

# The Parable of the Two Trains

## Part IV

by Mark Webb

For the sake of those who might be joining this discussion in midstream, let me briefly review the points covered so far. Covenant Theology tends to stress the continuity of the Old and New Testament eras. It sees but one covenant, administered at first by Moses and then by Christ. My model of this system uses a single train running on a single track. The train journeys through both the Old and New Testament ages, picking up passengers as it goes. At the juncture of these ages, a slight change does take place — Christ replaces Moses as the engineer. Other than this, it's the same train, track, and people that ran through the earlier age.

Dispensationalism, on the other hand, stresses the discontinuity of God's dealings with man, breaking history up into distinct epochs. In each age, God deals with man by placing him under a self-contained covenantal system, having no necessary connection to the covenant of another age. I've illustrated this as two trains running on two separate, but parallel tracks. One is engineered by Moses and collects Israel. The other is engineered by Christ and collects the Church. The two systems are completely distinct.

As an alternative, I've set forth a third model representing my view of an approach more in line with the Biblical data. This illustration utilizes two trains and two tracks, one engineered by Moses and the other by Christ. Although similar at this

point to Dispensationalism, in this case, the two tracks run at right angles to one another, rather than parallel. They intersect at a station house, representing the point of Christ's coming in history. As the train of Moses pulls into the station, an announcement is made that the passengers are now to switch to the train of Christ. Some do, but most don't, and the train of Moses soon derails. The train of Christ now runs through history, picking up mainly Gentiles to join the mainly Jewish riders who made the switch. Note that this model keeps the covenantal systems distinct. It emphasizes the temporality of the Mosaic system on the one hand, while it maintains the one way of salvation and the unity of God's people on the other.

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# Two Trains

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In the first article of this series, it was stated that any covenantal system, to be Biblical, must reflect three characteristics, all beginning with the letter ‘T’. So far we’ve looked at two of these, *transition* and *transference*. Now we’ll proceed to the final ‘T’—the idea of *transcendence*.

## Transcendence

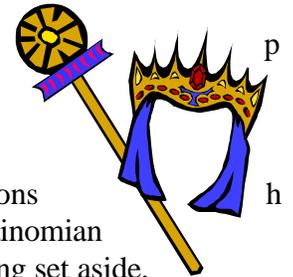
In defining “*transcend*”, Webster uses phrases such as “*to rise above*”, “*to go beyond the limits of*”, or “*to surpass*”. This term quite accurately summarizes what the Bible teaches when it describes

the New Testament and compares it to the Old. The New Covenant is neither an extension of the Old, nor the Old slightly modified — it transcends it in every way. Let us examine three passages that clearly express this idea.

## Mo’ Better

First, there’s the epistle to the Hebrews. For the first ten chapters or so, this book declares the superiority of Christ, the Covenant He ratifies, and the age He ushers in, compared to all that has come before. The words “more” and “better” are sprinkled liberally throughout the discussion. Christ has a “more excellent name” than the angels. He’s a greater captain than Moses and a greater priest than Aaron. He has a “more excellent” ministry than earthly priests in that He’s the mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises. His sacrifice surpasses those offered under the law. His blood avails where that of animals could not. As we say in the south, Christ is “mo’ better”!

Is this new arrangement merely the continuation of the previous covenant? Note, especially, the discussion related to the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ in Hebrews 7. The point is made that Christ was not qualified to be a priest under the Mosaic system, since He “sprang out of Judah” and not Levi. The Melchizedek order (*i.e.* “type” or “kind”) of priest, namely the “King-Priest” type (see Heb. 7:1), was absolutely unknown in the Mosaic covenant. In that economy, the offices of king and priest were strictly segregated. This kind of change requires more than just minor alterations on the existing system. It requires a change of the law itself (Heb. 7:12), along with the abrogation of the commandments contained therein (Heb. 7:18). The carnality, temporality, and partiality that characterized Moses’ system is now succeeded by that which is spiritual, eternal, and complete.



May I anticipate two objections here. First, some will hear an antinomian ring in this talk of the “law” being set aside. Let me point out that the moral principles of God’s law did not begin at Sinai, neither do they end if the system of law inaugurated there is set aside! The New Testament, if anything, magnifies the moral duties of Christ’s people in comparison to those living in the former age. Secondly, some will reply that it was not “Moses’ Law”, but “God’s Law” established at Sinai — and how dare we set aside that which God has established. Well, may I point out it was also not “Aaron’s priesthood”, but “God’s priesthood” established at (See “Two Trains” on page 6) Sinai. If the fact that God authored the Mosaic law argues for its perpetuation, why doesn’t the same principle hold true for the priesthood He likewise authored?

## Greater Glory

Another passage setting the covenants side by side is II Corinthians 3. The old covenant is characterized as that which is written on stones, whose ministry condemns and kills; the new covenant is that written in

# Sermon Snips



## Treasures Where?

Scriptures often speak of our life first of all occurring here on earth — this realm, this sphere of things — and then a life to come. It may be heaven or hell — eternity. But notice that we have that contrast exhibited. Man's body and his soul will neither be advantaged ultimately by what he has in this life. Neither his body or his soul will be ultimately advantaged by what he gains in this life. Let me try to give you an illustration. Suppose you were on vacation and every time you stopped for gas you went out behind the filling station with a shovel and you dug a little hole and you threw some money in the ground and covered it back up and then got in the car. After a while, your wife would be saying, "What in the world do you think you're doing?" And you say, "I'm just burying this in the ground so that I'll have it when I need it." And she might be right in pointing out, "But we're on vacation and we'll probably never be back here again. What are you doing putting your treasures, as it were, in the ground in a place where you are not going to be?" That is precisely Christ's point here. The man built the barns and the bigger barns. He amassed himself a treasure. But the treasure was located in a place where he was not going to be. We are just passing through this life you understand. We are strangers and pilgrims. We are not permanent residents. And if we sink our treasures in this life, what we are doing is putting them in a place where we are ultimately not going to be. Do you understand that principle? I think its fairly straight forward. Jesus gave a very mysterious parable called the Parable of the Unjust Steward. Basically, the guy is a crook. He's a steward. He's the bookkeeper for a very rich man. He's been swindling some money from him. And the fellow finds out about it and is going to put him out of his job. He's going to make a final accounting and kick him out on his ear. So before he does this, the bookkeeper goes to all his master's debtors and knocks down their bill a little bit so that when he gets kicked out of his job these guys will receive him. He made friends of his master's debtors by being unfaithful to his master. That's a strange parable because this guy is just a crook, yet Jesus holds this guy up before us and says this is an example of wisdom. I think what our Lord is doing in that parable is not pointing out the man's morality — obviously. He is pointing out the fact that the man was far-sighted. His present situation was going to come to an end. The situation he was in at the moment was not going to last forever. There was coming a day when he was going to be put out of that circumstance and wisdom would tell you to prepare for that day. We have alot of such wisdom going around today in financial seminars and so forth. Teaching you to prepare for retirement. Prepare for this or that. Indeed that is wisdom on the earthly realm. But my friend, retirement is not going to be here in this life. Retirement is going to be in eternity. There is where you'll retire, not here.

From "*Seek Ye First*" by Mark Webb

## Pray Simply

If faith asks, it will receive; if hope seeks, it will find; and if love knocks, the door will be opened to it.

These three modes of prayer suit us in different stages of distress. There I am, a poor beggar at mercy's door; I ask, and I will receive. But suppose I lose my way so that I cannot find Him of whom I once asked so successfully. Well, then I may seek with the certainty that I will find. And if I am in the last stage of all, not merely poor and bewildered, but so defiled that I feel shut out from God, like a leper shut out of the camp, then I may knock and the door will open to me.

Each one of these different descriptions of prayer is exceedingly simple. If anybody said, "I cannot ask," my reply would be, "You do not understand the word." Surely everybody can ask. A little child can ask. Long before an infant can speak, he can ask; he does not need to use words in order to ask for what he wants. Not one among us is incapacitated from asking. Prayers need not be fancy. I believe God abhors fancy prayers. When we pray, the simpler our prayers are, the better. The plainest, humblest language that expresses our meaning is the best.

From "*Spurgeon on Prayer & Spiritual Warfare*"  
by Charles Spurgeon

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hearts, whose ministry is spiritual, makes alive, and produces righteousness.

Not that the old covenant wasn't glorious. Indeed, it was. But, as the light of a candle pales in comparison to the light of the Sun, so the glory of the old was negligible and transitory compared to the glory of the new. Note again the idea of transcendence.

## *The Liberty of Sonship*

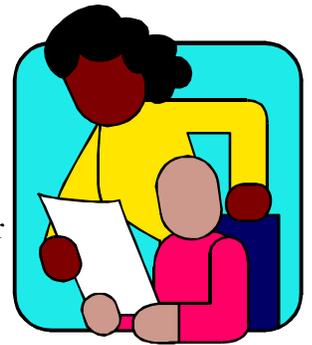
Through Galatians 3 and 4, and into chapter 5, Paul discusses the change inaugurated by the coming of Christ. In this discussion, the Mosaic covenant is actually viewed as the new one, being preceded by a covenantal "promise" of blessing made to Abraham. The law actually seemed to work at cross-purposes to this promise, bringing cursing rather than blessing, death rather than life. It was "added" (lit: "came alongside"), for disciplinary reasons, until the ordained recipient of the promise actually came into the world — Christ.

The contrast of the saints' situation prior to Christ and after Christ is viewed as the change from that of a child set under a pedagogue to that of an adult. The child placed under tutors and governors is disciplined rigidly by such things as homework, rules, deadlines, a structured schedule, corporeal punishment, etc. Every

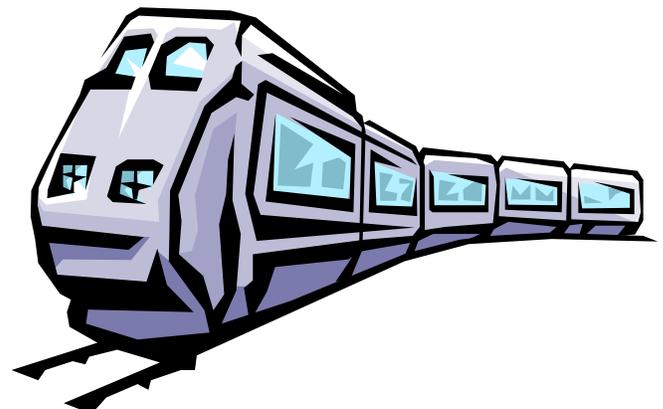
moment of every day he is under the stern eye of the schoolmaster. Upon becoming an adult, he is released from such a system. He now does from within the duties that were previously imposed from without. The rules have become "internalized". Likewise, Paul views New Testament saints as adult sons, freed from bondage to the "letteristic", external, and disciplinary principles of the Mosaic law. They now enjoy the full realization of their sonship, desiring to please their Father from the heart.

## *Back to the Trains*

Let us now return to our model. To simply describe the change occurring at the coming of Christ as a change from one train to another doesn't do justice to it! It's more like moving from a train pulled by an old steam locomotive into a sleek, modern passenger train. Further, the gauge of the tracks is completely different. The train of Moses couldn't run on this track even if it tried! The train of Christ, on the one hand, does bear a similarity to the train of Moses, and it incorporates many of its features. But, on the other hand, it is a new system, completely surpassing the old in every way.

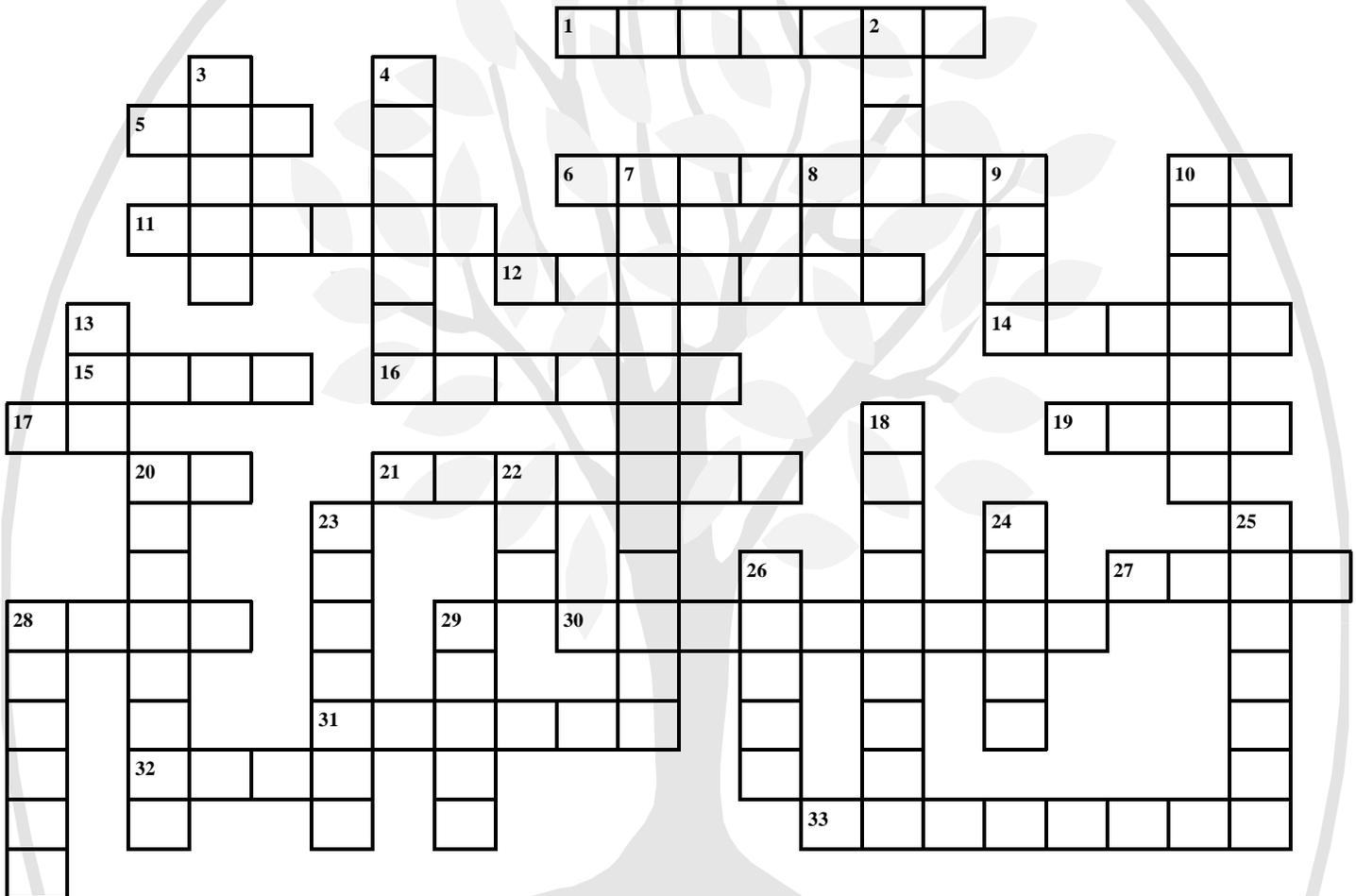


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# Bible Game

Fill in the crossword with the words from Psalm 1 taken from the King James Version.



Blessed is the man that \_\_\_\_\_ not in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the ungodly, nor \_\_\_\_\_ in the way of  
25 down 23 down 33 across  
 \_\_\_\_\_, nor \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. But his \_\_\_\_\_ is in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the  
12 across 10 down 27 across 6 across 21 across 22 down  
 Lord; and in his law \_\_\_\_\_ he meditate \_\_\_\_\_ and night. And he shall \_\_\_\_\_ like a \_\_\_\_\_ planted \_\_\_\_\_ the  
19 across 5 across 20 across 32 across 17 across  
 \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, that \_\_\_\_\_ forth his \_\_\_\_\_ in his \_\_\_\_\_; his \_\_\_\_\_ also shall not \_\_\_\_\_;  
16 across 3 down 20 down 24 down 31 across 2 down 28 down  
 and whatsoever he \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_. The ungodly are not \_\_\_\_\_: but are like the \_\_\_\_\_ which  
14 across 4 down 10 across 26 down  
 the \_\_\_\_\_ driveth \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore the \_\_\_\_\_ shall not \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ sinners in  
28 across 15 across 1 across 29 down 18 down 8 down  
 the \_\_\_\_\_ of the righteous. For the \_\_\_\_\_ knoweth the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_: but the way of the  
7 down 9 down 13 down 30 across  
 ungodly shall \_\_\_\_\_.  
11 across