

# Covenants of Justice & Mercy

(Priest Lesson July 2015 – Roald Peterson)

## Introduction

- All creation depends upon the laws of godhood, and God's obedience to those laws.
- God teaches and helps his children to become like him by making covenants with them.
- The first covenant we made was the covenant of justice. And we failed to keep it.
- To save his children, God instituted the covenant of mercy, also known as the new and everlasting covenant.
- Although both laws seek the exaltation of God's children, they stand opposite of each other and can only be reconciled by the atonement.

## What Are, And Why Do We Make Covenants?

- In one of their many face-to-face teaching sessions, the Lord explained to Moses the overarching purpose, or primary goal of his existence.

(Moses 1:39) For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

- He did not say “immortality **OR** eternal life”, for his purpose they go together. He seeks to make his children gods.
  - He has created the telestial and terrestrial kingdoms for his children that don't complete the path of godhood, but that's not his purpose.
  - Even the lower two levels of the celestial kingdom are not the goal. Father's purpose is to help his children who are willing become gods, just like he is.
- To this end, God is not only a king, but also a priest. And as a priest he administers covenants to us.
    - These covenants are based on laws which, if we learn to obey, will give us the attributes of God.
    - We promise to obey the laws of the covenant and God promises help us and give us the blessings associated with that covenant.
    - If we are faithful to the covenants we develop the attributes of godhood and become gods. If we do not learn to fulfill the covenants, we don't become gods.

## God Is Not Above the Law

- Although God is a lawgiver he is not above the law. He became a God by learning and obeying the laws of godhood. To remain a God he must always obey those laws.

- For this reason he is an unchangeable God.

(Mormon 9:9) For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

- The Prophet Moroni teaches a very bold doctrine, that if God did not live up to the laws of godhood he would cease to be God.

(Alma 42:22) But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth

the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

- If God broke the eternal laws of godhood, who would take his godhood away from him?

- His father? No. The Council of other gods? No.

- The power of his godhood would disappear because his creations no longer have faith in him. An eternal kingdom can only be established and maintained by the willingness of the governed to obey their king without force. We do things for other people without force because we honor them. See how Satan tried to dethrone God:

(DC 29:36) And it came to pass that Adam, being tempted of the devil—for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency;

- This is a great truth about establishing an eternal kingdom. Real power does not come from above you. Rather, it comes from those whom you would rule.

(DC 63:59) Behold, I am from above, and my power lieth beneath. I am over all, and in all, and through all, and search all things, and the day cometh that all things shall be subject unto me.

- When you establish your kingdom, if you're creations do not honor you, they will not obey the law you give them, and they will cease to be - and you will cease to be God.

## Eternal Laws of Justice and Mercy

- We read earlier of two great eternal laws of godhood. One is justice; the other is mercy. Out of these two laws come the two great covenants that God makes with his children.

- Justice and mercy are required to bring all of creation into balance. They are two halves of an eternal whole.

(2 Nephi 2:11) For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

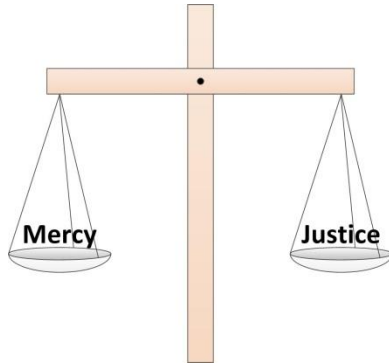
- This is taught in the book of Mormon but is also survived as doctrine in other religions. For example, the Ying Yang.



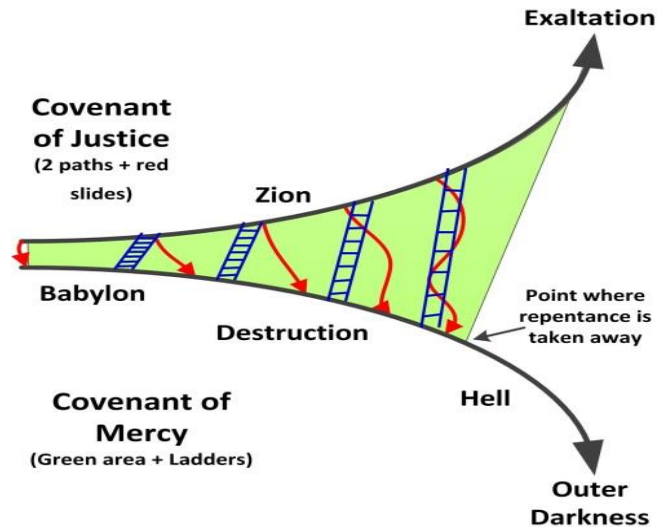
- Because these two principles are opposites there must be something to bring them into balance with each other. When the law of justice is broken, the law of mercy cannot be extended unless there is a payment made to appease the demand of justice.

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- The cross is symbolic of a balance.
- The atonement of Jesus Christ is what brings balance to justice and mercy and allows them to coexist – and allows all of creation to continue and not fall apart.
- Notice Mercy is on his right hand



mercy needed to reach exaltation. What we accomplish with this opportunity is everlasting – it will last forever.



### The Covenant of Justice

- The covenant of justice, which includes a system of celestial laws that make God who he is and provide him with what he has, power and eternal life.
    - The El in Elohim is the Hebrew word for power.
    - He administered this covenant to us before the world was created.
- (Abraham 3:24-26) 24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;
- 25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;
- 26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.
- Before the world was, we promised to obey everything the Lord commanded us. That was our first estate. This was the covenant of justice.
  - Notice that there was a punishment for those who did not keep their first estate. This applied not only to those who followed Satan, but to anyone who did not perfectly obey the covenant of justice.
  - The covenant of justice offered exaltation, but there was no room for error while learning to obey the laws. Any sin removed us from the path to exaltation and put us on the path of damnation – sort of like a chutes and ladders game without the ladders.

### The Covenant of Mercy

- The covenant of mercy was instituted to allow us to make mistakes while we learned to obey celestial laws - something that would provide the ladders to climb up from our fallen state, back to the path to exaltation.
- We know the covenant of mercy better by its other name: the new and everlasting covenant. It is called new because it is a new opportunity to live the gospel. It is called everlasting because there is no other opportunity beyond it. It provides all the opportunity and

- Under the NEC our sins are paid for by the atonement of Christ, and we are allowed to spend our time and effort learning how to follow him, be his disciple, and become a Zion person.
- While mercy is available almost without limit, there are two circumstances where it has no power.
  - If we receive a full remission of sins and an undeniable testimony of Christ via the Holy Ghost, and then allow Satan to overcome us, and deny the Christ, we find ourselves in a state where we will not seek forgiveness, and God cannot save us because he will not abrogate our agency. (Son of Perdition)
  - The other circumstance appears to happen when people refuse to repent even though God has offered them many opportunities and sent prophets to warn them, as in the case of the Nephites just before their destruction. The blessing of repentance was withdrawn from them and their damnation was sealed upon them while they were still alive. It appears that one can be sealed up to damnation just like one can be sealed up to exaltation as in the case of calling an election being made sure.
- All the ordinances and covenants of the gospel of Christ are part of the NEC. That includes baptism, the covenants of the endowment (obedience, sacrifice, gospel, chastity, consecration), and the covenant of celestial marriage. It also includes the oath and covenant of the priesthood.
- If we take advantage of the NEC, make all the sub covenants that pertain to it, and continue striving to learn to obey the laws that pertain to those covenants, we will eventually find that we have kept our first and second estates and will become gods like our father Abraham.
- Study more of these two covenants in the Book of Mormon. It deals with them extensively. Take advantage of the covenant of mercy, become a disciple of Christ, and become like him.