Noachic covenant was established (Gen 9) as an evidence of God’s grace to humanity.⁵¹ This is a redemptive promise, which can be comprehended in the line of the everlasting covenant of grace in Genes 3:15. God’s covenant with Noah is a phase of the everlasting covenant of grace, which is grounded in all the rest of redemptive history.⁵² God’s promise not to destroy the world with water is the manifestation of God’s grace to all humanity.⁵³ This was a promise of grace, which was beneficial to all humanity.⁵⁴ God’s covenant with Noah was universal in scope and extends indefinitely.⁵⁵ God’s plan of redemption communicated in the promise was part of the development of a covenant made

⁴⁹Arthur W. Pink, *A. W. Pink’s Studies in the Scriptures* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2001), 178, 178.

⁵⁰Clifford Goldstein, “All Future Generations” in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, January-March 2003, 2-3. See Henry J. Kohoutek, *Invitation to Biblical Christianity: For the Well-Educated* (Bishop Auckland: Pentland Press, 2001), 185.

⁵¹William Sanford LaSor, *David Allan Hubbard, Frederic W. Bush, Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 86.

⁵²Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray’s and Meredith G. Kline’s Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), 221.

⁵³White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, 132.

⁵⁴Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, 320-325.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

between God and sinners.⁵⁶ God is to save humanity through the value of the death of Christ through faith.⁵⁷ Thus, each of the biblical covenants is a manifestation of the everlasting covenant of grace, which God promises to save those who exercise faith in his promises.

Significantly, Noah understood the sacrificial system that pointed to the great and perfect offering of Jesus Christ.⁵⁸ The Bible says “Noah built an altar to the LORD. And he took of every clean animal, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen 8:20, NKJV). Noah’s offering points to the example God’s set in Genesis 3:21 and the offering of Abel (Gen 4). Noah’s burnt-offerings to God was an expression of his gratitude to God for sparing mercy, the family’s need of pardoning grace, and the hope of obtaining it, through the sacrifice of Christ as a propitiation for the sins of the world.⁵⁹ Noah became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (Heb 11:7, NKJV). As a result of Noah’s expression of conviction, God promised that “never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth (Gen 9:11, NKJV).” God promised to be merciful to all humanity. This denotes God’s patience, forbearance, mercy, and grace for all ages. This covenant is related to the other covenants. God’s grace for that period was His personal commitment to humanity. From Genesis 3:15 to the days of Noah, it is clear that God’s everlasting covenant in relation to the eternal salvation of humanity is continuous. It may be

⁵⁶Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 88. See, Bela Bates Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: Or, Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Steen & Co., 1851), 422.

⁵⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 865-866.

⁵⁸Richard Booker, *The Miracle of the Scarlet Thread* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1991), 102. See, Also, Sturges, *More Than a Promise*, 92.

⁵⁹Arthur W. Pink, *Divine Covenants* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, 2015), 65.

deduced that the everlasting covenant which God established with Noah and his seed is rooted in the grace of God.

Another debate on the continuity or discontinuity of God's covenant is whether the Abrahamic covenant is part of the everlasting covenant. The SDAs assert that the everlasting covenant of grace renewed to Abraham is essential to the whole course of salvation history.⁶⁰ New Covenant Theologians explain that God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed⁶¹ for an everlasting covenant,⁶² to be God to him and to his seed after him.⁶³ To some extent, it may seem that both SDAs and NCTs consider God's Covenant with Abraham as an everlasting covenant. However, NCTs believe that the Abrahamic covenant covers both the old and new covenant. They assert that the Abrahamic covenant which contains both the old and new covenants is the physical and spiritual fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁶⁴ While SDAs opine that the everlasting covenant of grace was made with humanity in Eden and was renewed to Abraham in the promise, which pointed to Christ.⁶⁵ However, they assert that the covenant could not be ratified until the death of Christ.⁶⁶

Analytically, it is appropriate to critically consider God's covenant with Abraham. First, God's relationship with humanity is biblically expressed in terms of a covenant. In the case of the marriage covenant relationship, the man becomes the

⁶⁰*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 108.

⁶¹Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 285.

⁶²Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 43.

⁶³Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 277.

⁶⁴Volker and Lehrer, "Did Paul Misinterpret the Old Testament?" 75.

⁶⁵Blazen, "Salvation," 276. Also, White, *Amazing Grace*, 133.

⁶⁶*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 108. Also see, White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1999, 370.

husband of the woman, and woman becomes the wife of the man. Similarly, God becomes the God of the people, and the people become the people of God.⁶⁷ This idea of relationship is seen in God's covenant with Abraham. God said, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee*, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen 17:7, NKJV; emphasis added). Why would the creator have to establish a relationship with His creatures? And how is this linked with the eternal plan of salvation?

Basically, when humanity sinned, the bond between God and humanity was shattered (Gen 3:6-8). This broken relationship was due to human's disobedience to God. Paul states that "do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness" (Rom 6:16)? Humanity become slave to Satan and slave to sin. Besides, the sinless nature of humanity become fallen. The Apostle Paul asserts that "as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12). Because of the fallen nature, humanity cannot become righteous. Righteousness is possible only through divine grace (2 Cor 5:21). The shattered relationship between humanity and God must be restored. Restoration is dependent on those who exercise faith in his promises. God's promise to humanity to send a saviour in Genesis 3:15 necessitates a lineage that has a covenantal relationship with Him. God chose Seth after the death of Abel. Again, He chose Noah, a descendent of Seth to preserve his lineage for the promise. Through Noah's son, Shem, God chose Abraham to renew His everlasting

⁶⁷Gen 17:7, 8; Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 14:2; 29:13; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; Ezek 11:20; 36:28; 2Cor 6:16.

covenant of grace.⁶⁸ It is the renewal of God’s promise concerning the redemption of humanity.

Second, the SDAs maintain the idea that God’s everlasting covenant of grace was renewed to Abraham in a promise.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the NCTs object that God’s dealing with Abraham is not the *establishment* of a covenant of grace (Emphasis is mine).⁷⁰ However, God was announcing the gospel of grace, and it is this gospel promise of Christ that unifies all of Scripture around the Person and work of Christ Himself.⁷¹ Surprisingly, a straightforward reading of God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17:7, points to a fundamental phrase “I will *establish* My covenant between Me and you” (Emphasis supplied). From the text, it is clear that God said “I will establish.” Therefore, it is wrong for NCTs to assert that God did not establish His covenant but rather announce His gospel of grace. The Hebrew word *quwm*, which is translated establish, also means confirm, or continue.⁷² This denotes that God has confirmed His everlasting covenant of grace to Abraham.

Similarly, Genesis 17:7, points to a fundamental phase of the redemptive promise used in Genesis 3:15. In Genesis 17:7, God said, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy *seed* after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy *seed* after thee” (NKJV;

⁶⁸Augustin Calmet, *Calmet’s Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (Boston, MA: Crocker and Brewster, 1852), 316. See, *Christian Nation*, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation” (New York: Christian Nation, 1901), 34.

⁶⁹*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 108.

⁷⁰Reisinger, *Tablets of Stone*, 43.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 1546. See, Jay Patrick Green, *Interlinear Hebrew-Greek-English Bible with Strong’s Numbers, Vol. 1* (Mulberry, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2009), 36.

emphasis added). The phrase “seed” is a reference to God’s promise of “salvation” in the statement: “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her *Seed* (Gen 3:15, NKJV, emphasis added). The promised “seed” refers to Christ as the redeemer of humanity (Gal 3).⁷³ The NCTs argue that, Abraham did not know that he was saved in Christ.⁷⁴ This assessment contradicts the Holy Bible, for Jesus said, “your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). How did Abraham see Jesus? Though Jesus had not come yet Abraham had faith through the sacrifices. Abraham understood it, and had faith in Christ. It was this faith that the Apostle Paul mentions that Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Rom 4:3, 5). Abraham’s righteousness was not based on works but by grace (Rom 4:2; 4).

The NCTs are right to opine that there are many seeds of Abraham; however, there is only one seed for the salvation of humanity, which is Christ. The Bible is clear that God promised Abraham to establish His covenant between Himself and the seed after Abraham for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to Abraham and his seed (Gen 17:7; 22:18, NKJV). Paul asserts that the promise does not say, and to your seeds, as of many; but as of one, “and to your Seed,” which is Christ (Gal 3:16, NKJV). The essential element is that all the promises are confirmed in Christ (Gal 3:19). The blessings of Abraham are available to those who are united to Christ, the true seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29). Therefore, the ultimate purpose of God’s covenant with Abraham was the coming of Christ to liberate humanity from the bondage of sin. If Abraham had faith in Christ, then it is clear that God’s everlasting covenant in relation to the eternal salvation of humanity is continuous and rooted in God’s grace.

⁷³Matthew C. McMahon, *Covenant Theology Made Easy*, 239.

⁷⁴Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, 92-95.

Another debate on the continuity or discontinuity of God's covenant is whether the old covenant is part of the everlasting covenant. The SDAs claim that the old covenant is none other than a renewal of the covenant given to Abraham.⁷⁵ The NCTs assert that the Old Covenant is the physical fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁷⁶ Logically, with regard to element of continuity of God's covenant with Abraham, the Bible says "God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exod 2:24, NKJV). This suggests that the old covenant is a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant. Similarly, Zacharias, filled with the Spirit, opines that God swore an oath to Abraham "to show mercy towards, our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant" (Luke 1:67-77, ASV). Here Zacharias made reference to the Abrahamic covenant as the basis of the old covenant. These are evidences that God's covenant in relation to the salvation of humanity is continuous.

Although there are proofs of continuity, yet, the Bible says that the old covenant had fault (Heb 8:8). First, the everlasting covenant was to be ratified by Christ's own blood. However, the people of Israel erroneously believed that the animal's blood ratified the covenant (Exod 24:8), which was faulty. Second, the response of the people of Israel to God's covenant was faulty. They declared that "all that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exod 19:8, NKJV). In their response, they establish their own righteousness without Christ. They did not realize their insufficiency and sinfulness. Also, they did not recognise that without Christ, it was impossible for humanity to love God. Eventually, due to their deficiencies, they broke God's covenant. They had no hope because they had promised to do it by their own

⁷⁵Blazen, "Salvation," 276.

⁷⁶Volker and Lehrer, "Did Paul Misinterpret the Old Testament?" 75.

strength. However, the gracious God saw their sinfulness and made them to feel the need of the Saviour. God instituted the sacrificial offering which pointed to Christ in the everlasting covenant of grace. Paradoxically, NCTs opine that the old covenant was certainly not under an eternal covenant of grace.⁷⁷ They assert that the old covenant could not provide spiritual salvation and forgiveness for Israel.⁷⁸ In fact, the NCTs assertions are worrisome because the old covenant pointed the people of Israel to Christ our ultimate sacrifice. Apostle Paul indicated that David was saved by faith in Christ. He says “just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works” (Rom 4:6-8, NKJV).

Basically, the people under the old covenant were saved through faith in Christ. In Leviticus 4, the Bible specifies the sacrifices that must be made in order for a sin to be forgiven. Specifically, Leviticus 16 shows that this sacrifice did provide forgiveness of sins (Lev 16:30, NIV). Ironically, the NT says “for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4; ESV). Thus the animal sacrifices themselves could not provide forgiveness, but faith in Christ’s sacrifice which the sacrifices symbolised. This shows that all the OT sacrifices pointed humanity to Christ, who is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). In other words, the forgiveness for sins that God “provided” in the Old Testament was through Jesus. The OT people looked forward to the Lamb of God and His atoning sacrifice for their sins, while the NT looks backward for our forgiveness. Thus Looking forward or backward does not matter. In Hebrews 11, sometimes known as the “gallery of faith” or the “faith hall of fame,” there are samplings of OT saints whose lives pleased God.

⁷⁷Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 47, 50.

⁷⁸Ibid., 57.

Therefore, it could be said that there is continuity of God's everlasting plan in relation to the salvation of humanity.

Considering the evidence from both sides, it seems that the evidence in favour of continuity of God's Covenants in the OT is more convincing. It could be deduced from the above analysis that God's plan of salvation which was made in eternity past was the same plan promised in Gen 3:15. Also, it is the same covenant renewed to Abraham in the promise of the seed after him (Gen 17:7). It is the same covenant remembered and established with the people of Israel though they faulted. These entire covenants had sacrifices which point humanity to Christ. Therefore, it could be said that there is continuity of God's everlasting plan in relation to the salvation of humanity. This is in agreement with Palmer Robertson's view that God's covenants are unified and function as phases of advancement in God's general plan.⁷⁹

God's Covenant in the New Testament

In the NT, debate on the continuity or discontinuity of God's covenants is whether the new covenant is part of the everlasting covenant. The SDAs subscribe to the continuity of God's covenant. They claim that God revealed a pre-existing covenant, which was called the Everlasting Covenant.⁸⁰ New The NCTs claim that there is discontinuity between the two testaments. As a result, they stress on the discontinuity of covenants in the Old Testament.⁸¹ Significantly, the phrase "new covenant" is seen first in the OT. This appears in Jeremiah 31 where God said:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand

⁷⁹Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 28.

⁸⁰Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Covenant." sees also, Sturges, *More Than a Promise*, 2009.

⁸¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37, 41.

to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (Jer 31:31-34)

A simple reading of the text may seem that the old and new covenant varied, yet they are all one and grounded on Jesus Christ. But a critical analysis of the text reveals that there is an element of continuity and discontinuity between the old and new covenants. To begin with the element of continuity, first, there is a debate on whether the new covenant is renewal or brand new. The SDAs claim that the new covenant is a renewal of God's everlasting covenant.⁸² On other hand, NCTs claim that the new covenant is not a renewal of the old covenant. It is a brand "new" one which has totally replaced the Old Covenant.⁸³ According to the text, God said "I will make a *new* covenant" (Jer 31:31, NKJV; emphasis is mine). The Hebrew word translated "new" is *chādāš*. The primitive root of the Hebrew word is rendered "to be new," "to rebuild," "to renew" or "to repair."⁸⁴

Basically, Hebrew does not have two separate words for "new" and "renew" as in English and Greek. Thus the Hebrew word *chādāš* which is translated "new" can also be translated "renew."⁸⁵ This Hebrew word *chādāš* is used in some areas in the OT⁸⁶ to mean "restore" or "renew." For instance, the Hebrew phrase translated as

⁸²Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. "Covenant." See also, Hubert F. Sturges, *More Than a Promise*, 2009.

⁸³Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 5.

⁸⁴Chaim Bentorah, *Hebrew Word Study* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford, 2014), 92.

⁸⁵Walter C. Kaiser, *The Christian and the Old Testament*, 218.

⁸⁶Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:33; Ps 81:3; Isa 1:13, 14; 66:23; Ezek 18:31; 36:2; 45:17; 46:3, 6; Amos 8:5). Make you a new heart (Ezek 18:31; 36:2).

“new moon” (Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:33; Ps 81:3; Isa 1:13, 14; 66:23; Ezek 45:17; 46:3, 6; Amos 8:5), does not necessarily mean a fresh new moon, but rather the existing moon which is going to be restored in another month. Also, the statement “make you a new heart” (Ezek 18:31; 36:2) is not necessarily creating fresh heart, but rather a “renewal” or “regeneration” of an existing heart. Adeyemi affirms that the Hebrew word *chādāš* sometimes does mean “renew” and this is always clear from the contexts.⁸⁷ Therefore, it appears that the new covenant is a renewal of God’s existing covenant but not a fresh one.

Similarly, in the Septuagint, the Greek word used in Jeremiah 31:31-34 for “new” is *kainos*, which may be translated as “renewed” or “restored.” Also, the book of Hebrews made reference to Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Hebrews 8:8-9 and used the Greek word *kainos*, meaning “renew” in qualitative sense as contrasted with “new” in a numerical sense.⁸⁸ This Greek word *kainos* is used in several areas in the NT⁸⁹ to mean “renew.” First, Apostle John uses the Greek word *entolē kainē* translated as “new commandment” which seems more preferably to be understood as “renewed commandment” instead of “fresh commandment.” This assertion is based on the fact that the commandment to “love one another” (John 13:34) being described as “new” is not really new, but an existing commandment in the OT (Lev 19:18). Thus Jesus renewed the commandment and said “love one another; as I have loved you” to all humanity. Other Johannine literature affirm that it is not a fresh commandment but a renewal of an existing commandment (1 John 2:7; 2 John 5). Also, the phrases

⁸⁷Femi Adeyemi, *The new Covenant Torah in Jeremiah and law of Christ in Paul* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 51.

⁸⁸Richard N. Rhoades, *Faith of the Ages: The Hebraic Roots of the Christian Faith* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2012), 88.

⁸⁹Luke 22:20; John 13:34; 2 Cor 3:6; 5:17; Heb 9:15; Rev 2:17; 5:9; 21:1, 5.

translated as “the new creature” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) or “new man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), do not necessarily mean that the believers are going to be created afresh or anew, but rather the spirit of regeneration renewed all the faculties of the born again believers. Furthermore, the statement “the new heaven and new earth” in Revelation 21:1 are not necessarily fresh heaven and fresh earth, but rather a “renewal” or “restoration” of an existing heaven and earth. In contrast, there is another Greek word *neos* which is frequently translated as “new” in the sense of freshness.⁹⁰ Thus the Greek word *kainos* cannot be freshness but rather renewal or restoration. It seems that the new covenant is a renewal but not a replacement of existing covenant. The Greek word *kainos*, from a Jewish perspective is not replacement but addition.⁹¹

Second, there is another debate on whether the new covenant is a renewal of the Abrahamic Covenant or a fresh covenant to Israel and Judah. The SDAs assert that the Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and is called the new covenant.⁹² On other hand, NCTs agree that God’s Covenant with Abraham represents continuity.⁹³ Thus, the new covenant is the spiritual fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁹⁴ If the new covenant is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, then it cannot be fresh but only a renewal of the Abrahamic Covenant. The

⁹⁰Donald E. Gowan, *The Westminster Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 345. See, Robert G. Bratcher, and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 1961.), 95. Also, see, Kenneth Samuel Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), 35. See, Geoffrey William Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 496.

⁹¹Rhoades, *Faith of the Ages*, 88.

⁹²Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. “Covenant.”

⁹³Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 38.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 32. As far as NCT is concerned, spiritual aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant deal with the ultimate fulfillment of the seed in the Messiah and the possession of the land is fulfilled in an ultimate spiritual rest, not a physical rest. *Ibid.*, 36. Abraham’s spiritual descendants enter into a special

text states that “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer 31:31). From the text, the parties to this covenant are God, and the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Why the house of Israel and Judah? They are the descendants of Abraham. God established an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his seed (Gen 17:7). When they were in slavery, God remembered His promise to Abraham (Exod 2:24) and delivered them from bondage. Regrettably, the house of Israel and Judah broke God’s covenant. Therefore, God promised a new covenant, which was intended for the house of Israel and Judah; but that did not limit its inclusion of believing gentiles. This implies that the Abrahamic covenant which is an everlasting covenant is being renewed as the new covenant. It is not called the new covenant because it is fresh, but it is the existing covenant, which was made with Abraham (Gen 17:7).

Third, there is another debate on whether the new covenant is a renewal of God’s grace or a fresh grace to Israel and Judah. The Bible speaks to the element of grace which is seen in both the OT and NT. Fundamentally, the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31: 31-34 is about the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, which bestows grace on all humanity. The faith in the ultimate sacrifice of Christ is demonstrated throughout the OT. Generally, God’s salvation by grace through faith is seen in the animal sacrifice, which points to Christ. Specifically, the death of Christ is promised as the “seed” of the woman in Genesis 3:15. Also, the faith in Christ is demonstrated through the sacrifice of Abel and Noah (Gen 4; 8). Beside, Christ is promised as the “seed” of Abraham (Gen 22:18). Paul affirms that “Abraham and to his Seed” the promises were spoken. It does not say, and to seeds, as of many; but as

relationship with God in which He “promises to love them forever and to never punish them.” Lehrer, “Commonly Asked Questions about New Covenant Theology,” 8.

of one, “and to your Seed,” which is Christ (Gal 3:15, 16, MKJV). God instituted the sacrificial offering in the sanctuary and the temple in the old covenant, which pointed to Christ. Both the OT and NT people looked for to the coming of Christ. The old covenant people looked forward and the new covenant believers look backward to Christ. The OT and NT people were or are all saved by grace through faith in Christ. McComiskey opines that “the unity of grace throughout redemptive history is a covenanted unity. It is the promised covenant, the force of which never fails. . . .The unity of grace is expressed in the unfailing promised covenant. It is a continuing legal entity.”⁹⁵

Fourth, there is another issue of continuity in relation to covenant relationship in the new covenant and the old covenant. The Bible states that “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10). This statement points to the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 17:7, which God Promised Abraham to be God to him and his descendants after him. God’s promise to Abraham reveals His covenant relationship with Israel. God’s covenant relation is expressed in the statement “I will be their God” (Gen 17:8; Exod 29:45), but in other incidences the element “you will be my people” is added (Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:28). These statements are echoed in the new covenant promise in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-12. It is significant that both the old and new covenants reveal the same purpose of God, to have a covenant relationship with humanity. It is necessary to note that the people in God’s everlasting covenant will have God as their God. They shall worship God and be his people, filled with His holiness.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 141-142.

If God's covenant in the OT and NT represents continuity because it contains the same gospel, why then did God mention that the new covenant is "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers" (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). Also, the Bible says "for if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second" (Heb 8:7). These statements seem to suggest that there is also an element of discontinuity. This element of discontinuity brings out the difference between the old and new covenants. The questions to ask are: what is faultless? What is new and better and ultimate about the new covenant? The answer to these questions is seen in God's own statement: "My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord" (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). This disobedience can be attributed to the response of the people. The Bible says "all the people answered together and said, 'all that the Lord has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord (Exod 19:8, NKJV). The Israelites were ready to promise than to perform.⁹⁷ Generally, it is not wise for humanity to depend on their ability, but rather to say, "If the Lord will, we shall" (Jas 4:15). This response is faulty because they did not depend on God for wisdom and grace to learn and do His will. Also, the problem lies not with the response, but with our fallen nature we just cannot make ourselves righteous and acceptable to God (Rom 3:20). Since we are sinful, we cannot by our might obey God,⁹⁸ then, no human being in the OT and NT was or can be saved through the "works of the law" apart from grace.

⁹⁶Henry Cowles, *The Minor Prophets: With Notes, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical, Designed for Both Pastors and People* (Oxford: Appleton, 1869), 199. See, William H. Piles, "The Friend" *A Religious and Literary Journal*, 35 (1862), 318.

⁹⁷Paul Matthews Van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality: A Christian Theology of the People Israel* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), 154. See, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *Present at Sinai: The Giving of the Law* (Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 109-115.

⁹⁸Rice, "The Covenants and righteousness by faith, 2007," *Ministry*, May 2007, 14-18.

Conversely, the new covenant is “renew” because it reveals God’s perfect provision of obedience after a new manner, more fully and, plainly and clearly. God said “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; . . . no more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord” (Jer 31:33, 34, NKJV). It is significant to keep in mind that the new covenant was given against the background of the people’s failure to obey under the old covenant (Jer 31:32-33). The newness manifests itself in God’s perfect plan in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13, NKJV). McComiskey affirms that “the administration of obedience is effected by the placing of the law within the heart and by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁹ Therefore, it could be said that in the new covenant, the Holy Spirit gives the strength essential for obedience as against the people’s willingness to obey without the Holy Spirit.

Considering the evidence from both sides, it seems that the evidence in favour of continuity and discontinuity between God’s Covenants in the OT and NT is more convincing. However, the old and new covenants are more similar than usually thought. The everlasting covenant promised in Genesis 3:15 is the same covenant that was renewed to Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant was also renewed to Israel as the old covenant. God’s existing Covenant was renewed between God and His people through the Messiah's mediation. The old covenant is described as faulty. God’s covenant cannot be described as faulty but the people’s response and obedience was faulty. However, God renewed His covenant and called it the new covenant. But, the

⁹⁹McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*, 163.

critical difference between the old and new covenant is not fundamentally in their stipulations; rather, the difference lies in the administration of essentially similar stipulation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant. It is not surprising that Eichrodt describes the covenant as the unique unifying theme that binds the Old Testament with the New.¹⁰⁰

God's Law

This study examines the theological discussion on whether there is continuity or discontinuity of the Ten Commandments in the new covenant period between NCTs and SDAs. The NCTs reject the continuity of the Ten Commandments and refute the eternal, unchanging nature of the Decalogue.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, the SDAs advocate that God's law is perpetual.¹⁰² This section compares and analyses the two opposing views, which is organised in two sub-sections, namely: God's law in the Old Testament, and God's law in the New Testament.

God's Law in the Old Testament

In the OT, the debate on the continuity or discontinuity of God's law begins with whether God's law existed before Moses. The SDAs assert that God's law is the foundation of His government, which was present long before man was created.¹⁰³ On the other hand, NCTs believe that the *divine law* existed before the fall of humanity and it expresses God's character. The *divine law* is naturally written on the heart of all

¹⁰⁰Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. by J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961), 66.

¹⁰¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 181.

¹⁰²*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 270.

¹⁰³White, *Amazing Grace*, 131.

humanity (emphasis added).¹⁰⁴ It seems that there is an agreement between SDAs and NCTs that God's law existed before Moses. Also, it appears that there is inconsistency in the argument of the NCTs. First, in reference to covenant, NCT opines that there is danger of calling something that Scripture does not mention and it would lead to an unbiblical theological system.¹⁰⁵ Inferably, there is nowhere in Scripture before Moses that the Bible explicitly mentions the term "divine law." If the term "divine law" is not explicitly stated, would that not constitute an unbiblical theological system? However, there are many biblical teachings that are not explicit but implicit. One of these is the "divine law," which was implicitly stated before Moses. If the people before Moses sinned then there was a divine law. The Bible states that there could have been no sin before Sinai if there was no law (Rom 4:15). But Cain was held accountable for the murder of Abel (Gen 4:6-11) before Exod 20:13. Also, Joseph knew adultery was a sin against God before God gave that commandment to Moses in Exod 20:14. Therefore, both NCTs and SDAs are right to opine that God's law existed before Moses and it was called the "divine moral law."

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of God's law is in relation to the Ten Commandments given at Sinai. The issue is linked with the question as to whether God's law could be divided into moral and ceremonial. NCTs do not accept the traditional divisions of the OT laws into moral and ceremonial.¹⁰⁶ On other hand, SDAs explain that the Bible reveals two laws: one everlasting (moral laws), another temporary (ceremonial or sacrificial laws).¹⁰⁷ Both NCT and SDAs

¹⁰⁴Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," 145-48.

¹⁰⁵Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 37.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁷*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 263-277.

accept that God's moral law existed at creation.¹⁰⁸ If the divine law existed before the fall man, then it excluded the law on sacrifices, which is referred to as the ceremonial law. If Adam had not transgressed the divine law of God, the sacrificial or ceremonial law would never have been instituted. Thus, the divine moral law given to Israel is the Ten Commandments but not the ceremonial law. Though the sacrificial or ceremonial law was handed over to Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, and was codified in the days of Moses to deal with sacrifices in the sanctuary, it could not be equated with the divine law codified as the Ten Commandments. Therefore, to distinguish between the divine moral law being the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial law, which came because of sin is not wrong as NCTs claim.

In addition, the ceremonial law was designed to teach humanity the plan of salvation and point them to the coming Christ. After the death of Christ on the cross, all the sacrifices, rituals, and feasts are no longer needed (Heb 9:9-12). The Ten Commandments provided Israel with the moral framework for maintaining their relationship with God. Even Moses distinguishes the uniqueness of the moral law of the Ten Commandments from other laws, such as those for Israel as a nation, the ceremonial laws pointing to the life and work of the Messiah that found their fulfillment in Jesus. Although all of these laws ultimately came from God, they differ in scope and duration. Below are the differences:

¹⁰⁸Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," 145-148. Also see White, *Amazing Grace*, 131.

Table 1. Difference between the Divine Law and Ceremonial Law

No.	The Divine Law or Ten Commandments	The Ceremonial or Mosaic Law
1	Written by God (Exod 31:18; 32:16)	Written by Moses (Exod 24:4; Deut 31:9)
2	Written on stone (Exod 31:18)	Written in a book (Exod 24:4, 7)
3	Handed to Moses by God (Exod 31:18)	Handed to the Levites by Moses (Deut 31:25 -26)
4	Placed inside the ark of the covenant (Deut 10:5)	Placed beside the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:26)
5	Focuses on moral principles (Exod 20:1-17)	Focuses on ceremonial and ritual ordinances (Lev 8)
6	Reveals sin (Rom 3:20; 7:7)	Describes sacrifices for sins (Lev 1-7)
7	Established through faith (Rom 3:31)	Abolished by Christ (Eph 2:15)
8	Violation of this law is sin (1 John 3:4)	Violation of this law is not sin as it is abolished (Eph 2:15)

Another issue of dispute regarding the continuity or discontinuity of God's law is whether the law mentioned in Jer 31:31-33 is the Ten Commandments. The NCTs totally reject the continuity of the Ten Commandments.¹⁰⁹ On other hand, SDAs advocate that the Ten Commandments are perpetual.¹¹⁰ In the new covenant promise, the Lord said, "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:33). Both NCTs and SDAs description of the law in the new covenant is similar to the "divine moral law." New Covenant Theologians observe that the divine law is naturally written on the heart of all humanity.¹¹¹ Seventh-day Adventists assert that the divine moral law was

¹⁰⁹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 181.

¹¹⁰*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 270.

¹¹¹Zaspel, "Divine Law: A New Covenant Perspective," 145-148.

printed on their hearts before their fall.¹¹² The same “divine moral law” written in the heart, which is codified as the Ten Commandment is the same law predicted in the OT about the new covenant. Therefore, God’s law is based on his righteousness and holiness, which are aspects of His character which given to Israel and is the same as predicted in new covenant. Wells and Zaspel affirm that God’s moral law has its basis in the unchanging moral character of God.¹¹³ Gulley confirms that the law is an external expression of God’s character.¹¹⁴ Since stipulations are an essential and integral part of every covenant, hence the same law giving to humanity as the divine law, which was also codified as the Ten Commandments is the same law predicted in the new covenant.

God’s Law in the New Testament

In NT, the debate on the continuity or discontinuity of God’s law begins with whether the law of Christ has replaced the Ten Commandment. New Covenant Theologians believe that Christ actually changed God’s laws in Matt 5. The Law of Christ has replaced the Ten Commandments.¹¹⁵ The SDAs claim that Christ did not bring new law but He explains the meaning of the Ten Commandments.¹¹⁶ The assertion of the NCTs is problematic. For NCTs to assume that Christ enacted a new law called Christ’s law is an indication that Christ is not the eternal Lawgiver. According to the NCTs, the new law came into being during the presentation of the Sermon on the Mount. Basically, Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, did not abrogate

¹¹²White, *God’s Amazing*, 131.

¹¹³ Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 162.

¹¹⁴ Norman R. Gulley, “The Battle against the Sabbath and Its End time Importance,” 79-115.

¹¹⁵Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 2.

¹¹⁶*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 276.

nor materially change the law. He explained the spiritual nature of the law as it was intended. Jesus asserts that He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill (Matt 5:17, NKJV). Jesus did not attack the very book that revealed the will of His Father. Instead, His purpose was to fulfill the law, and not to do away with them.¹¹⁷

The Greek word *plērōsai* (Matt 5:17) used for fulfill, literally means to fill up, or complete.¹¹⁸ Jesus came to fulfill what has been said about Him in the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39). Jesus did not enact a new law because He enacted the Ten Commandments. The immediate context of the text indicates that Jesus did not come to destroy scripture but rather made known its inner essence. Robertson affirms that Christ came to fulfill the ceremonial law, and to teach us the meaning of the moral law, which is engraved in our hearts.¹¹⁹ Then Jesus switched emphasis from the OT in general to the law in particular. He cautions that as long as heaven and earth remain, the law will exist until everything is accomplished (Matt 5:18, NIV). With this statement, Jesus confirms the perpetuity of the law.

Similarly, the phrase “law of Christ” first appeared in Gal 6:2. The Bible states that “bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). What is the law of Christ? According to the text, the peculiar law of Christ is to love one another. In the gospel several references are made about loving one another. Christ

¹¹⁷Clarke opines that Christ fulfill the law in three ways. First, the animal sacrifices in the law were only the shadow, but He came to offer Himself as sacrifice for the sins of the world. Second, He submitted to an exact obedience, and verifying them by his death upon the cross. Third, He has given us grace to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbour as ourselves; for this is all the law and the prophets. Adams Clarke, *Clark Commentary's on the New Testament, vol. 1, Mathew to Acts* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1831), 69.

¹¹⁸ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 868. See, Robbert Veen, *Fulfillment of the Law* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, 2006), 23.

¹¹⁹Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, 35.

said “a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34; 15:12). This law is not a new enactment, but an existing commandment in the OT (Lev 19:18). The Greek word *entolē kainē* translated as “new commandment” means a renewed commandment.¹²⁰ Thus Jesus renewed the commandment “love one another” to all humanity as He has love as. Christ the eternal lawgiver sum up the Ten Commandments and said “you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘you shall love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:35-40, NKJV) as in the Ten Commandment. Jesus quoted the Ten Commandments and said “you shall not murder,’ ‘you shall not commit adultery,’ ‘you shall not steal,’ ‘you shall not bear false witness, ‘honour your father and your mother’ (Matt 19:18, 19, NKJV). Jesus sums up the above laws as “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matt 19:19).

Also, in Romans 13:8, the Apostle Paul says “love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Paul quoted the Ten Commandments to explain what he meant by the statement to “love one another.” He said you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, and you shall not covet (Rom 13: 9). He continues that “all are summed up in this saying,” namely, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” Also, Paul confirms Christ statement and said “for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘you shall love your neighbour as yourself’” (Gal 5:14). In making reference to the Ten Commandments, He said love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:30; 31).

¹²⁰ Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2000), 339. See, D. A. Miller, *A Theological Study in I John* (Roseville, MI: Lulu Press, 2012), 26.

Apostle Paul affirms Christ statement of loving God and our neighbours and said that “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:14). Logically, the law of Christ is also called the Ten Commandments, since Christ is the eternal law giver.

Another issue of consideration regarding the continuity or discontinuity of God’s law is whether Christ repeated the law in the NT. New Covenant Theologians stresses that whatever is repeated from the Old Testament in the New Testament is binding but if it is not repeated it is not binding.¹²¹ From NCTs assessment, if Christ repeated the Ten Commandments then it is binding. The question to ask is, did Christ repeat the Ten Commandment? The gospel gives evidence that Christ did repeat the Ten Commandments. When the young ruler came to Jesus concerning eternal life, Christ said “you know the commandments” (Mark 10:19). What commandment? Jesus answered and said “do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honour your father and your mother” (Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20, NKJV). These commandments are in reference to the Ten Commandment. Therefore, the answer is quite obvious that the commandment Jesus is referring to is the Ten Commandments. He did repeat the Ten Commandment.

Though Jesus mentions some aspect of the Ten Commandments which constitutes loving your neighbour as yourself to the young ruler, this does not mean that He has repeal the other aspects of the Ten Commandments. Also, looking at the text critically, it shows that Jesus was not enacting a new law but pointing to the existing Ten Commandments. Jesus further tested the young ruler on the other aspects of the Ten Commandments which constitute loving the Lord your God. He said “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you

¹²¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 242.

will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me” (Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22, NKJV). The young ruler could not stand the test of the first tablet. He thought that he loved God best, but soon discovered that he did not. Thus, if one loves God, the person will avoid any form of idols or gods, and the person is willing to obey and worship God. The young ruler loved the world better than God, and therefore was very far from keeping the Ten Commandments. Jesus first mentions the commandments on the second tablet, which believers mostly fail. But nothing is better evidence of a believer unfeigned love to God than the sincere performance of our duty to our neighbours.¹²² Love to human is a fruit and testimony of our love to God;¹²³ for he that love not his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20). It seems most probably that Jesus did repeat the Ten Commandments in the NT.

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of God’s law is whether the Apostles repeated the Ten Commandments in the OT. The NCTs explain that the law which is applicable to Christians is the law of Christ that includes the commands given by Christ and His Apostles.¹²⁴ The SDAs assert that the Everlasting law indicates human obligation to God and to his or her fellow humans and is known as the moral law.¹²⁵ It seems that NCTs give very little attention to the writings of Apostle Paul. The books of Romans and Galatians deal with the continuity of the Ten Commandments. First, the book of Romans suggests that the Apostle Paul

¹²²William Burkitt, *Expository Notes, with Practical Observations, on the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Sorin & Ball, 1844), 214.

¹²³Robert Jamieson, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (New York, NY: S. S. Scranton, 1875), 534.

¹²⁴Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 112.

¹²⁵*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 263-277.

did repeat the Ten Commandments, “for the commandments, ‘you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet.’” (Rom 13:9, NKJV). This statement points to the Ten Commandments in Exod 20. This is summed up as “you shall love you neighbour as yourself (Rom 13:8). For the whole Ten Commandments oblige humanity to love God and neighbour. Similarly, Paul did repeat the Ten Commandments in a statement “is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, you shall not covet” (Rom 7:7). This is direct reference to the Ten Commandment which says “you shall not covet” (Exod 20:17).

Apostle Paul writings in relation to law and grace must be understood in two main concepts. The first is the law in the context of salvation, which includes: grace, justification, and right standing before God.¹²⁶ The second is law in the context of Christian conduct, which includes: sanctification, and right living before God.¹²⁷ With regard to law in relation to salvation, Apostle Paul assumes that humanity cannot become righteous through the works of the law because of the fallen nature (Titus 3:5). Righteousness is possible only through divine grace (2 Cor 5:21). Also, in Christ, humanity is saved by grace through faith; it is the gift of God, not of works (Eph 2:8-9). Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20). He explained that justification by faith in Christ does not make void the law through faith. On the contrary, the law is established (Rom 3:31, NKJV). Paul was aware that the problem

¹²⁶Hans K. LaRondelle, “Paul, law, and covenants” *Ministry*, February 2004, 22-27.

¹²⁷Ibid.

is not with the law itself, but with his sinful nature.¹²⁸ Therefore, in connection with our Christian conduct, he asserts that the law is “holy,” “just,” “good,” and “spiritual” (Rom 7:12, 14, 16; 1 Tim 1:8) because it exposes sin and reveals God's ethical standards. Thus, he stated that Christ came “in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us” through the dynamic power of His Spirit (Rom 8:4). Through the law we become conscious of sin (Rom 3:20). God’s law reveals our transgression, so that we may realize our need of God's grace through Christ (Rom 5:20, 21).¹²⁹

Though we are saved by grace through faith in Christ, the fruit of salvation leads humanity to a personal relationship with Christ. As a result of our relationship with Christ, sin shall not be our master, because we are not under law, but under grace (Rom 6:14). Because, we are led by the Spirit, we are not under law (Gal 5:18). Being led by the Spirit implies a Spirit-led obedience to the Christ. Paul argues that through grace we have changed master in our conversion experience. Thus we are not “slaves to sin” but “slaves to obedience,” which leads to righteousness (Rom 6:6, 15-18). Therefore, in Christ, humanity is obedient to the laws of God.

God’s Sabbath

This section discusses the theological debate between NCTs and SDAs on whether there is continuity or discontinuity of the seventh-day Sabbath in the new covenant era. The SDAs claim that the seventh-day Sabbath is the perpetual day of rest and worship; hence God’s Sabbath has not changed.¹³⁰ Contrarily, NCTs maintain

¹²⁸Gary Staats, *The Person and Work of Christ in Romans: A Christological Commentary* (n.p: Gary Staats, 2010), 50.

¹²⁹LaRondelle, “Paul, Law, and Covenants,” 22-27.

¹³⁰Horn, *SDABD*, s.v. “Sabbath.”

that the Sabbath has lost its significance as a weekly holy day, because seventh-day Sabbath has been changed.¹³¹ The study makes a thorough analysis and compares the two opposing views, which is organised in two sub-sections, namely: God's Sabbath in the Old Testament, and God's Sabbath in the New Testament.

God's Sabbath in the Old Testament

In OT, the debate on the continuity or discontinuity of the seventh-day Sabbath begins with whether the Sabbath is a creation ordinance or not. The first issue relating to Sabbath as creation ordinance is whether the seventh day of the creation week in Genesis 2:1-3 should be considered as theological foundation of the Sabbath in Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:12-17. The SDAs claim that Genesis 2:1-3 is the theological foundation of the Sabbath, which is linked with Creation.¹³² They assert that the Sabbath is memorial of creation.¹³³ The NCTs oppose the assertion that Genesis 2:1-3 is the theological foundation of the Sabbath.¹³⁴ They opine that the word Sabbath cannot be found before Exodus 16:23, which indicate that the biblical Sabbath is not theologically founded in the creation account.¹³⁵

It seems that, NCTs are correct about the term Sabbath not exactly appearing in Genesis 2. The Hebrew word for Sabbath, *šabbat* is a noun and the verbal form, *šābat* means to cease primarily from work.¹³⁶ In Genesis 2, the Hebrew word used is

¹³¹Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," 400.

¹³²Strand, "The Sabbath," 495.

¹³³*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 251.

¹³⁴Arnold, *Two Stage Biblical Creation*, 360, 384-392.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 364, 365.

¹³⁶Tompaul Wheeler, *Bible Readings: Straight Answers from God's Word* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2007), 359.

the verbal form *šābat* but not *šabbat*. Dressler proposes that since there is no conclusive evidence on the origin of the Sabbath at creation, in that case, he suggests that the Sabbath originates with Israel.¹³⁷ Dressler’s conclusion seems to be erroneous. If the word Sabbath does not exactly appear in Genesis, does it mean that the concept is not implied? Can that be said about the personality of Holy Spirit, since the word person does not appear in the Bible? Contrarily, it is obvious that the idea is implied in Genesis 2:1-3. Waterman suggests that though the word ‘Sabbath’ is not employed, it is certain that the author meant to assert that God blessed and hallowed the seventh day as the Sabbath.”¹³⁸ Thus, it is linguistically possible that the Hebrew verb *šābat*, “to cease, to rest” and noun *šabbat*, “Sabbath” share a common Hebrew root.¹³⁹ Although the noun *šabbat*, “Sabbath” is not used in Genesis 2:2,3, however, the most likely possibility is that noun *šabbat*, “Sabbath” is derived from the Hebrew verb *šābat* “to cease,” since the most ancient of seventh-day observance is that all work ceased.¹⁴⁰ Thus “Sabbath” would mean “cessation day,” or “the day on which all work stops.”¹⁴¹ On the basis of the OT context, the verb *šābat* and noun *šabbat* are related to each other from the beginning.¹⁴²

¹³⁷Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” 24.

¹³⁸G. H. Waterman, “Sabbath” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill Chapin Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 5:183.

¹³⁹Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 17.1 See, W. E. Vine and Terry Kulakowski, *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words* (Roseville, MI: Lulu Press, 2015), 61, 62.

¹⁴⁰Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 247.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch” in *The Sabbath in Scripture*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1982), 24.

In addition, the Hebrew word *šabbat* occurs five times in its verbal form prior to Exodus 16:23.¹⁴³ Out of these five occurrences, three are actions directly related to the seventh day (Gen 2:2, 3; Exod 5:5).¹⁴⁴ According to the Hebrew's linguistic view, the verb seems to have preceded the noun.¹⁴⁵ Buber¹⁴⁶ adds that "it is worthless to disconnect the content of the Bible from its first readers, any attempt to disconnect the content from the form would lead to a fake analysis."¹⁴⁷ Thus, even though the noun Sabbath does not appear in the English translation prior to Exodus 16:23, there is strong evidence that the actions associated with the Sabbath are present in Genesis 2:2, 3, and throughout the history of the people of Israel.¹⁴⁸ Easton affirms that the Sabbath is a memorial of God's Creation. This truth emanates from an unprejudiced investigation, which is recognized throughout the world as a sacred day.¹⁴⁹

The second issue relating to Sabbath as creation is whether the seventh day in Genesis 2:2, 3 has any relationship with the Sabbath in Exodus 20:8-11 and Exodus

¹⁴³Genesis 2:2, 3; 8:22; Exodus 5:5; 12:15.

¹⁴⁴Silva, *Creation and Covenant: A Hermeneutical Approach to the Correlation of the Seventh Day and the Biblical Sabbath*, 17-42.

¹⁴⁵Doukhan opines that the message in the OT Bible is inherent in Hebrew language. Jacques Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians: A Textbook for the Study of Biblical Hebrew in Relation to Hebrew Thinking* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), xvii, 48.

¹⁴⁶Martin Buber is a Jewish philosopher, religious thinker, and educator. Buber translated the Bible from Hebrew into German and wrote numerous religious and Biblical studies. When translating the Bible, Buber's goal was to make the German version as close to the original oral Hebrew as possible. One important method was to identify keywords (*Leitworte*) and study the linguistic relationship between the parts of the text, uncovering the repetition of word stems and same or similar sounding words. Christian D. Von Dehsen and Scott L. Harris, *Philosophers and Religious Leaders* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1999), 34.

¹⁴⁷Martin Buber, *Werke: Schriften Zur Bibel* (München: Kösel, 1962), 1112, quoted in Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians*, xvii. See also André Lacocque, *But as for Me: The Question of Election in the Life of God's People Today* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1979), 75, 76, cf. 51.

¹⁴⁸Silva, "Creation and Covenant," 17- 42.

¹⁴⁹Frederick Adolphus Packard, *The Union Bible Dictionary* (Philadelphia, PA: American Sunday-School Union, 1842), 249.

31:12-17. Seventh-day Adventists assert that Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:17 points to the Creation Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3.¹⁵⁰ New Covenant Theologians argue that Genesis 2:1-3 has no relationship with the Sabbath in Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:12-17.¹⁵¹ The assertion of NCTs seems to be incorrect. A simple reading of the Creation account in Genesis points the Sabbath to God's act of creation (Gen 1 and 2). There are several vital statements used in Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:12-17 which point to Genesis 2:1-3. The statements provide the basic biblical facts that point to creation as the theological foundation of the Sabbath. In Exodus 20, the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy is motivated by an explicit reference to creation account in a statement: "For in *six days* the LORD made the *heavens and the earth*, the sea, and all that is in them, and *rested the seventh day*. Therefore the LORD *blessed* the Sabbath day, and *sanctified* it. (Exod 20:11, MKJV, emphasis supplied). Also, in Exodus 31:12-17, the commandment to observe the Sabbath finds its ultimate reason in the statement: "It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in *six days* the LORD made the *heavens and the earth*, and on the seventh day He *rested* and was refreshed" (Exod 31:17b, NKJV, emphasis supplied).

These texts point to the theological foundation of the Sabbath at Genesis 2:1-3. There are statements very similar to those in Genesis 2:2-3. In reference to the creation Sabbath, the texts point to God creating *heaven and earth in six days*. Besides, it speaks not only of *God's resting* as in Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:8-11, but also adds that God was refreshed in Exodus 31:17. Pipa opines that God rested on

¹⁵⁰ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, 250-252.

¹⁵¹ Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 26.

the seventh day to establish the principle and practice of Sabbath observance.¹⁵² God rested was the result of neither exhaustion nor fatigue, but a cessation from previous occupation.¹⁵³ He rested to set an example for human beings to follow (Exod 20:11). Again, in the texts the instruction to keep the Sabbath as creation ordinance is rooted in the statement: the Lord blessed the Sabbath day in Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:11. God conferred blessing on the seventh day. The solemn act of blessing is the institution of a perpetual order of seventh day rest for humanity.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, in the text the command to observe the Sabbath as creation ordinance is motivated by the statement: God sanctified the Sabbath day. The institution of the Sabbath as set forth in Genesis shall continue to be a constant reminder of the holiness of God by virtue of its association with God.¹⁵⁵ Nothing is holy in itself, but anything becomes holy by its consecration to God.¹⁵⁶ The writer of Genesis sees Sabbath to be an integral part of Creation. Therefore, there is a relationship between Gen 2:1-3 and Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17.

The third issue relating to Sabbath as creation ordinance is whether there is command for a workweek for man in Genesis 2:1-3. The NCT insists that Genesis has no command for a workweek for man and no mention of ‘Sabbath’ requirements for man.¹⁵⁷ According to Bacchiocchi, an Adventist scholar, the very word “Sabbath”

¹⁵²Joseph A. Pipa, “The Christian Sabbath,” in *Perspective on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, ed. Christopher John Donato, (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing, 2011), 120.

¹⁵³*SDABC*, rev. ed., 1:220.

¹⁵⁴Skip MacCarty, “The Seventh-Day Sabbath,” 13.

¹⁵⁵Cephas Angira, Perpetuity of the Sabbath: Evidences from the creation accounts, *Ministry* 2015 / December.

¹⁵⁶J. C. Lambert, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online, s.v. “Holiness,” accessed June 16, 2016, <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/H/holiness.html>.

¹⁵⁷Arnold, *Two Stage Biblical Creation: Uniting Biblical Insights Uncovered*, 364, 365.

means rest, and to rest implies that you have laboured.¹⁵⁸ God work on creation for six days and on the seventh day ceases to *work and satisfied it* (Gen 2:1-3). The Hebrew word *qādoš*, which means sanctified, “holy,” hallowed, made sacred, and set apart. The Hebrew word *qādoš* denotes that God set apart the seventh day for holy purpose.¹⁵⁹ Interestingly, “the seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone.”¹⁶⁰ It is logical, then, for God to have designated six days in the *week* as the days of work, and the last day of the week as a day of rest. It is not surprising that the command to work in six days and keep the seventh day Sabbath in Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17 is rooted in Genesis 2:1-3. The God of the Sabbath is God, the Great Worker. Humanity is privileged to be included in His plans. “Keeping” the Sabbath means more than having a day of rest, it means factoring God into every aspect of our working lives.¹⁶¹

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of Sabbath is relating to whether the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant. The issue is linked with whether the seventh day Sabbath was for only Israel or for all humanity. The SDAs maintain that the Sabbath is God’s perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people.¹⁶² They assert that the seventh day Sabbath is for humanity in all generation. On other hand, NCTs allude that the seventh day Sabbath is the sign of the

¹⁵⁸Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, 250-252.

¹⁵⁹Edward D. Andrews, *Christian Theology: The Evangelism Study Tool* (Cambridge, OH: Christian Publishing House, 2016), 341.

¹⁶⁰Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, ed. David A. Hubbard et al., WBC 1 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1987), 36. See H. Ross Cole, “The Sabbath and Genesis 2:1-3,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, 1 (2003): 10, 11.

¹⁶¹Elizabeth Ostring, “The Sabbath: A celebration of God’s work,” *Ministry*, January 2015, 16-18.

¹⁶²“My sabbaths,” *SDABC*, 1:662.

old covenant between God and the sons of Israel. They assert that since the old covenant has passed away then the Sabbath is no longer in force.¹⁶³ Comparatively, both SDAs and NCTs believe that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. While NCTs limit the people of God only to the Israelites and therefore there is discontinuity, SDAs maintain that the Sabbath is for all humanity in all generation and thus there is continuity.

The controversy is centered on Exodus 31:16, 17. The Bible states that “Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever” (Exod 31:16, 17, MKJV). From the text it may appear that NCTs assertion is right, because the nation “Israel” is mentioned in the text to keep the Sabbath holy. However, the appearance of the nation “Israel” in text does not mean that they are only responsible to keep the Sabbath holy. There are various instructions given to the first audience in the NT, which the principles are applied today. For instance, can we say that Christ’s instruction on the mountain “that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt 5:22, NKJV) was only given to the first audience? There is the need to critically consider why the Israelites were commanded to keep the Sabbath holy?

Nevertheless, the study needs to ascertain some basic questions. First, who are the Israelites? It is obvious that the Israelites are the descendent of Abraham. Second, what covenant was made with Israel? When the people of Israel were in bondage of Egypt, God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham (Exod 2:24; 6:5). Third, what covenant was made with Abraham? The Bible states that God said, “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after

¹⁶³Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 365.

you in their generations for an *everlasting covenant*, to be a God to you and to your seed after you” (Gen 17:7, MKJV, emphasis is mine). From the text the main agreement of the everlasting covenant with Abraham is expressed in a statement “to be a God to you and to your seed after you” (Gen 17:7, MKJV). Lastly, why is the Sabbath between God and the people of Israel? If the God of Abraham has promised to be God to Israel, then God gave His Sabbath to Israel, because “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God” (Exod 20:10, MKJV). This God of Israel is the God of creation, God of redemption, and God of sanctification which the Sabbath signifies. Therefore, the Sabbath is a sign between God and the people of Israel, because the Sabbath point to creation, redemption, and sanctification, which are the prerogative of God. These core reasons are discussed as follows:

First, seventh day Sabbath is a sign of God’s creation. The Bible begins with the statement, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1, MKJV). The Bible states that after God had ended His acts of creation in six days, He rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:1-3). God set aside the seventh day Sabbath to commemorate His creation. Thus the seventh day Sabbath points to God’s creation. The Sabbath is symbol that God created the earth in six days, and it is memorial of creation.¹⁶⁴ As the God of Israel, He commanded the people of Israel to keep the Sabbath holy because “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day (Exod 20:10, 11, NKJV). The Sabbath was instituted to remind humanity about the Creator.¹⁶⁵ God gave humanity the Sabbath day as an

¹⁶⁴E. L. Baylis, *The Unbeliever* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2014), 377.

¹⁶⁵B. J. Dinkins, *The Sabbath Breaker* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 71.

eternal sign of His creative power.¹⁶⁶ Since the people of Israel are God's creation, they were commanded to keep the Sabbath holy. Therefore, the Sabbath became a sign between God and Israel, or between the Creator and His creation.

Second, the seventh day Sabbath is a sign of God's redemption. It points to God's redemption. The Bible states that God remembered His covenant with Abraham to be a God to him and his descendants (Exod 2:24; 6:5), and God redeemed the people of Israel (Exod 18:8-9). Before the redemption, God asked each household to take a lamb without blemish (Exod 12:3, 5). The perfect lamb was to be killed and its blood was to be sprinkled with hyssop on the lintel and doorposts of the house as a guarantee of divine protection (Exod 12:7, NKJV). The Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt at Passover midnight (Exod 12:29). It was a day of deliverance from Egyptian bondage. After God had delivered Israelites out of bondage, He gave them His Sabbath.¹⁶⁷ God instructed the people of Israel to keep the Sabbath holy because they "were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut 5:15, NKJV).

This redemption symbolizes what God did for Israel through the Exodus. The gods of Egypt had no power to prevent Israel from fleeing the bondage of slavery. God of Israel had redeemed His people from the bondage of slavery.¹⁶⁸ God wanted Israel to "know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him" (Deut 4:35, NKJV). God gave the people of Israel the Sabbath to be a constant

¹⁶⁶Aubrey Lennox Duncan, *Understanding God's Sabbath: A Decision to Make* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2003), 11.

¹⁶⁷Tompaul Wheeler, *Bible Readings: Straight Answers from God's Word* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 2007), 355.

reminder that the same God who created them is the one who redeemed them.¹⁶⁹ It took a creator to bring about creation, and it took the same creator to bring about redemption.¹⁷⁰ As the Lord celebrated His finished work of creation by setting apart the Sabbath day and making it holy, so He celebrates His work of redemption for Israel by making the same Sabbath a sign of that redemption.¹⁷¹ Gary Cohen opines that “the original creation brought man forth unto God out of that which was non-existent; redemption brought man forth unto God out of that which was lost.”¹⁷² The Sabbath is a sign that God is the God of redemption. Therefore, the Sabbath became a sign between God and Israel or between the Creator /redeemer and His creation/redeemed.

Third, the seventh day Sabbath is sign of God’s sanctification. It points to God’s sanctification. Genesis 2:3 states that God “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” (NKJV). Likewise Exodus 20:11 states that “the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (NKJV). The Hebrew word *qādoš*, which means sanctified, or “holy,”¹⁷³ basically, connotes the idea that God made the seventh day “holy,” putting it into a state of holiness or separation of the seventh day from six working days.¹⁷⁴ As the God of Israel, He commanded them to keep the Sabbath holy

¹⁶⁸Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 122.

¹⁶⁹Terrence D. O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-Day Worship* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 35.

¹⁷⁰Paul McGlasson, *God the Redeemer: A Theology of the Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 52.

¹⁷¹Nancy Mahusay, *The History of Redemption* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 326.

¹⁷²Gary Cohen, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath in the Old and New Testament*, accessed June 18, 2016, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/grace-journal/06-2_07.pdf.

¹⁷³Andrews, *Christian Theology: The Evangelism Study Tool*, 341.

¹⁷⁴Hasel, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch,” 25.

(Exod 20:8). But in order to keep the Sabbath, the Israelites must be holy. How can unholy people of Israel keep the Sabbath day holy? Holiness is something that only God can do in humanity. The Sabbath is the sign of that holiness.

The Hebrew word translated as “sanctify” in Exodus 31:13 and Ezekiel 20:12 comes from the same root word used in Exodus 20:8, when the Lord told the people to keep the Sabbath “holy.”¹⁷⁵ This can be translated that “you may know that I am the Lord who makes you holy. God said “you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine” (Lev 20:26, NKJV). The Sabbath symbolizes what God wants to do for the people of Israel, which is known as sanctification. God designed Sabbath observance to be a token of their separation from other gods, and their connection with the true God.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, the Sabbath became a sign between God and Israel or between the Creator /redeemer/sanctifier and His creation/redeemed/sanctified.

Considering the evidence from both sides, it seems that the evidence in favour of seventh day Sabbath as creation ordinance is more convincing. New Covenant Theologians objections against the creation origin of the Sabbath are unfounded. The assertion that there is no explicit command to keep the Sabbath, and there is no work week command in Genesis 2 is incorrect. The fact is that Genesis is not a book of commands but of origins. There is nowhere in the book of Genesis that says Abraham was given command to keep God’s law.¹⁷⁷ However, God testified that “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Gen 26:5, MKJV). This is a proof that though there was no explicit command

¹⁷⁵David Bird, *Sabbath Challenge, Sabbath Delight* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2003), 138.

¹⁷⁶White, *Desire of Ages*, 283.

¹⁷⁷Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, 70.

in the book of Genesis to Abraham, yet Abraham kept God's commandments and laws. Therefore, the command to keep the Sabbath is implied in Genesis. Jamieson affirms that the institution of the Sabbath is as old as creation, giving rise to that weekly division of time which prevailed in the earliest ages.¹⁷⁸

Moreover, NCTs are correct that God gave His Sabbath to Israel, but are wrong to say “only Israel” that the Sabbath was given. The Sabbath being a sign between God and Israel does not mean that it was for only Israel. The Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It is wrong to declare that the Sabbath day is for the Jews. There were no Jews at creation. There is no such mention in the record of creation. The Sabbath reveals that God is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Therefore, all humanity who believes in God and trust that God is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier is to keep the Sabbath holy. The Sabbath is a sign or evidence that the true God is the God of creation, redemption, and sanctification. It could be said that Sabbath is for all humanity created in the image of God. Hence the Sabbath is a creation ordinance and Genesis 2:1-3 is the theological foundation of the Sabbath.

God’s Sabbath in the New Testament

In the NT, the debate on the continuity or discontinuity of the seventh-day Sabbath begins with whether Jesus or the Apostles affirm the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. The SDAs believe that the NT Scripture supports the seventh day Sabbath’s continuity.¹⁷⁹ The NCTs believe that the NT does not support the Sabbath's continuity. They believe that the Sabbath is a temporary commandment.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, 2 vols. (New York: Doran, 1871; reprint, Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1:18.

¹⁷⁹Strand, “The Sabbath,” 495.

Fundamentally, the assertion of NCTs seems to be erroneous; since they believe in Christ centered theology, and read the scriptures in the lens of the NT. However, it appears that NCTs do not read creation in the lens of the NT. The NT affirms that “all things were made through Him” (John 1:1, 3, NKJV), and “for by Him were all things created” (Col 1:16, NKJV). The seventh day Sabbath is a symbol that God created the heaven and earth in six days.¹⁸¹ In that case if Christ is the Creator according to the NT, then He is the creator in the OT. Also, If Christ is the Creator in Genesis, it then presupposes that He instituted the seventh day as the Sabbath. It is evident that Christ, the divine Son of God, as well as the Father, participated in Creation and in the establishment of the Sabbath. Thus when Christ finished His work of creation, He rested, blessed and sanctified the seventh day (Gen 2:2, 3). This rest signified completion and accomplishment.

In Mark 2:27, Christ made reference to Genesis 2:1-3 and said “the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (NKJV). The statement points to creation as the theological foundation of the Sabbath. The Greek word *egeneto*, which means “be made” or “created,” “be done” alludes to the original “making” of the Sabbath at creation. Christ used the Greek word to suggest that the Sabbath is an everlasting and generic institution. Linguistically, the Greek word *egeneto*, “made” or “came into existence” could only refer to creation Sabbath. In Genesis 1, the Greek word *egeneto* is used 20 times¹⁸² in connection with creation account in the

¹⁸⁰John Reisinger, 54.13 min., Gospel in the Sabbath, Granted ministries sermon, audiocassette.

¹⁸¹Baylis, *The Unbeliever*, 377.

¹⁸²Genesis 1:3, 5a, 5b, 6, 8a, 8b, 9, 11, 13a, 13b, 15, 19a, 19b, 20, 23a, 23b, 24, 30, 31a, and 31b.

Septuagint. Also, it is used three times¹⁸³ in John 1:3, and once in Hebrews 11:3 in reference to God's creation of the world out of nothing, which introduces Jesus as the one through who, all things were "made."¹⁸⁴

In addition, Christ's statement that the "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NKJV) is an affirmation that the loving Creator designed the Sabbath for the welfare of humanity and the whole creation.¹⁸⁵ Christ's choice of words is significant. The Greek word *anthropos* meaning "man" suggests its human function. It is generic term for humankind.¹⁸⁶ Thus to establish the human and universal value of the Sabbath, Christ reverts to its very origin right after the creation of human. Christ assertion refers to the time of creational origins when things were being made and relates the Sabbath to human generically, but not limiting it to Israel.¹⁸⁷ The Sabbath, originally instituted for humanity at his creation, is of permanent and universal obligation. According to Collins, the Sabbath came into existence because of humanity, which points to the creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:4.¹⁸⁸ It is evident that Jesus Christ affirms in Mark 2:27 that the Sabbath is creation origin and ordinance, designed for all humanity but not only for the Jews.

Moreover, Jesus declares that He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28). Why? First, Christ called Himself as "the Lord of the Sabbath" because "all

¹⁸³The Greek word *egeneto* is used twice and its perfect form "*gegonen*" is used once constituting three times in John 1:3.

¹⁸⁴MacCarty, "The Seventh-Day Sabbath," 21.

¹⁸⁵O. P. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 68-69.

¹⁸⁶Isaac E. Mozeson, *The Word: The Dictionary That Reveals the Hebrew Source of English* (New York, NY: SP Books, 2001), 106.

¹⁸⁷Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene: OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 79.

¹⁸⁸A. Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2007), 203.

things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3, NKJV). Thus Jesus is the Creator who made the seventh day Sabbath. If Jesus instituted seventh day Sabbath, then He is the Lord of the Sabbath. Second, Christ called Himself as “the Lord of the Sabbath” because in the Bible, the only day referred to as the Lord’s is the seventh day Sabbath. In Exodus 20:10, the Creator said “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God” (MKJV). Since the Son of man, who is God in human nature, claim to be the Lord of the Sabbath, then the Saviour’s own evidence as the Lord of the Sabbath is all humanity needs (Mark 2:28).¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, one more text in the NT that calls humanity to worship the Creator is Revelation 14:6, 7. The text uses a language that pointed to creation as the theological basis of our worship. In Revelation 14:7, the statement to worship God who “made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (MKJV), is a direct reference to the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:11. Comparatively, Exodus 20:11 states that God “made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (NKJV), which is a clear link to Genesis 2:1, which states that “the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them were finished” (NKJV). When the people of Israel were redeemed, God called His people to worship Him on the seventh day Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11; Lev 23:3). Similarly, Christians are called to worship the Creator, and the Sabbath reminds humanity of the Creator; it is evident that Revelation 14:6, 7 is a call to keep the Sabbath. In addition, the book of Revelation refers to God’s people as those who keep the commandment of God (Rev 12:17; 14:12), this implies that God requires total obedient to His Commandments, which include the seventh day Sabbath.

¹⁸⁹Gane, *The Role of God’s Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the New Covenant*, 47.

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of Sabbath is relating to whether the Sabbath is sign between God and Christians today. The issue is connected with whether the seventh day Sabbath is for Christians or not. The NCTs allude that the seventh day Sabbath which is the sign of the old covenant is no longer in force. Hence, the requirement for keeping the Sabbath has been terminated.¹⁹⁰ They assert that the old covenant has passed away and none of the commands of the Mosaic Law is binding on believers today, including the command to keep the Sabbath holy.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, SDAs maintain that the Sabbath is a perpetual sign to all people in all generation, including the Christians.¹⁹² There is the need to critically consider the reason God gave His seventh day Sabbath to His people?

First, in the NT, the Sabbath was instituted to remind humanity about the Creator. God of Abraham is the Creator God. God became the God of the Jews because they were the physical descendents of Abraham (Gen 17:7, MKJV). God gave them His Sabbath. Christians are spiritual descendents of Abraham through Christ.¹⁹³ God's promises are conferred in Christ (Gal 3:19), and they are available to those who are united to Christ, the true seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29). Therefore,

¹⁹⁰Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 324. Dressler agrees, "As a sign of the covenant the Sabbath can only be meant for Israel, with whom the covenant was made. It has a "perpetual" function, i.e., for the duration of the covenant, and derives its importance and significance from the covenant itself. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 30.

¹⁹¹Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 181. Also, According to Lincoln, the Decalogue itself is "pars pro toto, the part standing for the whole" of the Mosaic covenant in the sense that "what is true of the place of the covenant as a whole will also be true of the Decalogue." A.T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," 356.

¹⁹²Strand, "The Sabbath," 495.

¹⁹³Paul asserts that the promise does not say, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, "and to your Seed," which is Christ. (Gal 3:16MKJV). Those who believe upon Christ, the promised seed of Abraham (Gal 3:26) are the spiritual children of Abraham (Gal 3:7) and the heirs of the promise. Nichol, Francis D., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 752. See also, M. Eugene Boring, Fred B. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 585.

through Christ anyone who believes is the child of Abraham (Gal 3:26), and thus becomes the child of God. God of Abraham is the Lord of the Sabbath. Since Christians are the creation of God, it is logic to conclude that the Sabbath, which is the memorial of God's creation, belongs to the Christians as well. The Saviour's own evidence as the Lord of the Sabbath is all that Christians need (Mark 2:28).

Second, in the NT, the seventh day Sabbath is a symbol of God's redemption. Basically, Christ came to liberate humanity from the bondage of sin. Jesus declared, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34, NKJV). Paul affirmed "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness" (Rom 6:16) ? Therefore, humanity needs redemption. The slavery of sin demands a powerful redeemer. Christ, the Lamb of God, has to die on the cross to set humanity free from the bondage of sin. Jesus is God and He is immortal (1 Tim 1:17), but He needs to die to redeem humanity from the bondage of sin (Titus 2:14). In the night, Jesus established the Lord's Supper (John 13) and offered Himself as the true Paschal Lamb for our redemption. The Passover setting underscores human impotence in contrast to God's great power.¹⁹⁴

Comparatively, since it was as impossible for Israel to free itself from Egyptian bondage, similarly, it is impossible for Christians to free themselves from the bondage of sin.¹⁹⁵ Paul explicitly declares: "For indeed Christ, our Passover lamb was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7, NIV). Peter declares the great price of redemption: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but

¹⁹⁴Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals Part I: The Spring Festivals in Scripture and History* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001), 26-27.

¹⁹⁵John M. Fowler, "The Book of Luke," in the *Sabbath School Study Guide 2nd Quarter* (Accra: Advent Press), 155.

with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet 1:18-19). As literal Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt, so God’s people today have been set free from the bondage of sin (Rom 6:16–18). When God the creator redeemed Israelites from the bondage of the Egyptians, He gave His seventh day Sabbath which is the memorial of His creation to Israel to be a sign of His redemption (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15). Similarly, Christ our Creator and Redeemer gave His Sabbath as constant reminder to Christian of the bondage from sin. Jesus claims the ownership of the seventh day Sabbath and declares that He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8). The Sabbath is a sign that the same God who created humanity is the one who redeemed them.¹⁹⁶ It took a creator to bring about creation, and it took the same creator to bring about redemption, which the seventh day Sabbath symbolized.

Moreover, Christ rest in the tomb after redemption echoes God’s rest after creation. As God finished His work in the sixth day and “on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done” (Gen 2: 2), similarly, Jesus who is God in human nature on the six day (that is the preparation day; Mark 15:4), finished his work of redemption for humanity. According to John, Jesus said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (John 19:30). Jesus rested in the tomb on the seventh day to set an example for humanity. In the light of the Cross, the Sabbath memorializes not only God’s creative power and but also His redemptive accomplishments for humankind. Since Christians are created and redeemed of God, it is logic to conclude that the Sabbath being symbol that God is creator- redeemer belongs to the Christians too.

¹⁹⁶O’Hare, *The Sabbath Complete: And the Ascendency of First-Day Worship*, 35.

Third, in the NT, the seventh day Sabbath is symbol of God's sanctification. God sanctified the seventh day for humanity to observe and secure the holiness residing in it. God calls Christians to holiness. The Bible states that "He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15, 16, NKJV). Holiness is something that only God can do in humanity. As the blood of Christ sanctifies Christians (Heb 13:12), so the Sabbath is the sign of believer's acceptance of His blood for the pardon of sins. The Sabbath provides an assurance of God's sanctifying of His people. Just as God has set the Sabbath aside for holy purpose, so He has set Christians apart for a holy purpose. Jesus kept the seventh day Sabbath holy to set an example for Christians to be set apart (Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16, 13; 13:10). Christian's communion with God on the seventh day leads to holiness. The Sabbath is the sign of that holiness. Since Christians are created, redeemed and sanctified of God, it is logic to conclude that the Sabbath being symbol that God is creator- redeemer-sanctifier belongs to the Christians today.

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of Sabbath is relating to whether the NT speaks of a change of Sabbath. The NCTs assert that the Sabbath has passed away and it is not binding on believers today.¹⁹⁷ On other hand, SDAs maintain that the Sabbath is relevant to all people in all generation.¹⁹⁸ The first discussion is centered on the Sabbath controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees. The NCTs assertion that the Sabbath has been changed or abolished seems to be

¹⁹⁷Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered*, 181. See Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, xiv, 324. Again, see Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 30. Also, see Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," 356).

¹⁹⁸Strand, "The Sabbath," 495.

erroneous. Nothing Jesus said or did regarding the Sabbath ever implied that it was abolished or changed. Christ battles with the Pharisees relating to plucking grain on the Sabbath, the healings on the Sabbath day (Matt 12:1-13; Mark 2:23-3:1-5; Luke 6:1-10; John 5:2-9), were never over which day was to be kept or whether it was even still to be kept. The battle instead was over how it was to be kept. The logical question would be: why would Jesus wrestle with the religious over Sabbath keeping if He planned to abolish or change it to another day?

When Christ was criticized, He replied, “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matt 12:12, NKJV). Pipa explains that amidst the controversy, Christ taught humanity the principles behind the Sabbath observation. He taught that on the Sabbath day God’s children are to do things: that strengthen them for the Lord’s work; necessary to promote the purpose of the day; which brings mercy or goodness.¹⁹⁹ God intended the Sabbath for humanity’s spiritual enrichment. Activities that enhance communication with God are proper; those which distract from that purpose and turn the Sabbath into a holiday are improper.

Christ demonstrated His ownership and authority over the Sabbath. There is no account of Christ Jesus having ever changed or abolished the seventh day Sabbath. In Luke 4:16, the custom of Christ was to attend at the synagogue on the seventh day Sabbath. Jesus manifested His positive attitude toward the Sabbath as time for holy convocation (Lev 23:3). Similarly, after the resurrection of Christ, the apostles continued to observe the seventh day Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:13; 17:2, 3; 18:2). Paul observed the Sabbath “as was his custom (Acts 17:2); expression similar to the one about Jesus in Luke 4:16. There is no account of the apostles having ever changed or abolished the seventh day Sabbath.

Furthermore, Colossians 2:16, 17 is used to object to the continuity of the seventh day Sabbath. The Bible states that “so let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (NKJV). The word Sabbath in the OT is applied not only to the seventh day, but to other Sabbaths that were observed by the Hebrews, and particularly to the beginning and close of their great festivals.²⁰⁰ The text points to the Sabbaths of the various feasts of the Lord (Lev 23:4-39).²⁰¹ The feasts are associated with foods, and drinks, which are a shadow of things to come (Col 2: 17, NKJV). Paul made clear that Christians were under no obligation to keep these Sabbaths of the Lord’s feasts. The text does not refer to the seventh day Sabbath, which point to God as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.²⁰² Therefore, the Sabbaths’ reference in Colossians 2:16 neither suggests nor implies that the seventh day Sabbath was changed or abolished.

¹⁹⁹Pipa, “The Christian Sabbath,” 120.

²⁰⁰Gary Hullquist, *Sabbath Diagnosis: A Diagnostic History and Physical Examination of the Biblical Day of Rest* (Maryland, MD: TEACH Services, Inc., 2004), 358.

²⁰¹Leviticus 23 outlines various Sabbaths associated with Lord’s Feast. The various feasts are associated with meats, and drinks. First, the fourteenth day of the first month is the Lord’s Passover, which is associated with meats (Exod. 12:6-14; Lev. 23:5). Second, the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord. The people were to eat unleavened bread for seven days (Exod. 12:15-17; Lev. 23:6-8). The first day of unleavened bread shall be a Sabbath and seventh day of unleavened bread shall also be a Sabbath (Exod 12:16; Lev 23:7, 8). Third, the day of Pentecost is the fifty days to the day after the seventh of unleavened bread shall also be Sabbath (Lev 23:16, 21). Fourth, Feast of Trumpet which is in first day of the seventh month shall be a Sabbath (Lev 23: 24). Fifth, the tenth day of the seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement, which shall be for seven days to the Lord. The first day there shall be a Sabbath (Lev 23:34, 35). Also, the eighth day you shall a Sabbath (Lev 23:34, 36). All these are called the Sabbaths (Lev 23:34, 35). Aside these Sabbaths, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord for seven days; on the first day there shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day a Sabbath. These Sabbaths are associated with either eating meats or bread and drink ((Exod 12:8, 9; Lev 23:6, 13, 17, 18). Also, these Sabbaths are not the seventh day Sabbath of the Lord which point to God as the creator (Gen 2:1-3).

²⁰²In Leviticus 23, the Lord distinguished between His Sabbath and His feast. In verse 2, the Lord speaks of the feasts of the Lord. However, in verse 3, seventh day Sabbath is mentioned not as part of the feasts of the Lord but as the first and greatest day of the Lord. In verse 4, God begins to mention His feasts in a statement “These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of Sabbath is relating to whether the Sabbath has been changed in the new covenant era to a spiritual rest in Christ and or a type of eschatological rest in the yet to come kingdom of God in Hebrews 3:7-4:1-13. The NCTs assert that the Sabbath is now a continuous experience of rest from a life of sin, and an ever-present realization of peace with God.²⁰³ The SDAs maintain that the seventh day Sabbath is a sign of spiritual rest from bondage of sin and from one's own efforts at salvation.²⁰⁴ They emphasize that weekly observance of the seventh day Sabbath is a symbol of the believer's entering into gospel rest.²⁰⁵ Comparatively, while NCTs believe that the Sabbath has been changed to spiritual rest in Christ, the SDAs believe that the Sabbath has not been changed, but it is still the sign of spiritual rest from bondage of sin. Argument from both sides seems perplexing; however, it appears that NCTs consider the seventh day Sabbath as a shadow and the continuous spiritual rest in Christ as real. This assertion seems erroneous, because the seventh day Sabbath was not instituted because of sin. If this is the truth, then why would the death of Christ on the cross for the sins of humanity abolish or change the sign of His redemption into a continuous spiritual rest or eschatological rest in Christ.

Also, Hebrews 3:7-4:13 made reference to the passage in Psalm 95:7-11. God swore that His people would not enter His rest (Ps 95:11). There are two words in Hebrews 3:7-4:1-13, which are translated rest. First, the Greek word *katapausis* meaning "rest" occurs eight times (Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3a, 3b, 5, 10 11) and the verb

shall proclaim at their appointed times (Lev 23:4, NKJV). The phrase "these are the feasts of the Lord" suggest that the Lord now begin to spell out His feast making verse 3 not inclusive of the Lord feast.

²⁰³Wells and Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*, 324.

²⁰⁴*SDABC*, rev. ed., 7:420.

katapauō meaning “rest” occurs three times (Heb 4:4,8,10). This rest signifies a cessation from labour, so that the weary body is rested and refreshed.²⁰⁶ Christ said “Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28, NKJV). Christ calls humanity to believe in Him and receive rest from their sins. God has a spiritual rest for his people. Therefore, all who have entered this rest, the saving grace received by faith in Jesus, have ceased every effort to achieve righteousness by their own works.

Basically, Hebrews 3:7-4:13 makes reference to God’s spiritual rest from bondage of sin. God had promised this spiritual rest to literal Israel but they failed to enter it. Moses’ generation failed to enter God’s rest not because it was not available to them but because of their unbelief and disobedience (Heb 3:16-19). Also, the generation of Joshua failed to obtain the spiritual rest in God because of the people’s unbelief and disobedience (Heb 4:8). This does not necessarily mean that none of the people in the OT obtained God’s spiritual rest, because Hebrews 11 acknowledges great faithful people in the OT. Similarly, not all people in the new covenant era will enter into God’s spiritual rest. Jesus states that “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14, NKJV). Despite that majority of the people could not obtain God’s spiritual rest throughout the OT period, the entering into God’s spiritual rest, existed alongside the observance of the seventh day Sabbath.²⁰⁷ In the same way, the entering into God’s spiritual rest in the NT is linked with observance of the seventh day Sabbath. This truth is revealed in the word “rest” used in Hebrews 4:9.

²⁰⁵*Seventh day Adventist Believe*, 291.

²⁰⁶Adam Clarke Commentary, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 70.

²⁰⁷Kay Arthur and Pete De Lacy, *The Key to Living by Faith: Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009), 40.

Second, in Hebrews 4:9, the author deliberately used the Greek word *sabbatismos*, meaning “Sabbath-rest” which occurs once. This word is not used in NT but used in the Septuagint and extra-biblical source to mean observance of the seventh day Sabbath.²⁰⁸ Thus the idea of “rest” including “Sabbath-rest” is obviously a key notion in Hebrews 4:9. *Sabbatismos* is not only a rest from labour, but a religious rest; a rest of a sacred kind, of which both soul and body partake.²⁰⁹ In Hebrews 4:9, the author left no doubt as to what he intended to say that *sabbatismos* (Sabbath observance) remains for the people of God. Also, in Hebrews 4:4, allusion is made to God’s resting from work at the time of creation; the reference to seventh day Sabbath (Heb 4:9, 10) draws upon this: “there remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (NKJV).

Again, throughout salvation history the seventh day Sabbath has functioned not as a temporary, as the NCTs alleged, but as a permanent sign of God’s sanctification (Exod 31:13). Thus, “the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God” (Heb 4:9) is not only a physical cessation from work to commemorate God’s perfect creation, but also a spiritual entering into God’s rest (Heb 4:10) made possible through Christ’s complete redemption. The physical act of resting in the seventh day is the sign of believers entering into the spiritual rest in Christ. Andreasen affirmed that the spiritual rest is ceasing from sin. It is this rest that the generation of Moses and Joshua failed to enter. It is the rest that the seventh day Sabbath symbolized.²¹⁰ God sanctifies all humanity who cease from daily work on the seventh day Sabbath.

²⁰⁸Ibid. Also, see Skip MacCarty, “The Seventh-Day Sabbath,” 26.

²⁰⁹Adam Clarke Commentary, *Hebrews - Revelation*, 70.

²¹⁰M. L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1942), 105.

Thus keeping the seventh day Sabbath is a symbol of the believer's entering into God's spiritual rest.

Another issue of debate regarding the continuity or discontinuity of Sabbath is relating to whether the phrase "the Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10 indicates a change of the seventh day Sabbath. The SDAs opine that the "Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10 refers to the seventh day Sabbath.²¹¹ The NCTs on other hand assert that the Lord's day Revelation 1:10 could refer to "Christian Sunday" or it could refer to "the day of the Lord's return."²¹² First, the controversy is whether "Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10 means the seventh-day Sabbath or Christian Sunday. The Greek word rendered "Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10 is *Kuriakē hēmerā*.²¹³ The Greek word *Kuriakē* is an adjective form of the Greek word *Kurios* meaning "Lord." The Greek word *Kuriakē* occurs only in Revelation 1:10 and in 1 Corinthians 11:20, where it relates to the Lord's Supper.²¹⁴ It is applied in precisely the same sense in the two texts to mean thing pertaining to the Lord.²¹⁵ If the "supper" belongs to the Lord, it is logic say that a day belongs to the Lord. This brings the issue which day the Lord claimed as His or a day designed to commemorate some important event pertaining to Him; or because it was observed in honour of Him. John was one of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. He heard the Lord declare that "the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matt 12:8; Mark 2: 28; Luke 6:5). He surely knew also that according to that the commandment, "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exod

²¹¹*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 251.

²¹²Lehrer, 190. See also, Gary D. Long, *The Christian Sabbath: Lord's Day Controversy* (San Antonio, TX: Sovereign Grace Ministries, 1980), 19, 20.

²¹³Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, 2010.

²¹⁴Barnes, *Barnes New Testament Notes*, 4501.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*

20:10; Deut 5:14). It is therefore logical to assert that the “Lord’s day” John referred to in Revelation 1:10 is the seventh day Sabbath.

Second, the controversy is whether “Lord’s day” in Revelation 1:10 means the seventh-day Sabbath or the day of the Lord’s return. The expression “the day of the Lord” occurs twenty-one times in OT²¹⁶ and four times in the NT.²¹⁷ The Greek word rendered “the day of the Lord” in all the occurrences is *hemerā kurios*.²¹⁸ The contexts of all these occurrences are used to mean the great day of the Lord, in which the Lord will judge the world. It is not surprising that NCTs assume that the expression “the Lord’s day” in Revelation 1:10 could refer to “the day of the Lord’s return.” However, this assertion seems to be erroneous. In the book Revelation, John has the sense that God’s grace and probation for sinners has not yet ended, and that the great day of God had not come. Prior to Revelation 1:10, there is a statement on “the Lord’s return.” John said, “Behold, He is coming with clouds” in Revelation 1:7 does not suggest that the Lord has come but rather the Lord’s second coming is still future. The Greek word use is a futuristic present middle indicative of *erchomai* meaning “He is coming.” Therefore, it will be wrong to assume, that John was in the day of Christ’s second coming. The Lord’s Day is a day that Christ assumes as His, which is the seventh-day Sabbath.

In view of the facts from both sides, it seems that Jesus and the Apostles affirm the Sabbath as a creation ordinance in Mark 2:27, 28 and Revelation 14:7. Also, Jesus instituted the seventh day Sabbath at creation, because “all things were

²¹⁶Isa 2:12; 13:6, 9; 34:8; Jer 46:10; Lam 2:22; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:7, 8, 14, 18; 2:2, 3; and Zech 14:1.

²¹⁷1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess 5:2; and 2 Pet 3:10.

²¹⁸Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, 2010.

made through Him” (John 1:1, 3, NKJV). If the Sabbath is creation origin and ordinance, then NCTs’ assertions are wrong, implying that the Sabbath is designed for all humanity and not only for the Jews. Besides, nothing Jesus and the Apostles said or did regarding the Sabbath ever implied that it was abolished or changed. In the NT, the Sabbath is a sign between God and Christians. Since Christians are created, redeemed, and sanctified by God, it is logic to conclude that the Sabbath is a sign that God is the Creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, which belongs to the Christians as well. It is also imperative that humanity must first enter, by faith, into His spiritual rest from sin and observing the seventh day Sabbath is a symbol of Jesus’ redemption.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter gives a concise overview of the various views and issues discovered and discussed in the study. The section presents the summary of major findings in relation to the Bible. This is followed by the conclusions of the analysis. Implications are, then, made, based on the findings and conclusions.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to assess the views of NCTs and SDAs in relation to God's covenant, the law, and the Sabbath, and to compare the views of NCTs and SDAs on God's covenant, God's law, and God's Sabbath in the light of biblical teachings about covenant and its relationship to the redemption of humanity. The study employed theological and comparative methods, in a systematic way in analysing the views of the NCT and the SDA in the light of the views of biblical teachings on the everlasting covenant and its relationship to the salvation of humanity. The results of the analysis are as follows:

The study suggests that there is a greater element of continuity of God's covenant. First, Luke 22:29 suggests the idea of a covenant between the Father and the Son. Implicitly, the Greek word *diatithêmi* which is derived from *diatheke* means "to assign by will," "covenant" or "testament," this is evidence that the eternal covenant of grace is biblical. Second, the promise of the seed in Genesis 3:15 is the declaration of God's everlasting covenant of grace. The term covenant or promise is

used interchangeably. For instance, in Galatians 3:15, 17 Paul gives the word “promise” the status of a *diatheke* (covenant). Third, God has renewed His everlasting covenant of grace to Abraham. The Hebrew word *quwm*, which is translated “establish,” also means “confirm,” or “continue.” Fourth, Exodus 2:24 and Luke 1:67-77 suggest that the old covenant is a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant.

The study reveals that there is an element of continuity and discontinuity between the old covenant and new covenant. Beside, the Hebrew and the Greek word translated “new” in Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8:8-9 is *chādāš* and *kainos*, respectively means renew rather than new. This suggests that the new covenant is a renewal of the old covenant representing continuity. However, the study suggests that there is little element of discontinuity; this is based on God’s perfect provision of obedience in new covenant as against human effort of obedience. In the new covenant, the Holy Spirit gives the strength essential for obedience as against the people’s willingness to obey the old covenant without the Holy Spirit.

The study further reveals that there is continuity of the Ten Commandments in the new covenant period. God’s law existed before Moses and it was called “divine moral law.” The divine moral law was given to Israel as the Ten Commandments. The same “divine moral law” written in the heart, which is codified as the Ten Commandments is the same law predicted in the OT in the new covenant. Jesus did not enact a new law but repeated the Ten Commandments in Mark 10:19 and Luke 18:20. Also, the Apostles repeated the Ten Commandments in Romans 13:9 and 7:7.

Besides, the study reveals that there is continuity of the seventh-day Sabbath in the new covenant era. Genesis 2:1-3 indicates that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. Phrases in Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:12-17 all point to Genesis 2:1-3. Also,

the Sabbath is a sign between God and the people of Israel, because the Sabbath points to creation, redemption, and sanctification, which are the prerogatives of God.

In the NT, Jesus or the Apostles affirm(s) the Sabbath as a creation ordinance in Mark 2:27, 28. Christ is the Creator in Genesis, when He finished His work of creation; He rested, blessed and sanctified the seventh day (Genesis 2:2, 3). The Sabbath is the sign of that holiness. Since Christians are created, redeemed and sanctified of God, it is logical to conclude that the Sabbath being a symbol that God is creator- redeemer-sanctifier belongs to Christians today. The Apostles observed the Sabbath (Acts 17:2). The Sabbath reference in Colossians 2:16 neither suggest nor imply that the seventh day Sabbath was changed or abolished. In Hebrews 4:9, the author deliberately used the Greek word *sabbatismos*, meaning “Sabbath-rest” or Sabbath observance remains for the people of God.

Conclusion

In relation to the debate and analysis of various issues of the NCT and the SDA in the light of the biblical teachings on the everlasting covenant and its relationship to the salvation of humanity, it is relevant to suggest the following conclusion in relation to God’s covenant, the law, and the Sabbath.

First, the plan of salvation which was made in eternity past was about Christ. It seems to be the same Christ, which is promised as “the seed of the woman” in Genesis 3:15. Again, Christ the seed is promised to Abraham. The seed which is Christ (Gal 3:16), is the saviour of the world. Second, God’s plan was for Christ to die for humanity. In relation to the faith of humanity in Christ death, God instituted temporal sacrifices pointing to the true sacrifice, which is Christ. Abel demonstrated his faith in Christ through the sacrifice he offered (Gen 4). Noah offered sacrifices to demonstrate his faith (Gen 8:20, 21). It was the same sacrifices that Abraham offered

to God (Gen 22:13). This shows that all the OT sacrifices point humanity to Christ, who is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). The Hebrew system of sacrifices ended when Christ was crucified, but the covenant did not end. God continues to be God to all believers.

Second, the everlasting covenant promised in Genesis 3:15 is the same covenant that was renewed to Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant was also renewed to Israel as the old covenant. God's existing covenant was renewed to Israel. The old covenant is described as faulty. God's covenant cannot be described as faulty but the people's response and obedience was faulty. However, God renewed His covenant and called it the new covenant. Therefore, it could be said that there is continuity of God's everlasting plan in relation to the salvation of humanity. But, the critical difference is the new covenant obedience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant.

Third, in the NT, both Christ and the apostles did repeat the Ten Commandments. Also, the Apostle Paul's writings in relation to law and grace must be understood in two main concepts. Moreover, the law in the context of salvation, which includes: grace, justification, and right standing before God. Furthermore, law in the context of Christian conduct, which includes: sanctification, and right living before God.

Fourth, the Bible teaches that the means of salvation always comes by grace and never by works. The godly standard expected of the saved people of God, in both OT and NT times, is governed by the same moral law. However, none of the people who lived in the OT times were saved by the law. They were saved by grace; which fruitage was obedience to the commandments of God. As obedience was required from the saved in the OT times, so is obedience expected from Christians. The gravity

of sin in the sight of God, which required the death of Jesus Christ, has not changed. The Ten Commandments defined for all time the moral frame-work of God's governance. Therefore, to be in Christ does not rule out God's law but rather it means to have personal relationship with Christ, which is equivalent to the "keeping of God's commandments" (1 Cor 7:19). In Christ, we must bear fruit of love and obedience to the law of God (John 15).

Fifth, Genesis is not a book of commands but of origins. There is nowhere in the book of Genesis that says Abraham was given command to keep God's law. However, God testified that "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen 26:5, MKJV). This is a proof that though there was no explicit command in the book of Genesis to Abraham, yet Abraham kept God's commandments and laws. Therefore, the command to keep the Sabbath is implied in Genesis.

Sixth, the Sabbath being a sign between God and Israel does not mean that it was only for Israel. The Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It is wrong to declare that the Sabbath day is for the Jews. There were no Jews at creation. There is no such mention in the record of creation. The Sabbath reveals that God is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Therefore, all humanity who believes in God and trust that God is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier are to keep the Sabbath holy. The Sabbath is a sign or evidence that the true God is the God of creation, redemption, and sanctification. It could be said that the Sabbath is for all humanity created in the image of God. Hence the Sabbath is a creation ordinance and Genesis 2:1-3 is the theological foundation of the Sabbath.

Finally, the Old Testament is so intertwined and connected to the New Testament. God's covenants are unified and function as phases of advancement in

God's general plan. The phases of God's unified covenant conveys the plan of God's redemption throughout the OT era and on into the NT. There is one covenant of salvation in the OT and NT, which is called everlasting covenant.

Implications

Theologically, there have been various explanations with regard to the relationship between God's covenants, God's law, and God's Sabbath in the Old and the New Testaments. The various explanations of NCT and SDA have enormous doctrinal implications and unbiblical beliefs in relation to God's everlasting covenant. Several beliefs have been derived from the doctrine of God's covenants, God's law, and His Sabbath.

First, the idea that the Bible is structured around two covenants, that is, the old and new covenant has generated the belief that the OT God is unforgiving, ungracious, unmerciful, and unloving, while, the God of the New Testament is considered as forgiving, gracious, and loving. The fact that the Bible is God's progressive revelation of Himself to us through historical events and through His relationship with people throughout history might contribute to misconceptions about what God is like in the Old Testament as compared to the New Testament. This idea contradicts the Bible. God is no different in the OT than He is in the NT. God by His very nature is immutable.

Second, the doctrine of covenant has created misconceptions about salvation in the OT and NT. This misunderstanding is based on the view that in the OT period, the people of Israel were required to obey God's laws with all their heart, for that reason they were saved by their obedience to the law because they were under the law but not under grace. But, in the NT, Christ came to fulfil the law in order to bring it to finality. This view disagrees with the Bible. There is nowhere in the Bible which

teaches that the means of salvation differs during OT and NT times. Salvation always comes by grace and never by works. The sacrificial system of the OT pointed to the real sacrifice of Jesus. The godly standard expected of the saved people of God, in both OT and NT times, is governed by the same moral law.

Third, another theological implication of the doctrine of covenant is the view of antinomianism. The view has it that Christ atoning sacrifice has ushered in a new era of grace and therefore, through faith “in Christ” one is not obliged to obey the law of God. This view contradicts the Bible. As obedience was required from the saved in OT times, so is obedience expected from Christians. The gravity of sin in the sight of God, which required the death of Jesus Christ, has not changed. The Ten Commandments defined for all time the moral frame-work of God’s governance. Therefore, to be in Christ does not rule out God’s law but rather it means to have personal relationship with Christ, which is equivalent to the “keeping of God's commandments” (1 Cor 7:19). In Christ, we must bear fruit of love and obedience to the law of God (John 15). The theological position of antinomians does not permit a believer to lead a lifestyle of sanctification.

Fourth, another theological implication of the doctrine of covenant is the idea that the Sabbath has been changed or transformed. This misconception has generated several views. One view has it that since Christ has brought the true Sabbath rest into the present, the Sabbath commands of the OT are no longer binding on believers. Another view has it that the Sabbath commandment was given to Jews alone and does not concern Christians. Rest and worship are still required but are not tied to a particular day. These views disagree with the Bible. The Sabbath was instituted at creation, and rejection or changing God’s day is an attack on the worship of the Creator.

In brief, the outcome of the doctrine of everlasting covenant is that NCT is gradually infiltrating Christian theological circles and many congregations. The basis of God's salvation through grace and its fruitage being obedience to God's laws including the seventh day Sabbath is under attack.

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