

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS, EDITOR

7844 GRIMSBY CIRCLE, HARRISBURG, N.C. 28075

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## THE ETERNAL COVENANT (cont'd from last month)

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep *through the blood of the eternal covenant*, Jesus our Lord.” In the eternal covenant, Christ becomes the one who is representing us, he is the one with whom God made covenant. That is why it cannot be broken. In the making of the eternal covenant Christ became three things: 1) Malachi 3:1 states that he is *the messenger* of the covenant, that is he makes it known. when Christ came, he brought the revelation of God from heaven and preaching the gospel of the kingdom he made known a new and better way. 2) Hebrews 7:22: “He became the *surety* of the better covenant.” This means he is the one who represents us. A surety is one who represents others. He fulfilled the obligations in their name and for their benefit. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* defines the word surety as “He by whom we get full assurance of the more excellent covenant made by God with us, and of the truth and stability of the promises connected with it.” Christ perfectly and fully discharged all of them. In covenant God holds nothing against us because all our debts, all our sins, all our obligations to God have been fully paid for us in Christ. He paid the entire debt in full. He settled all our liabilities. This frees us to walk without all sin, without all burden, and without the obligation of trying to get rid of it because it is already gone. As Paul shows in Galatians five, we are free to serve God. Why do so many Christian people not serve Him as they should? Because they are still bound up with a burden of sin. They still do not know or cannot accept that Christ has already paid them. He is going to fulfill his promises whether or not we walk in them. 3) Hebrews 9:15: “He is the mediator of a new covenant.” As the mediator, he imparts all the blessings of the covenant to the beneficiaries. Hebrews has described the benefits we have because we are a part of this eternal covenant. We have access to God. We have the way to the throne of God opened to us. We have Jesus as our surety and mediator. We have all our obligations satisfied in Christ. That is covenant life which God imparts to us through Christ.

We are going back to Galatians 3 which shows the truth of all this. (We keep referring to this passage because it is so important, and so little known by most Christian people). Galatians 3 shows that the eternal covenant was made with Christ and all the promises that God made to Abraham in the Old Testament were not to the Jews as a nation, but to Christ and those who are in Christ. Galatians 3:16: “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds’ referring to many but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ.” Verse 26-29: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, *heirs according to the promise*.” And just what is this promise? Paul answers that question in Romans 4:13: “The promise to Abraham and his seed that he would heir to the *world* was not through Law, but through the righteousness of Faith.” Jesus confirmed this when he said: “Blessed are the meek for they shall *inherit the earth*” (Matt. 5:4).

In the ninth chapter of Hebrews the writer describes the difference in the two covenants in the scriptures, the one a covenant based on the Law and the other one based on the promise of God to Abraham and his seed, that is the eternal covenant. Both covenants had to be ratified by the shedding of blood, The one by the death of an animal sacrifice and the other by the sacrificial death of Christ. His conclusion is stated in verses 23, 24: “Therefore it was necessary for the *copies* of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these (animal sacrifices), but the *heavenly things* themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”\_If all the things in the Old Testament had to be cleansed by blood, then the *heavenly things*, that is the blessings of the eternal covenant, also could not become effective until there was a death. But this time it is not the death of an animal standing for the people, but it is the death of Christ standing for us. So the *heavenly things*, are the blessings of the eternal covenant, could not be effective and could do us no good until Christ died. In verses 24-28 the heavenly things are described. There are three things listed which are the blessings of the eternal covenant.

The first one is that Christ appears in the presence of God for us. (verse 24). He was not an earthly priest. He had nothing to do with the old covenant system. The reason Christ ascended and went into heaven and the reason he is there now is that he may appear in the presence of God for us, that he might represent us. If he represents us, then we have total and complete access to the throne of God. So he says, “Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb. 4: 16). We do not have a high priest who does not understand us, but we have one that was tempted in all points as we are, who faced everything we will ever face, who has suffered in the flesh as we suffer, who has gone through all the trials and pitfalls of human life. He knows and understands and can sympathize with us. He is representing us before the Father, and it is the same as if were there, so much so that Paul says, “We are sitting with Christ in heavenly places.” So wherever Christ is we are there spiritually and if he is seated at the right hand of the Father, we also have access to the Father. So his point in 10:19-22 is: “Since therefore, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and since we have a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...” *Let us draw near...* let us take advantage of the fact that we can come boldly before the throne of grace and receive mercy and grace and the help we need (Heb. 4:16).

No Christian should think it hard to live the life demanded by God. All heaven has been made available to us...He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pet 1:3), He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm (Eph. 1:3), He has withheld nothing from us to the extent that Paul tells us in I Corinthians 3:21 that “all things belong to you whether life or death, all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ and Christ

belongs to God.” We cannot get any better than that.; He represents us and we have access to the very throne of God.

The second blessing of the eternal covenant is in verse 26: “But now once at the consummation of the ages he was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” It only took one sacrifice, his death on the cross, at the end of the Patriarchal and Jewish ages, Christ was manifested in the flesh, and he made an annulment of sin by his sacrificial death. Mankind had only one problem and he still has only one problem no matter who he is and that problem is sin. Jesus was born to take care of that problem. There was not another man from Adam to Christ that could do it. There was no system that man could invent that could do it. That’s why all the religions of the world amount to nothing. They cannot solve man’s basic and only problem. They can make men feel good, they can give him peace. Perhaps they can do a lot of things for him but they cannot answer the problem of sin. The Law could not do it. There was nothing that could put away sin and give man forgiveness. He was born of a virgin, sinless and was in all points human as far as the flesh was concerned. He suffered as we suffer, was tempted as we are tempted but he didn’t give in to any temptation. He didn’t make the same mistake Adam made. He being sinless could therefore deal with sin. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) but when he died he was not dying because he had sinned, for had he ever sinned he could not have paid the price for us. The Apostle Paul stated: “He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21). He exchanged places with us. He took our sin upon himself and when he did that God punished him for our sin instead of punishing us.

When he was hanging on the cross and dying that terrible death, it was as if you and I were hanging there. He had to do it only once so the writer states in 10:12-14: “But he, having offered one sacrifice for sin for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies are made the footstool of his feet. For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” His one offering took care of all our sins. Past present and future. What does this mean for us? Heb.10:15, 17, 18: “The Holy Spirit also bears witness to us, ‘their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.” You cannot add anything to what God has done. He has done it all. Heb. 9:14: “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, *cleanse your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God?” It is a cleansing that goes as deep as our consciousness of sin...not a surface thing...not a temporary forgiveness...it’s a cleansing to the extent it cleans our conscience. This is the only thing that can give you a good conscience, that is the blood of Christ. This is possible because this is one of the blessings of the eternal covenant.

Christians should not have any problem with sin. We act like that is our biggest problem. James says “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (4:7)...Paul Writes: “There is no temptation but such which is common to man; God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but will with the temptation provide you with a way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. Therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry” (I Cor. 10:13, 14). God is not putting us on a guilt trip. He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).

He has done this so you might serve the living God, you don’t have time to dilly around with sin.

The third blessing of the eternal covenant is we have complete salvation. The redemption of our spirit now and the redemption of our bodies at the appearing of Christ. Verse 28: “So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sin of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin to those who eagerly await him.” Our salvation will be completed when he appears the second time. The apostle John states it in these words: “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we will see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as he is pure” (I John 3:2, 3). Romans 8:23-25 definitely shows our salvation of our bodies will be the completion of our redemption: “...We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, *the redemption of our body*. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” That which is still lacking in our salvation is the *redemption of our bodies*.

That our bodies will be redeemed is, for the most part, an unknown, or at least overlooked, concept in the religious world today. We are accustomed to believing that salvation has little or no relation to the human body. For most Christians salvation concerns the saving of your immortal soul from the sin and pollution of the body, and from eternal damnation in hell. We are taught that the soul’s longing is to “fly away when I die, hallelujah by and by” (seeing death as a friend and not an enemy) and winging our souls from the body to heaven above. However Paul never speaks of the salvation of a bodiless soul. His use of the word “soul” (sometimes translated “life”) always has reference to embodied persons (I Cor. 15:45; I Thess. 2:8 (translated *life*); 5:23; Rom. 2:9, 13:1). When Peter speaks of “the salvation of your *souls*” in the context this refers to “the living hope” based upon Christ’s resurrection, ready to be revealed in the last time” at his appearing (I Pet.1:3,9). When commenting on this passage, N.T. Wright in *Surprised by Hope* stated: “The *soul* here refers not to disembodied inner part of the human being but to what we might call the person or even the personality. And the point in I Peter 1 is that this person, the ‘real you’ is already being saved and will one day receive the salvation in full bodily form. That is why Peter quite rightly plants the hope for salvation firmly in the resurrection of Jesus. God has, he says, ‘given us new birth to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead.’”

Romans 8:17 states that the Christian has been made an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ; but he has not yet received the inheritance. As the Sweden theologian, Anders Nyrgen on this verse wrote: “The Christian has received the spirit, but only as a first fruit and guarantee of the glory that is to be. Only the first payment has been given him, but the full possession is not yet his. Though the Christian has received the Spirit and already lives in security of sonship, he still has to wait, as long as he lives in the flesh to which Paul calls ‘the revealing of the sons of God.’” It is only when this “body of death” (7:24) has given place to the new spiritual body of the resurrection, only “when the perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality” (I Cor. 15:54), can we realize our full redemption.