

The Bible: A Love Story

Pt 3: Reconciliation - the New Covenant

In the first two messages of this series, we saw that the Israelites were incapable of remaining faithful to their marriage vows made at Mt Sinai to their spiritual husband, Yahweh.

Why was this so? Did it mean that the Israelites were 'a bad lot' - a nation totally undeserving of God's love? The answer is, of course, 'yes and no'. Undeserving of God's love? Absolutely - in common with every other individual and nation on earth! 'A bad lot'? Certainly no worse than any other nation! In short - they were simply human - the same as all others (and, in fact, better (humanly speaking), than many)!

What made the difference between Israel and the other nations could not be found within the nation itself: it was due wholly to the nature and identity of her God! Yahweh Himself - the Almighty *Elohim* - had graciously chosen to enter into a relationship with this tiny nation - for reasons we've discussed in the first message of this series: *Israel - a nation chosen by God*.

And what a relationship! So loving and intimate (potentially) that it is symbolised in Scripture as a

(spiritual marriage) between a husband (Yahweh) and wife Israel).

However, as we said a little earlier, the Israelites were merely human - and this lay at the root of the marital infidelity and betrayal on their part - Israel's inability to honour the contract she had made with her divine husband - namely: an inability to keep the law!

As we saw in the previous two messages , the law represented the obligations of the bride under the terms of the *Ketubah* - the *book of the (marriage) covenant*). If we examine its wording carefully, we see that, in this context (and there are others) it constituted nothing less than a declaration to the bridegroom of love and faithfulness on the part of the bride.

Under such terms, she would love and adore her husband alone (1st commandment), she would rid herself of any mementos of other men (2nd commandment), she would always act in complete sincerity in relation to her betrothed (3rd commandment), she would spend precious time with Him (4th commandment) and she would seek to please only Him by living in the way that pleased Him (commandments 5-10).

This is what makes God's law so unique - and explains why man's adherence to a moral code (no

matter how well-intentioned or maintained) can ever please God! *The whole point* of the law lies, not so much in what is done (or not done), but in *why* it is done! It was, in Israel's case, a declaration of love - the voluntary submission of a loving bride devoted to her beloved husband - and nothing less!!

Let's look at the nature of God's law by contrasting it with human law - the *law of the land*!

As with God's law, keeping the law of the land certainly involves submission and obedience to a higher authority - but there the *essential* resemblance ends! And in one very vital respect:

Man obeys human law (with rare exceptions) for one of two reasons - as Paul points out in [Romans 13:5](#)

Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

According to this passage, the human being firstly obeys human law because he/she wishes to avoid the penalties incurred when we transgress the law! The second reason one will often strictly obey a legal and moral code is as a matter of conscience - doing the *right* thing and feeling good about oneself - as well experiencing the very

natural satisfaction (in some cases) of helping others.

So what's the problem? Just this - that what man does *not* do - *cannot* do - is live a moral life *as a result of* (or even *in_order to show*) *love for God!* How can this be the motivation when he has no relationship with God? When he doesn't know God? When, in fact, his whole nature instinctively rejects any impulse to submit to God ([Rom. 8:7-8](#))?

But it's the inward motivation of the heart that God is interested in! Remember that when Yahweh gave the law, it was in the context of a marriage vow! *It was designed to be the outward expression of a loving inward response* - a means by which man (specifically Israel at that time) was to show that love which would naturally lead to a willing submission to God's wishes and display an earnest desire to be like Him and follow - much like a young bride with her beloved!

So then Israel, in her natural state devoid of spiritual life, could not keep the Old Covenant - the terms of the marriage contract between her and Yahweh. She could not remain faithful to her *husband* as evidenced by her consistent violation of the *Ketubah* - a violation that manifested itself in moral corruption and idol worship.

Because of this, intimacy with her husband was impossible and a spiritual divorce inevitable. Though continuing to go through an outward show of honouring God, coldness of heart was inescapable ([Matt.15:8](#)) and legalism replaced love and devotion.

In other words - when confronted with God Himself, the Jews demonstrated that their outward obedience to the Torah was pure legalism - not based on love. In fact - quite the opposite! Jesus, in connection with the world generally (then expressed in Israel's attitude) levelled this damning accusation:

[John 15:24](#)

..... they have hated both me and my Father.

Israel couldn't do it! And this inability to love God and be faithful to His wishes is a characteristic of sinful, fallen mankind! Because all have sinned - both Jew and Gentile. It's in our nature!

[Romans 8:7-8](#)

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. **8** Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

A New Covenant was therefore needed - one that contained a different set of conditions! This was the lesson to be learnt by the giving of the Old! A

way had to be found to enable Israel to fulfil her side of any contract that could bring God and man together.

The blessed news for the nation of Israel (and for us at the present time) is that God promised such a New Covenant (Testament) through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:31-32

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. [32] It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, ” declares the Lord.

Here Yahweh explains just what this New Covenant will entail:

Jer.31:33-34

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. [34]For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Notice that this Covenant was to be unconditional - one containing no requirements that would have to be met by mankind. In fact the Scriptures tell us that if the possibility of such a covenant had existed (i.e. based on any degree of law-keeping) then Israel (and we) would have been certainly held to it.

Galatians 3:21 if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

No - this New Covenant was to be a totally one-sided contract - in which God Himself would fulfil all the conditions imposed on both parties (in effect, the condition of perfect (and eternal) love, faithfulness and righteousness - originally required of the bride!

Keeping this in mind, how could this possibly be achieved? Sin would need to be forgiven, an absolute devotion to God would be necessary (coming from the heart) and there would have to be no possibility of this Covenant ever being broken - as happened with the first Covenant!

All of this was to be made possible under the conditions of the New Covenant! The reason? *The New Covenant bore a different signature!!*

Remember how every Covenant was signed in blood? Well, as we saw in a previous message, it was this signature in blood that validated the contract. And therefore (as it is with contracts today) a contract was only as reliable as the signature.

On Israel's side, under the Old Covenant, their performance was being guaranteed solely by animal blood - symbolic of the natural life and energy of the flesh ([Lev.17:11](#)). It was therefore a Covenant consequently doomed to failure:

[Hebrews 10:4](#)

It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Moses (symbolic of natural man under the law - [John 1:17](#)) was the mediator of the Old Covenant and he used the blood of animals! It had to fail because human effort could *never* satisfy God's righteous requirements!

But with the New Covenant, Christ Himself - the *only* one who could actually bring God and man together ([1 Tim.2:5](#)) became the Mediator of this New Covenant ([Heb.9:15](#)). And as mediator, he didn't sign this Covenant with animal blood but with his own blood!

1 Corinthians 11:25

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant *in my blood*;

In thus shedding his blood, Christ satisfied God's righteous requirements on the one hand, and met man's need for this required righteousness on the other.

In other words, God Himself actually met *all* the conditions for the successful honouring of this New Covenant. Not just on His side (as He always had done) but also those imposed on His bride (eternal love and sinless perfection)!

Christ appending his signature in blood to the New Covenant is tantamount to guaranteeing that everything promised in this Covenant would be accomplished and ratified by his death! That signature made the contract eternally valid!

Hebrews 8:6

[6] But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.(see also Heb.12:23-24).

For the new Covenant to take effect (joining God and man in peaceful union - whether the natural

nation of Israel or the spiritual nation of the Church) two conditions would have to be met as set out in [Jeremiah 31](#).

1. Sins would need to be forgiven: ("I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.")

2. A new nature would need to be imparted - one that would naturally have the determination and desire to do the husband's will ("I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts").

The Lord's death made these two things possible - two conditions that are present realities for us in the Church today and will be future realities in the earthly nation of Israel!

Forgiveness and cleansing - together with the acquisition of a new mind and heart! Let's consider each in turn.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

This New Covenant would need to provide for the forgiveness and cleansing of sin - and indeed it does:

Hebrews 9:15

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive

the promised eternal inheritance---now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

This freedom from the guilt of sin would apply in three respects:

(i) The guilt of original sin, attributed to us as a consequence of our identification with Adam would have to be expunged. John heralded this aspect of the coming work of Christ when he announced:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the *sin of the world!* (John 1:29) (*italics mine.*)

(ii) The guilt of individual sin (Jew and Gentile alike: Rom.3:22b-23) would need to be erased. Accordingly, John tells us that:

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (1 Jhn 2:2.)

(iii) The curse Israel was under because of her initial violation of the law given on Mt Sinai would need to be annulled.. In fact, the keeping of the old contract would have to be revoked as a precondition for righteousness on the part of Israel! How Christ accomplished this was nothing

less than a miracle of God's wisdom, love and grace!

Firstly Christ fulfilled the purpose for which the law was given by meeting all its requirements in every area. In life he satisfied the stipulations of the law by living a life of sinless perfection. In death, having become sin for us, he paid the due penalty for this sin as required by that same law.([Romans 10:4](#)).

In other words, by meeting all the requirement of the law, Christ effectively removed the (keeping of) law as a pre-requisite for righteousness on the part of Israel (and us)! He did so by passing on his *resurrected* life to all who would receive him by faith. This life has *already* fulfilled the law in every respect - already paid the penalty demanded by a *broken* law and has consequently triumphed over death.

Therefore in removing the law *as a standard to be kept by man*, Israel's Messiah effectively dissolved the Old Covenant - thus dissolving forever a *marriage* based on human loyalty and effort!

In fact, the Scripture tells us that, in effect, Christ took the broken *Ketubah* (marriage contract [Book of the Covenant]) and did away with it by nailing it to his cross.

In the words of [Colossians 2:14](#),
having canceled the charge of our (i.e. Israel's)
legal indebtedness, which stood against us and
condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to
the cross.

IMPARTING OF A NEW NATURE

This aspect of the work of the Cross is of course
co-incident with the forgiveness of sins which
makes possible the consequent (and
simultaneous) renewal by the Holy Spirit:

[Titus 3:5](#)

[5]..... He saved us through the washing of rebirth
and renewal by the Holy Spirit

The problem with the Old Covenant was that the
Israelites weren't indwelt by the Spirit of God;
they were operating purely in energy of flesh. So,
for them to be reconciled to God, to be able to
remain faithful, forgiveness and a new spirit was
required! Rebirth and renewal would take place
upon their reception of the Messiah who had come
primarily to reconcile with His estranged wife by
the mediation of this New Covenant. As he said to
the Gentile woman:

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”
([Matthew 15:24](#))

And again in [Luke 19:10](#)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Lit: “*that which had been lost*”)

At Pentecost, Peter (prematurely) believed that the giving of the Holy Spirit was indeed a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy concerning Israel, when he stood up and proclaimed:

.....this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: [17] “ 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams ([Acts 2:16-17](#)).

But it was not to be for Israel at that time. Bound up in legalistic pride, she failed to recognize or accept her Messiah who had come to reconcile with her ([John 1:11](#), [Luke 19:44](#); [Matt.23:37](#)).

So the New Covenant couldn't be enacted with Israel at that time! In failing to recognize Christ, she in fact had him crucified. Ironically (and tragically), the erring wife had put to death the only one who could mediate the New Covenant with her:

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus ([1 Timothy 2:5](#))

And so Israel must now wait! Wait until her Messiah returns - and that will not happen until she is ready to welcome him. As Christ said in [Matt.23:39](#)

you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' ”

Then will come the Great Day of Atonement. Then the remnant of the bride ([Zech.13:8](#); [Rom.9:27](#)) will finally (and tearfully) recognize and welcome the one they had wilfully rejected ([Zech.12:10](#)). Then the miracle of forgiveness and regeneration foretold in [Jeremiah's](#) description of the New Covenant, will become a reality for the nation ([Ezek.37:9-14](#)).

So Yahweh will be reconciled to His wife who, under the fulfilled conditions of the New Covenant (sins forgiven and a new life in Christ via the Holy Spirit) will then be enabled to remain faithful to her loving husband.

As [Jeremiah 31:22](#) says:

How long will you wander, unfaithful Daughter Israel? The Lord will create a new thing on earth--- *the woman will return to the man.*” (italics mine).

We detailed in the last message (*Adultery and Divorce*) some of the many verses where Yahweh

promises to reconcile with His wife. Here are just a few:

“Return, faithless people,” declares the Lord (Yahweh) “for I am your husband. I will choose you - one from a town and two from a clan - and bring you to Zion ([Jer. 3:14](#))

“In that day,” declares the Lord, “you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' ” ([Hosea 2:16](#)).

[Ezekiel 16:60](#)

Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you (see also [Jeremiah 31:31-33](#)).

..I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. [7] She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.' ([Hosea 2:6](#))

I repeat what was said in the last message:

'..... ever since the Babylonian captivity ended in 531 BC, we have witnessed a situation unique among the nations. Although Israel has been scattered, she has, for two-and-a-half millennia,

retained her distinct identity. Jews all over the world have at no time adopted any other religion or been assimilated into any other country - never 'found another lover' - so to speak! A Jew is still a Jew and their identity as a race is still effectively synonymous with their religion of Judaism! Israel has truly been surrounded by 'thornbushes' and has had her path blocked'.

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince (time of the Gentiles) without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. [5] Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days ([Hosea 3:4-5](#)).

This reconciliation will take place on the *Day of Atonement* when Christ returns. The Lord Himself assures Israel that she will be lovingly restored at this future time:

For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. "Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood. For your Maker is your husband---the Lord Almighty is his name---the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the

God of all the earth. The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit---a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God ([Isa.54:3-6](#)).

"I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. [20] I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord. [23] I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'" ([Hosea 2:19-20,23](#))

One last question remains in connection with the Old Covenant: Did God *know* that the original marriage contract was doomed to failure? Of course He did! Then why did He go through the formality of a conditional marriage contract if He well knew that it was something impossible to fulfil on Israel's part?

The answer is clear! He had no other choice given the reality of sin and the gift of free-will enjoyed by His creation!

To understand this, we need to really grasp the implications of free-will! God never forces Himself on human beings. Everywhere and always He makes us responsible for our own choices and

gives us the prerogative to determine our own destinies. This is genuine freedom and is entirely consistent with the nature and character of God.

Now, for choice to be genuine, there must be alternatives available from which the choice is made; therefore there must be transparency! In other words, one must also be made aware of the consequences pursuant to that choice (i.e. it must be a *considered* choice). That's why God, in the OT and NT alike, consistently presents alternatives and makes very clear the consequences of each (Isa.1:5, 18-20; Deut.30:19; Jhn 5:40; Rom.3:25-26)

And such was the case with the Old Covenant. Israel itself (and we today who are to learn from their example) - needed to clearly understand the impossibility of a relationship with God in our natural state! The Israelites' response to the Divine conditions was - give humanity's deluded confidence in its own ability - quite predictable:

Exodus 24:3

When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."

But just not possible! Not under the terms of the Old Covenant! No relationship with God could be

viable because man couldn't love God enough to remain faithful to Him by honouring the conditions stipulated in the Ketubah: by keeping the law, if you will! It was clearly demonstrated by Yahweh in the Old Covenant that there had to be another way - a relationship with God that was not based on man's ability to keep the law. This was the lesson Jehovah wished to teach Israel - and it furnished the rationale for the New Covenant established by the death of her coming Messiah!

To take this a little further, what could not change between the Old Covenant and a proposed New Covenant was this: if Israel was to have a relationship with Yahweh (and if we are to have a relationship with God right now), that relationship would have to be based on the same basic premise as with the Old Covenant: the voluntary and total submission of the *bride* to her *husband* evidenced by her loving him dearly and obeying His wishes as set out in the law.

And these requirements could not change, so any Covenant pursuant to the first, would of necessity have to make it possible for man to satisfy them. The relationship would still have to be based on mutual love - displayed our part by genuine, willing submission to our beloved stemming from unfeigned love which would be exhibited in steadfast obedience to the law!

And such a New Covenant was promised! And so the reasons for the death of the Messiah become evident! Forgiveness and rebirth through faith - resulting in the impartation of the life of Christ: the only life that could (and did) satisfy all the original requirements of sinless perfection and love for God demanded under the terms of the Old Covenant.

May God bless His Word to each one of us! Amen.