

The Pledge of Service & Protection

The Kingdom and the Covenant, Session 14

Review

- This series began with study of God's kingdom
 - refers to God's reign & sovereignty
 - currently exists as a realm into which people can enter; in future will be universal, encompass entire spiritual & physical realms
- God is supreme; has absolute authority & ultimate control of everything that occurs
- The Bible is our handbook for life in God's kingdom
- Characteristics of Satan's kingdom & his defeat
- Jesus' kingdom parables identify important characteristics of God's kingdom
- We currently enter God's kingdom by entering relationship with him through new covenant
- A covenant is a loving, enduring relationship in which each partner focuses on the other's well-being and success, including what they deserve, need or want
 - it's a legally acknowledged relationship based on terms which define its purposes & requirements for those who enter it
- The primary purpose of the new covenant is to restore our relationship with God
 - it also restores his image & likeness in us, which in turn prepares us to serve effectively in his kingdom
- Jesus, the Son of Man, entered the new covenant in humanity's behalf, because only a sinless human could remain totally faithful to the covenant
 - his death for the world's sin makes it possible for us to enter the new covenant
- Requirements we must satisfy to enter the new covenant
 - repentance – change the way we think; make it compatible with his methods, laws, standards & nature
 - accept his offer of salvation
 - cause our faith in him to motivate what we do
 - obey what he says; includes faithfulness
- We take a oath of faithfulness to our covenant partner by declaring that Jesus is our Lord
- Covenant element of shared identity
 - the Son of God took on our identity by becoming the Son of Man, human in every respect except sinless
 - we take on God's identity by becoming increasingly like Jesus
- Relationship, death to self-centeredness (individualism, independence)
- Evidence of the covenant: becoming increasingly like our elder brother Jesus & live a life that honors & pleases our heavenly Father
- Shared purpose & authority: having our names changed in covenant is evidence we're authorized to act in God's behalf, that we share his purpose & authority

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Bible Study

- 1 Sam 18:3-4, ³ “And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.”
 - “made a covenant” is from Heb *karath berith*, which literally means “cut covenant”
 - The belt held cloak or armor together, & held money, tools, dagger sheath, sword, arrow quiver
 - Exchanging belts represented pledging all of one’s strength, support, skills & abilities
- Pledge of service in new covenant
 - Eph 1:19, “... and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.”
 - Eph 3:20, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us”
 - Eph 6:10, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”
 - 2 Co 12:10, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
 - How does this relate to the practice of exchanging belts?
 - Paul’s perspective: I delight in these problems, because they make room for God’s strength
 - Mt 6:31-33, ³¹ “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
 - How does God serve us in covenant according to this passage?
 - Jn 16:33(c), “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
 - “trouble” (Gk, n, *thlipsis*): distress; affliction (KJV: “tribulation”)
 - What covenant service did Jesus provide?
 - Lk 18:42, “Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.’”
 - “healed” (Gk, v, *sozo*): rescue, save, heal
 - How should we respond when we’re faced with difficulties or health problems?
 - God serves us in covenant by providing the help we need; in part by healing us, rescuing or delivering us from affliction
- 1 Sam 18:4, Jonathan gave David his weapons – his sword & bow – representing a pledge of protection
 - A covenant partner pledges himself unto death for the other’s security & well-being

- Pledge of protection in new covenant
 - Gk word *sozo* also means to save, to rescue from danger, destruction, harm, loss
 - Eph 2:8, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”
 - What does this verse tell us about our salvation?
 - Which of God’s character traits motivated him to save us, according to this verse?
 - According to this verse, how do we receive our salvation?
 - Matt 14:30, “But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’”
 - What kind of “saving” did Peter need in this case?
 - Matt 24:22, “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”
 - What kind of *sozo* is this?
 - Rom 5:9, “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”
 - What kind of *sozo* does this verse describe?
 - How should we face danger, once we realize *sozo* deliverance is readily available?
 - Rom 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - Gal 1:14, “... who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age.”
 - What does it mean, Jesus “gave himself”?
 - What benefit do we receive from his death, according to this verse?
 - Gal 3:13, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”
 - What does this verse say Jesus protected us from?
 - 2 Co 10:3-5, ³ “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
 - What does the world use weapons to do?
 - “stronghold” (Gk, n, *ochyroma*): a strongly fortified defensive or military structure
 - “argument” (Gk, n, *logismos*): a proposition arrived at by human reasoning
 - “pretension” (Gk, n, *hypsoma*): lofty opinion or claim
 - Whose “every thought” do we take captive?

- The only power Satan has over us is that of persuasion
- If he can get us to focus on him, he's accomplished two things:
 - he's receiving our worship because we're preoccupied with him; preoccupation is essence of worship
 - he's distracted us from dealing with our biggest problem: our own sinful ways of thinking
- Eph 6:17, "... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
 - Jesus defeated our enemy, so we use God's word to limit Satan's work
- Jesus delivered us from danger by defeating our spiritual enemy, Satan
- It's our job to enforce that victory by demolishing our ways of thinking we value so highly & strongly protect, that conflict with what God says & shows us
- Related point
 - Mt 5:44, "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."
 - Ro 12:19-20, ¹⁹ "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.'"
 - How do these passages relate to covenant protection (exchanging weapons)?
 - Because God pledges in covenant to protect us, we're to do 2 things:
 - rely on him to protect us
 - demolish our strongholds of thinking & self-centered attitudes that insist we protect ourselves
- Any time it seems God isn't responding to our problems by providing whatever help we need, keep in mind that he sometimes uses our problems to develop us, strengthen us, purify us or teach us important spiritual principles such as the benefits of perseverance
- He always does what's best for us in the long term

Questions

- What kingdom responsibilities or obligations does this impose on us?
- How must this affect our thinking?
- How does this enable us to be more effective in the kingdom?

Conclusion

- Because God made covenant with us, he responds immediately when we need help, deliverance or protection