

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc.

Advent 4 Sunday Sermon on 2017-12-24

Jesus Came to Bring us into His Covenant

by Fr Reed Merino

John 1:10-14 "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." [PART of Christmas Gospel reading]

In this celebration of the incarnation of the Son of God, the question I want to address for today is, "WHY did Jesus become a human being?". John answers that question in part by saying, "... as many as received him, to them He gave the power **to become the sons of God.**" But that raises yet another question: "Just HOW do we become 'Sons of God'?"

One aspect of that answer has to do with what the Scriptures call a "covenant," or "testament."

1. In Genesis 17:7 we read, "And I will establish **my covenant** between me and you, and your offspring after you, throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

[In reading the Scriptures carefully, we see that the only relation offered by the only God that actually exists is that of a "covenant" form of relationship. Covenants from God were never negotiated: you accepted all of its detail, or you were not allowed into it by God. This is the same for the NEW Covenant as well.]

2. Deuteronomy 5:1 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the **statutes and the rules that I speak** in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and **be careful to do them.** 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3 Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today.

[The Old Covenant indeed included a personal relationship with God (a relationship of "faith" and "love"), but it also came with quite specific required beliefs and commitments – read Leviticus and Deuteronomy to see just HOW detailed. But the NEW covenant, brought by the Son of God, ALSO has numerous significant details: EVERY command, teaching and promise of Jesus and His chosen apostles

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forms the content of the New Covenant. And those detailed commands, teachings and promises are EVERY bit as binding as the details of the Mosaic law were to Israel. The Sermon on the Mount, for example is as “non-negotiable” as was the numerous details of the Mosaic Law. For us to say, for example, that the New Covenant simply means to “follow the Golden Rule” shows how ignorant we are about Jesus or His Father, or about GOD’S way of salvation.]

3. Covenants contain both promised blessings AND promised punishments. Listen to Deuteronomy 28: 14 “So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them. 15 “But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: ... 58 If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are **written in this book**, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, 59 then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues — great and prolonged plagues — and serious and prolonged sicknesses. 60 Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. 61 Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. 62 You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. 63 And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing...”

[God spelled out in horrifying and SPECIFIC detail what would be the consequences of ignoring Him and disobeying Him: I only quoted above the GENERAL descriptions. The devout Jew in the time of Jesus knew that the God who promised such punishment meant what He said. The ancestors of that devout Jew had actually experienced some of those horrible details, and his NEXT generation would experience even MORE horrible portions of that promised punishment in 70 & 132 A.D. when they rebelled against Rome, and were utterly destroyed as a nation. But what most of Christendom’s “Christians” have virtually NEVER heard, is that **God has not changed His attitude toward those who enter the NEW Covenant:**]

God tells us in Hebrews 10 that, “28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How **much**

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worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

4. Both Old and New Covenants include a Spirit-produced Book to which loyalty and obedience are required:

Exodus 24 ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the **Book of the Covenant** and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and **we will be obedient.**" ⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Revelation 22 ¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him **the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life**, from the holy city, and from **the things which are written in this book.**

[To be on GOD'S way of salvation, and become free from the destiny of this world's "god," we must also commit ourselves to learn **and act** upon what is contained in God's "Covenant Book."]

5. In God's Covenant He makes WONDERFUL promises, but ONLY if you are serious about obeying its details:

Exodus 19 ⁵ Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant**, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." [He also included promises of victory, healing, protection...]

Luke 1 ⁶⁷ Now his [John's] father Zacharias was filled with Holy Spirit and prophesied saying: ⁶⁸ 'Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel, because He has visited and provided redemption for His people; ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of

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deliverance for us in the house of His servant David ⁷⁰ — just as He spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from antiquity— ⁷¹ deliverance from our enemies and out of the hand of all who hate us ⁷² to use mercy with our fathers, even to remember His Holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath that He swore to our father Abraham; ⁷⁴ to grant to us (having been rescued from the hand of our enemies) **to serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life’.** [If you are NOT committed to a life of Biblical holiness and goodness, you are NOT yet in the covenant that leads to freedom from Satan’s destiny and that leads to the paradise of God.]

6. IF you have entered into GOD’S covenant, something has happened in your heart and your mind that you can remember. Conversely, if it has NOT happened, you are not yet in His covenant. And, once again, remember that the only salvation and union with God that He is offering comes as this covenant containing His SPECIFIC detail.

Acts 8 “¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[Among His most wonderful of promises is the personal, experienced and remembered Pentecost.]

Hebrews 8: ¹⁰ (quoting Jeremiah 31: ³³) “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: ***I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts,*** and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.”

[Has this happened to YOU?]

When you have truly entered God’s NEW Covenant, you will quickly develop a confidence that you are INDEED His, that your relationship with Him is built upon solid rock, and that no matter how you may fail, you are still yoked to Him forever. His salvation requires a sincere consecration to Him, but it is WELL worth it! Amen? So, please, PLEASE look at the DETAILS of what Jesus and his apostles have taught, and pledge yourself to believe, receive and obey ALL of them (even if you cannot imagine yourself

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succeeding in doing so). Anything other than that kind of surrender does not make you a required “disciple” of Jesus.