

## **Our Great Covenant With God**

**Intro: All of us are familiar with contracts or covenants. Some examples include a note at the bank or a service contract with a business; even marriage is a covenant. In each case, two or more parties join together in agreement to do certain things and receive certain things in return. Each party is bound to the conditions made known and agreed to in the covenant itself.**

**When we obey the gospel, we enter into a covenant with God. This covenant was of such importance that God spoke of it hundreds of years before it came into being.**

*Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord, I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (Jer. 31:31-34)*

### **Israel's First Covenant with God**

When you read this verse you can see that God had already entered a covenant of spiritual marriage with Israel.

At Sinai God lovingly made Israel His bride. He "took her by the hand and led her out of the land of Egypt".

God says, "I was a husband to her". In fact, He was the perfect husband, loving her completely and providing all her needs.

Yet in spite of God's love, Israel broke her vows (the covenant promises they had made), betraying her marital lord by turning to other lovers, the idols of men.

Thus, Israel was about to be divorced from the Lord, sent away because of her unfaithfulness. It was the tragic end to a beautiful wedding!

But what had gone wrong? Why had Israel become unfaithful? To answer that we must remember three things about this marriage contract:

God's law had been written on stones.

To say that the Law was written on stones is to say, God's word was set before them but not necessarily put within them! God made known to them what He required and preserved it in stone but that did not ensure the faithful performance of it!

The law that was before Israel never got inside of Israel's heart (Jer. 11:3-8). Divorce was the result!

The covenant was entered by physical birth necessitating that each generation had to be taught anew to know God.

The maintenance of the covenant was contingent upon teaching and re-teaching the Law to each new generation.

Israel's teachers became corrupt and failed to teach her why to love the Lord and how to serve Him (Cf. Jer. 23:9). Divorce was the result!

The basis of the union was animal sacrifice.

On the basis of nothing more than the cleansing of animal blood was Israel cleansed and made the Lord's bride.

Soon the bride began to think that offering themselves were sufficient to maintain the marriage rather than repent of sin and obey the will of her husband. This attitude resulted in continued sin. Separation from God was inevitable!

Thus, the marriage of God and Israel came to an angry end with Israel being put away for her unfaithfulness. And if we left it there, it would indeed be a sad story of a failed marriage; but God's promise in Jeremiah 31 anticipates reconciliation.

### **Israel's New Covenant with God**

If we follow the story carefully, we'll see that God proposes again to His estranged bride. He offers to take her back—to enter a “new covenant” with her.

But what would ensure that this marriage would not end the same way? What was it about this covenant that was different?

The husband would give the greatest possible display of His love!

The basis of this union was not be the sacrifice of animals but instead the sacrifice of God's own son! Decisively and forever God would deal with the grounds of his estrangement to His bride. He would Himself provide a sacrifice that would remove sin once and for all from His bride to be.

“I will forgive their iniquity and their sins I will remember no more”.

Consequent the basis of the union would be the greatest possible display of God's love for His bride.

The bride would enter the marriage with the knowledge of the greatnesses of her husband's love.

In this new covenant Israel would not have to be taught to “know the Lord” but would in fact already “know Him” through His great sacrificial love. Those who entered into this “new covenant” would come with the knowledge of His great love and grace.

Because of the husband's great love, the bride would love and serve her husband from the heart.

I will write my laws in their heart! That is to say, the bride would not merely see the law of God on stone, but experience the love of God in her heart and responding to it, love God in return.

And when the love of God is in one's heart, then the law of God is also already there as the expression of love.

And this time God announces that the marriage will never end! Instead the story is, "they shall live happily everafter". What God envisioned for Israel was a marriage of love based on His great love that would cause them to never want to turn to any other. His love would be so great that no other lover could begin to compare.

But how were and are these promises of God fulfilled? If we sang, "Here comes the bride, who would that bride be?"

### **The church is the Bride!**

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:25-27)*

God's new covenant with Israel was fulfilled when Jews accepted the good news that Jesus died for their sins. God's new covenant also includes Gentiles who come to Christ. The church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have entered a new covenant with God.

Three important lessons to remember

We have a God who loved us enough to provide an everlasting relationship with Him through the blood of His son. No matter what we must face in life, we always have this great truth to comfort and encourage us.

Our knowledge of God's great sacrifice is the motivation to leave what the world offers behind and serve Him. I can hardly imagine a bride who happily enter a marriage in which the only motivation was fear of what the prospective husband would do if she didn't!

We should love God and seek to please Him for the sake of His great love for us. If we truly grasp what he has done we will seek every day to do His will and never leave Him for anything or anyone! If we fail to fulfill our covenant responsibilities, we show a great disregard for the Lord and what He did for us!

*How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:29)*

Conclusion: So the “new covenant” is really the beginning of a new love story between God and His people, one in which he made ultimate sacrifice to win our hearts forever.

When today we took the Lord’s Supper did you remember His words, “This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sin”. This gathering every week is intended to keep our love alive by being reminded of His great love.

This covenant is entered with God personally and individually. You will have to make that covenant with God yourself. In gospel obedience you may enter that covenant with God.