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The Promise: God's Everlasting Agreement

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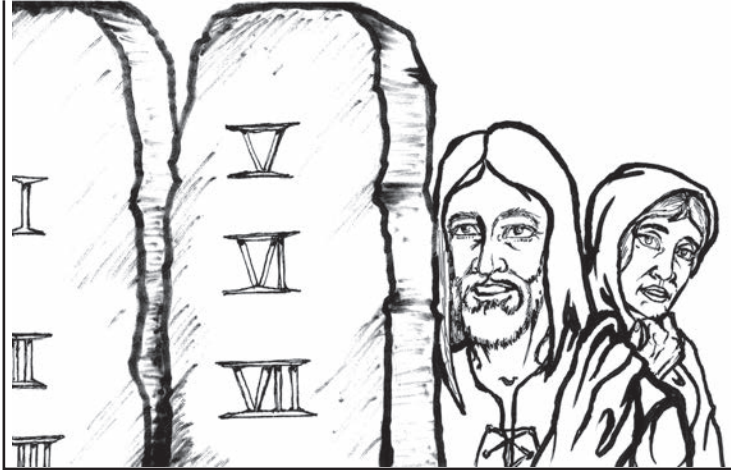
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Introduction



The Agreement

In 1588, a young English woman looks over the sea. The young woman carries a baby in her belly. The baby will be born in two months. But the young woman sees something on the sea that scares her. She sees 130 ships from Spain. The ships plan to take England by force. The young woman is so frightened that she has her child two months early.

Her son is Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes became one of the most famous thinkers in Europe. Hobbes lived at a time when his own people fought many wars against each other. Hobbes wrote that humans needed a strong government. Without a strong government, humans live in endless fear. They are afraid of not being safe. They are afraid other countries will take them prisoner. Most of all, people fear death. Hobbes said that all people were part of something he named “the war of everyone against everyone else.” Hobbes believed that something needed to be done about it. A big change must happen for the better. Or, Hobbes warned, human life will be nothing but “lonely, poor, mean, ugly, and short.”

How did Hobbes say the problem should be solved? He said there was only one answer: people must accept government that will have total control over their lives. This government can be one leader or a group of leaders that will end the troubles that make the lives of the people so awful. So, the people must give up all their freedom. Then they can have peace and safety. Hobbes named this change of power the “agreement.”

The idea of an agreement did not start with Hobbes. Thousands of years before Hobbes lived, God made an agreement with Israel. But even the agreement with Israel was the same as the first agreement God made with humans after sin. God led out in all these Bible agreements. God made His agreements known to humans. God also made the agreements legal. The agreement by Hobbes was built on fear. But the agreement with God is built on love. God loves humans. This love led Him to the cross.

We love God back because of everything Jesus does for us. In the contract by Hobbes, the people must give up their freedom to their leader. We, too, must give things up to God. We give Him our sins, our fears, and our wrong ideas. We do not do this to get something from God. We give Him these things because He already has given us

the best gift of all: Jesus and His plan to save us. We can be saved only by Jesus.

How does the agreement with God work? It is simple, really. The agreement is an exchange: Jesus takes our sins. He gives us His record of perfect obedience. Then God looks at us as if we did not sin. In this way, God no longer sees us as guilty. He no longer charges us for our sins. Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. So, sin no longer needs to separate us from God. Killers, cheaters, liars, thieves, and people who are guilty of sex crimes can all be forgiven now. Then God will see them as holy as Jesus Himself. This is a wonderful gift. We get this gift from God only by faith.

There is more good news. Killers, cheaters, liars, thieves, and people who are guilty of sex crimes also can have a friendship with God after they are forgiven. Jesus makes this friendship possible. The blood of Jesus brings us forgiveness. His blood also makes us clean. His blood heals us and makes our hearts new again. We are born again in Jesus. Then God writes His holy law inside our hearts. Then people who are killers, cheaters, liars, thieves, and people who are guilty of sex crimes will change. They will no longer do the bad things they did in the past. When God writes His law on our hearts, our whole lives are changed. We want to live fully the law that God puts in us. God gives us the power to do it. This is what it means to be in the new agreement with Jesus and to be friends with God Himself.

***Jesus takes
our sins. He
gives us His
record of
perfect
obedience.***

This quarter, we look more closely at the agreement with God. What is the agreement? What does it offer us? What does it ask of us? The lessons this quarter were rewritten from a Bible study guide by Dr. Gerhard Hasel. His understanding of the agreement will give us hope and encouragement. We will learn something that Hobbes never learned: “Where God’s love is, there is no fear. God’s perfect love takes away fear” (1 John 4:18, WE).

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