

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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BOOK OF THE COVENANT LOST IN THE TEMPLE THE COVENANT LOST IN THE CHURCH

The word "Covenant" is found 284 times in the Old Testament and 37 times in the New Testament. Of the number of times it is mentioned in the New Testament nearly one-half is either a quotation from the Old Testament or a reference to the old covenant. This infrequency of the use of the word in the New Testament in contrast with the numerous use in the Old Testament is due to the fact that the covenant of Judaism was entirely the Mosaic Law. The New Covenant rejects the detailed stipulations of religious obligations demanded by the old covenant, a covenant of laws. In the Old Covenant God expresses Himself in Language, in the New Covenant He is expressed in the word that "became flesh." The Old Covenant is said to be "of the letter engraved on stone" and the New Covenant is "of the Spirit" (II Cor. 3: 6, 7). This is confirmed in Galatians 4:24ff where Mount Sinai as the mother of children of slavery is contrasted with the heavenly Jerusalem as the mother of children of freedom.

The word "Covenant" describes a binding agreement which involves a sharing together. This "sharing together" says: "what is mine is yours" and "what is yours is mine." Our covenant with God is illustrated in this passage: "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). In this covenant our sin was exchanged for Christ's righteousness. His righteousness was exchanged for our sin. Most, but not all covenants in the Bible, involved a death or the shedding of blood. When Israel came to Sinai and entered into covenant with God, the blood had already been shed at the Passover when they left Egypt. After leaving Sinai they were a different people. The old Israel of slavery died and the new Israel had come into being. For us the New Covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ. According to Hebrews 13:20 this was an eternal covenant between God and Christ. Christ gave his life (the blood) and God raised him from the dead (the resurrection). This was not for Christ's sake, but for us. The covenant comes into the world through Abraham and through Christ we are brought into it (Genesis 15:8-13; Galatians 3:15-17; 26-29). Marriage is also a covenant that involves a death. This is not a physical bloodletting, rather a dying to the old life. When the bride and groom are joined together in marriage they are dying to the life they knew as singles. The old life dies and a new life begins. Also it is a death to the parents of the couple. They die to the relationship they had with their children and a new relationship is born. If there is no death there is no covenant. Perhaps this is the reason for so many marriage failures

An illustration of the effect of covenant upon Israel is seen in II Kings 22 and 23. King Josiah comes to the throne of Judah. He is a young king (8 years old) and doesn't have much to do, or thinks he doesn't. He sent his men to the archives to count all the money. They started counting the money and found something they didn't expect to find. "Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe. 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord'" (II Kings 22:8); and that book of

the law was the book of the covenant. "And the king went up to the house of the Lord and all the men of Judah with him, and the priests and all the people and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant, which was found in the house of the Lord" (II Kings 23:2). The book that was lost and found in the temple was not the covenant. It was simply a record of the covenant God had made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. Covenant is the basis of God's faithfulness.

How can we know we are "heirs of the promise," that God will do what He says He will do, that His Word is true? Abraham asked the same question when God made him the promise. When Abraham asked God "How may I know that I shall possess the land? God said, "Bring me a heifer..." and "on that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram" (Gen. 15:8, 9, 18). How do we know God will do anything? Will He do what He says He will do in His word? Hebrews 6:13-18 gives us a very definite answer: "In the same way God, desiring even more to show the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, declared with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things (His oath and His covenant) in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement..." Covenant assures us that God is faithful and His Word is true.

Now back to Josiah and the finding of the book of the covenant that had been lost in the temple. After reading the book of the covenant and out of his conviction King Josiah stated: "Go and inquire of the Lord for me and the people of all Judah concerning the words of the book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of the book, to do according to all that is written concerning us" (II Kings 22:13). Josiah concluded the land was under the judgment of God because "our fathers did not listen to the words which were written in this book." We are what we are in the church today because our fathers have not listened to the words of the covenant, and neither has the modern church. The subject of the covenant is virtually an unknown subject to most Christians. The religious world today has forsaken God, served idols and has lost not only the book of the covenant but the covenant itself. It was lost then and is lost today. It is really remarkable and astonishing that we can have so many Bible translations today with so many Bibles available and so many religious books from religious bookstores and we can have so many religious services with so much preaching and teaching going on yet the word of God is lost to most people. When Josiah read the book of the covenant he understood what the covenant was and then he decided to do something about it.

After emphasizing the dearth of knowledge concerning the subject of the covenant in the religious world today, Arthur W. Pink in his book *The Divine Covenants* states: "If some think we have exaggerated the ignorance of the covenants, let them put the following questions to their best informed Christian friends, and see how many can give satisfactory answers. 'God has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: *for this is my salvation.*' (II Sam. 23:5)? What did David mean when he said, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will *show them His covenant*' (Psalm 25:14)? What does

the Lord mean when He speaks of those who ‘take hold of my covenant’ (Isa. 56:4)? What does God mean when He says, ‘The covenant that was confirmed before of God is Christ’ (Gal. 3:17)?”

Not only is covenant the basis of God’s faithfulness, it is also the basis for dealing with the problems of our age. The problems of modernity that we face are not new. King Josiah faced the same problems in Israel (see II Kings 22, 23). There was the problem of idolatry (23:4, 5, 10, 12-14) and this idolatry was taking place within the temple of God! Baal, the god of wealth was a prominent heathen god worshipped by Israel. Baal, being the god of wealth has ruled America for decades. Many times he hasn’t fared so well on Wall Street, but he comes through the crisis and takes his seat again in the idolatrous temples of the land. There was the god Ashteroth (male) and Asheria (female), gods made of wood, from trees etc. These were the gods of fertility and sex. America has bowed to the god Ashteroth and sex has been defiled. It has been ripped out of its covenant context to be used and abused as an end in itself and has become corrupted and polluted. The god Ashteroth is alive and well in our land today. Then they worshiped the god Moloch (god of Ammon) and Chemosh (god of Moab). The words mean “king”. They were gods of power characterized by human sacrifice. Israel was condemned for “passing children through the fire,” human sacrifices to Chemosh and Moloch.

Our land is filled with temples of Moloch and Chemosh. We call them “abortion clinics” and there is no lack of priests and priestesses to serve them. David C. Reardon writes in *Aborted Women Silent No More*: “Abortion in America is a commodity, bought and sold for the convenience of the buyer and profit of the seller. Though abortion utilizes medical knowledge, it is not medical, that is, abortions are not being prescribed in order to heal the body or cure illnesses. Abortion providers have undertaken a major effort to cover up the morbidity and mortality rates of legal abortion. This deception has been easily achieved, with the cooperation of the courts, since there is no legal requirement to report abortion-related complications or to even record deaths resulting from abortion as such.” Thus, in America, Moloch and Chemosh are alive and well today. There was also the practice of Astrology with the “idolatrous priests the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and its constellations and to all the host of heaven” (ver. 5). How many Christians check their horoscope each morning? There was the practice of homo-sexuality in the temple of God. So ordaining homosexuals as ministers of God is nothing new. Concluding the list of sins among the people was the practice of the occult (ver. 24). The church may not have practicing witches and warlocks among its number, of which the world boasts, but there is a danger of a multitude of occult practices invading the church today.

In his book *Idols For Destruction* Herbert Schlossberg comments on the idolatry of Israel in these days. “When Israel fell into idolatry, it did not openly renounce the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in order to bow before the pagan shrines. Rather, the nation combined the old rituals with what it knew of Canaanite religion. We see this in the description of the religious revival under King Josiah (II Kings 23). The king commanded the priests to remove from the temple the vessels that had been introduced for the service of Baal and of the

heavenly bodies; he deposed the priests who burned incense to the pagan deities; he scattered the cult prostitutes; he desecrated the altar at which the people had adopted the Canaanite practice of burning their children as offers to Molech; he destroyed the high places, dedicated to Ashteroth, which had existed since the time of Solomon. In turning away from God, the nation had not fallen into irreligion, but had combined the temple religion with the pagan beliefs and practices of the surrounding peoples, the worship of God of the Exodus had been defiled by merging it with the worship of idols. When Judgment final came to the nation, it fell on the syncretistic perversion.”

How did king Josiah deal with this evil? He found the “Book of the Covenant” which had been lost for generations. He read it in the hearing of the people and applied its principles to the nation. The church is God’s “holy nation” (I Pet. 2:9), therefore, the modern church in America, as Christ’s ambassadors (II Cor. 5:20), should cease trying to make America a “Christian Nation” and rather concentrate on finding the lost covenant and making the church a “Covenant Nation.” It is by the blood of the eternal covenant that God equips his people in every good thing to do His will and work in them that which is pleasing in His sight (Heb. 13:20-21). It is because the church is a covenant people they are commanded “that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgiving, be made on behalf of all men; for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (I Tim. 2:1, 2). This is how the church is to affect and influence culture. Proverbs 16:7 states: “If a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” If and when the church is faithful God changes men. This is further illustrated in Acts 5:11-14: “Great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.” The church being faithful caused the culture around it to take note of what was happening. They even “dared to associate with them.” The world was afraid of the church! The people held the church in “high esteem.” Yet “all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly being added.” The church is in charge of culture. We don’t have to take over the government, we just need to find the lost covenant and apply it. When Jonah was obedient Assyria was converted. When Daniel and company stood in faith, Nebuchadnezzar converted. It was because Judah was wicked that the Babylonians conquered her. It was the faithfulness of the church that toppled the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:44). This is the result of covenant.

The church today has lost not only the book of the covenant, but the covenant itself has been lost. The concept of the covenant for the most part, is unknown in the average church today. The weekly diet of many Christians in the “relative up to date” church is a psychology of having our felt-needs met or in the “fundamentalist Bible believing” church a call to escape hell and get to heaven after death; these are “vampire Christians,” people who want a little blood for their sins but nothing more to do with Jesus until heaven. The bestselling books in the Christian bookstores today are books dealing with the intricate details of end-time prophecy. Our prayer today should be “Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ whom be glory forever, Amen” (Heb. 13:20, 21).