

On the Same Page

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,”
(Hebrews 10:23-24 NAS95)

Covenant

It is said that we live in a transactional age. I suppose that there can be “fair” transactions, that is, deals that are struck that are good for both parties. But often, transactions are enacted with carrots and sticks. You might agree to a deal based not on what you might gain, but rather on what you hope to avoid.

Covenants are not mere transactions. They are relationships. They are a special kind of relationship, one in which both parties have an expectation of “winning” in the end. Marriage-as-covenant is an example of this, whereby we pledge ourselves to one another for the good of both, being able to enjoy more and accomplish more as a united couple than alone. Of course, love is the oil that aids this relationship.

But I want to talk about the covenantal nature of the believer’s and the church’s relationship to God. Let me give you some Biblical background.

The form of covenants in the OT can be traced to a pattern of covenant used in the greater region at the time called “suzerain/vassal treaties.” There is a great king, and there is a subdued people. According to the terms of this relationship, the king pledges himself to be the king of this people whom he has spared, perhaps cared for, and will offer protection even as the people agree to the stipulations of the covenant, or following the king’s rules. God is not bound by this form, but He uses it, even as He uses human language, to accommodate Himself to us and our understanding.

Unsurprisingly, God is the Great King. God entered into covenant relationship with Israel, a slave people whom God would come to regard as His own people. The blessings of fruitfulness and security would flow to them even as they pledged to “have no other gods before Me” and to “make no graven images” and refuse to “take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Included here would be the other stipulations of the old covenant found in Exodus and Leviticus (and repeated in Numbers and Deuteronomy).

This is good for God, not that He needs anything, being Self-sufficient, but according to His desire to form a people for Himself. This is good for the people, because as sinners, they are a mess without Him and stand under His judgment, not His favor. They now become the beneficiaries of being counted as His subjects and His children. They



Forever-Family Fellowship

We will teach and practice truth-and-love relationships with brothers-sisters in Christ that must survive/thrive in the present because we believe that these relationships will last forever

All-Week-Long Worship

As the local body of believers gathers each Sunday for worship, **we will inspire a worship experience for all age groups that will travel with you all week long.** What we do on Sunday will assist you in your singing, in your praying, in your devotion, and in your witness.

Conversely, it is as you worship all-week-long that you will be prepared to enter into gathered worship on Sunday.

Day-to-Day Discipleship

As followers of Christ, we are disciples every single day. Respect for and commitment to Scripture is essential. **We will show you how to interact with and respond to God's Word, both as individuals, and in groups.**

Moment-by-Moment Mission

God, the Architect of the world and of our lives arranges appointments and interruptions. Each of us is called to represent His Son for the glory of His Name. **We will cultivate a mind-set for moment-by-moment mission, whether close to home, or far away.**

are grateful for His grace, and express that gratefulness through obedience.

Except they didn't. And so it seems to be a covenant "on hold;" an interrupted covenant. Scripture seems to indicate that God will keep His promises to this people, but based on a New Covenant and according to the terms of this New Covenant.

In the New Covenant, the Great King sends His Holy Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people. Due to this sacrifice, the covenant is "kept," not by the people, but by the Son. God keeps His part, and then, through the Son, He keeps our part as well.

There is one act that Christ does not undertake for us. That is our acceptance of the terms of the covenant, or believing in Jesus. There is no entrance into the covenant apart from faith in Christ.

But we must be clear about what is involved in this faith or receiving. It is true faith and a full receiving. It is not a gesture, but an embrace. It is not an add-on, but a replacement. Jesus becomes to us "wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30 NAS95)

This receiving is described in two parts: "if you 1) confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and 2) believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9 NAS95) We do not believe with our mouths, but with our hearts, from which deeds of gratefulness flow. No grateful deeds, no faith; and no faith, no entrance into the covenant, which is your only lasting and eternal good.

Ordinary by Michael Horton

Christians should be some of the most conflicted people in the world. It is far simpler to be dead to God and to live for oneself. But Christians must struggle against their selfish ambition because they are alive to God in Christ Jesus, and the indwelling Spirit turns on the lights to enable them to see their sin.

Notes:

Sunday school classes for adults and youth meet each week at 10 a.m.

Caroling takes place at American House this Sunday, Dec 15, at 3 p.m.

Our Daily Bread devotionals for Dec-Feb are available in the church lobby

Christmas Sundays, Dec 8,15,22; Christmas Eve service, Dec 24, 6 p.m.

Weekly Worship @ 11:00 a.m.

Last Sunday, December 8, our first Christmas message searched out the meaning of the Christmas star and explored the Bible and finds a story-thread that will reach the conclusion that "**Jesus is the Star of the Show**" (Isaiah 14 and Numbers 24). [Listen to the message here](#)

This Sunday, December 15, our second Christmas message seeks to see how shepherds are an integral part of the Bible's story, from beginning to end. We will see that God has always intended for His people to be shepherded; how there are good shepherds and bad; and how there are lesser shepherds and the Great Shepherd. I'll call this message "**As Shepherds Watched the Baby.**"

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