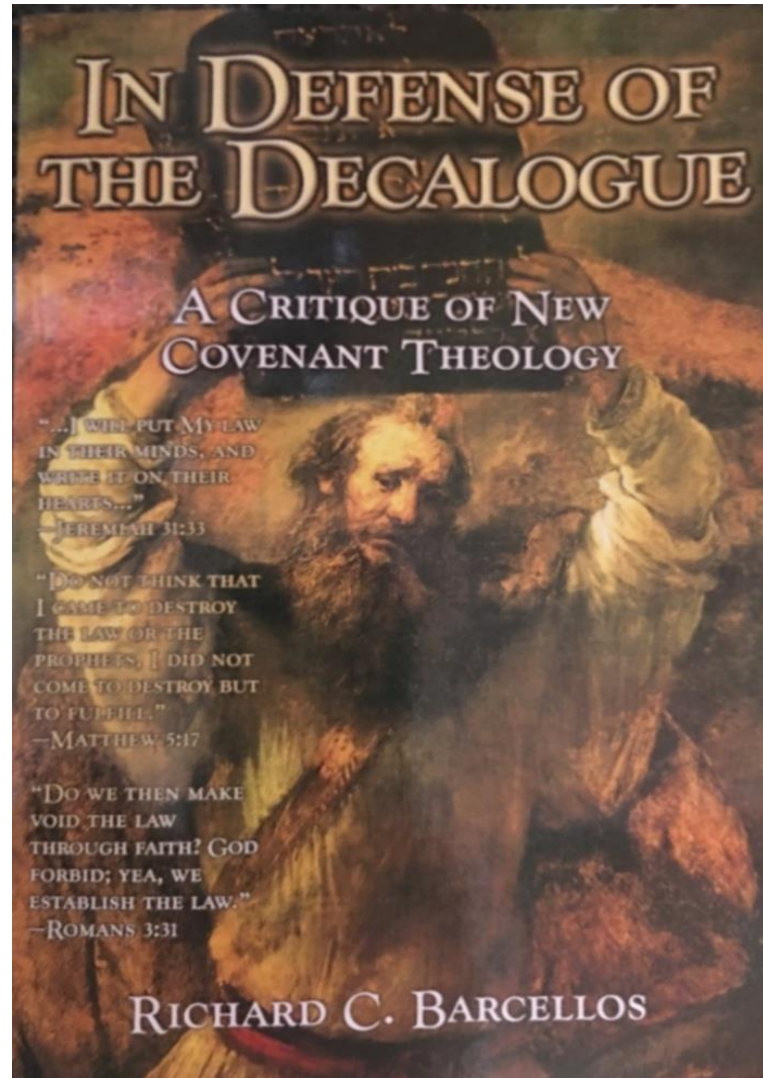


New Covenant Theology



An Examination of Reformed Baptist Arguments Against New Covenant Theology



Chapter 3

NCT and the Abolition of the Old Covenant

- This chapter has a very different feel than the chapters we have covered so far.
- Throughout the first two chapters Barcellos seemed to argue, almost relentlessly, that the Ten Commandments are the “moral law” of the OT and all Ten of them are as binding on New Covenant Christians today as they were on the Israelites in the Old Covenant.
- So it comes as a bit of a surprise to hear Barcellos say at the beginning of Chapter 3 that: *Hearty agreement must be given when New Covenant theologians argue for the abolition of the Old Covenant. This is clearly the teaching of the Old and New Testaments... The whole Law of Moses, as it functioned under the Old Covenant, has been abolished, including the Ten Commandments.* (p.61 – emphasis original)
- What gives? Has Barcellos suddenly changed his mind? Have we been misunderstanding him up to this point?

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- I don't think Barcellos has changed his mind, nor do I think we've been misunderstanding him.
- So why does Barcellos almost sound like he's changing his mind in this chapter?
- Both ***Covenant*** Theologians (like Barcellos) and ***New Covenant*** Theologians (like us) recognize that there is both ***continuity*** and ***discontinuity*** between the Old and New Covenants:
 - Covenant Theologians tend to emphasize the ***continuity*** between the Old and New Covenants
 - As New Covenant Theologians, we tend to emphasize the ***discontinuity*** between the Old and New Covenants.

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- In Chapters 1 and 2, Barcellos focused on the ***continuity*** between the covenants and therefore sounded like the Covenant Theologian that he is.
- In this chapter, Barcellos is acknowledging and attempting to deal with areas where he sees ***discontinuity*** between the covenants, and this tends to almost make him sound like New Covenant Theologian.
- But don't be fooled - as we have already seen, and will see again in later chapters, Barcellos still sees far more continuity between the covenants than I believe the scriptures teach.

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- I will give Barcellos kudos for at least acknowledging that the scriptures clearly teach that there are significant discontinuities between the Old and New Covenant – something that is rather difficult for Covenant Theologians to acknowledge.
- But, in my opinion, one of the glaring weaknesses in this chapter, is that, at this point at least, he doesn't give us any details as to what the discontinuities between the Old and New Covenant actually are.

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- Barcellos examines two Biblical texts in this chapter: Mat 5:17-20 and Eph. 2:14-16
- In his discussion of Mat 5:17-20, he levels a number of criticisms at what he perceives to be the NCT handling of this text.
- For example, on page 62, Barcellos says: *A common understanding of this text goes like this: Jesus is saying that he will make the law null and void for his people and is declaring that they will have nothing to do with the Old Testament law of God because he will fulfill or complete it for them.*
- You may recall what I (and what most NCT authors that I'm familiar with) have taught on this text is that:
 - Jesus tells us that he has **not** come to set aside the OT scriptures as though they were of no value or importance.
 - The purpose of the OT scriptures – and even the commandments within them – was to **point** to Jesus as the one who **fulfills** them.
 - Jesus then, takes us through a series of six examples, where he shows us how to “keep” the OT commandments by listening to **him** and doing what **he** says.

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- But I found Barcellos *next* critique of the NCT to be **very** curious: *Those of this persuasion often say... “We are not under the Law of Moses, but under the law of Christ,” as though Moses and Christ were sworn enemies. This view has many problems.*
- Does the statement that Barcellos criticizes in the above point look familiar?
- *To those under the law [i.e., Jews] I became as one under the law (though **not** being myself **under the law** [of Moses]) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God **but under the law of Christ**) that I might win those outside the law. (1Cor. 9:20-21)*

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- On page 62-63, Barcellos goes on to describe the “many problems” with viewing ourselves as “not under the Law of Moses, but under the Law of Christ”:
 - *First, this view cannot stand up to the context.*
 - I believe the NCT does a **better** job of dealing with the context.
 - *In verse 17, the phrase “the Law or the Prophets” refer to the whole Old Testament...*
 - I agree.
 - *In verse 18a, the phrase “till heaven and earth pass away,” refers to the duration of the whole Old Testament’s authority... in verse 18b*
 - Mat. 5:18 is not talking about the duration of the OT’s **authority** – it says that “*not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished*”, meaning (in the context) that every bit of what the law pointed to will be fulfilled and **accomplished** by Christ.

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- On page 62-63, Barcellos describes the “many problems” with viewing ourselves as “not under the Law of Moses, but under the Law of Christ”:
 - *Second, this view assumes a theory of the postponement of the kingdom of Christ that is explicitly disproved by the rest of the NT.*
 - My view does not assume any such theory of the postponement of the kingdom of Christ.
 - *Christ’s... Kingdom... was inaugurated at His first coming and... all Christians have been placed [into it].*
 - I agree.
 - *Third, this view cannot adequately deal with the pro-law statements of the NT.*
 - I have no problem with the pro-law statements of the NT. The law is good and perfect at doing what God designed it to do.

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- On page 62-63, Barcellos describes the “many problems” with viewing ourselves as “not under the Law of Moses, but under the Law of Christ”:
 - *Fourth, this view cannot justify capital punishment as a duty of the civil magistrate.*
 - I’m not sure what he means by this. But Romans 13, in the NT, speaks to the duty of a civil magistrate to carry out capital punishment.
 - *Fifth, this view cannot adequately explain 2 Tim. 3:16-17:*
 - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
 - I have no problem affirming that the OT scriptures are profitable for doing all the things that this verse affirms.

For Next Time...

- Read Chapter 4 (from pages 71-76) before we meet again in four (!) weeks and come prepared to discuss it.
- In the meantime, Stephen will be filling in as teacher for the next three weeks.

Other Questions?

