

The Two Becomes One

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When God finds the vessel He wants, He then secures a covenant with them. The term covenant is the strongest form of bonding recorded in biblical times. It is not a contract or a simple agreement, nor is it a treaty between two parties. Rather it presupposes two or more parties coming together to form a single entity based on very specific purposes. It is in this deep union God chooses to reveal Himself and work with man.

God's process of covenant most always begins with an introduction where He reveals aspects of Himself to the potential covenant partner. When the potential covenant partner is in complete awe of God, He then takes them to the next phase. The second phase is negotiating and accepting the terms of covenant. Covenants are negotiated. All interested parties must agree on the terms; including promises, stipulations, privileges, responsibility and consequences.

A careful study of the formation of the nation of Israel shows God at work. He chose a vessel as discussed in the previous chapter then began to do a work that was bigger than any one man could ever imagine. The following narrative as a template for how He introduces Himself and then binds Himself to a partner via covenant.

God first introduced Himself to Abram and sent him to Canaan with wonderful covenant promises. See Genesis 12:2-3. When he arrived at the destination, God added another layer to his promise, giving him the entire land of Canaan as an inheritance (Genesis 12:7). What was his responsibility now that he was in the land? Walk the length and breadth of the land to lay claim to it with a network of altars. He was also to teach his household after the ways of God. God waited for Abram to fulfil these requirements before moving on to the final stage of Abram's destiny – having biological children.

God introduced Himself personally to the three patriarchs as the God Almighty. To Isaac, He introduced himself as the God of his father Abraham. To Jacob, He called Himself the God of Abraham and Isaac. Later, after Jacob knew and could differentiate between Him and all the other gods, God called himself "the God who met you at Bethel." He was careful to be known by the people expected to walk with Him.

It is their descendants God delivered from Egypt and brought to himself at Mount Sinai after testing and proving Himself to them at the waters of Marah and again between Elim and Sinai. The first test addressed their thirst for water. The second test addressed their need for food. He provided both for this vast group of people in the dry and barren wilderness. Later, He would tell their descendants He is the Living Water and the Bread of Life.

Although God had the platform to legally claim the descendant of Abraham as His own through the covenant initiated with the patriarchs, He needed to covenant Himself with this new people. Covenants are very specific and are designed to fulfill specific purposes. The old covenant with the patriarchs did not cover them fulfilling His purposes in the nations. It stipulated He would give them the land and to bless all the nations of the earth through them. For that purpose, God would need to personally introduce Himself again to this nation to make covenant with them.

This process began with Moses. We see God working behind the scenes in Moses' life preparing him for 80 years. His first 40 years were spent immersed in the Egyptian culture seeing the world through the eyes of an Egyptian. This was necessary for him to understand the mindset and cultural constraints of the people he was to lead. The next 40 years were spent in the wilderness being stripped of that same

Egyptian mindset and self-dependency so God could effectively use him. He had to learn the ways of the wilderness as he was going to be there with a vast multitude of people leading them for the next 40 years.

God took covenant with Moses to another level. It was necessary for Moses to learn more about this God. Where the patriarchs were enamored by their Almighty God, Moses needed more. God revealed Himself to Moses with a name not mentioned before in scripture. He called Himself the I AM.

He began the introduction in Egypt to clearly differentiate Himself from all the other gods. Jehovah was careful to demonstrate to His vast audience that He knew that the gods of Egypt had power. That is why He started with simple acts that the magicians could replicate. He then continued to build showing greater and greater authority attacking and breaking their foundational beliefs while demonstrating that He has no equal.

Now, Egypt was the super power among nations. It was said that Egypt's marching army shook the ground. There was no nation that matched its military power. They attributed this great power to their gods. But God Himself intentionally built them. Why would He build a nation and allow them to give credit to demons?

He also had a bigger plan. Israel, as His first born of the nations, was to be His tool to draw all the other nations to Himself. He therefore used this opportunity to introduce himself to the rest of the nations. How better to do this than to raise up a nation as the super power, put it on stage for all the nations to see, then shake it from heaven while everyone was watching (Exodus 9:16).

Was the world paying attention? Did they see His show? Consider the account of the battle of Aphek recorded in the book of 1 Samuel 4:7-8. The Philistines were in the audience as God demonstrated His power. They saw and remembered. This epic was handed down through the generations and the wise men paid attention. Even though they worshiped Dagon, the leadership knew there is a greater God who shake nations. They also knew He was covenanted to Israel, their declared enemy.

At Mount Sinai, God began sharing His plans with them and then asked for their agreement. Next, He sought and received agreement for Him to speak with them personally. This was a huge deal for Israel. They were accustomed to seeing gods interact with humans. In Egypt, many gods worked through the Egyptian priesthood. They also knew from their ancestors that the Almighty God did speak with man. This was their opportunity to hear and interact with their God themselves instead of hearing through Moses.

It was in preparation to meet with this God that they began to realize the price. The required two days of consecration was only the beginning. He even required a fence around the mountain as a physical barrier to prevent trespass. God guarded His presence well.

The encounter itself was much more than they bargained for. Moses stood as the priest among them and initiated the conversation. God responded by an audible voice then came down on the mountain. In a closer than ever before encounter, the nation was introduced to their God while He spoke to them ten foundational laws that would thereafter govern their lives. He also discussed with Moses a supplementary set of principles that governed how His covenanted people were to interact with each other.

Note well. Even though the experience terrified them, it was still up to them to agree to the terms of the covenant. God would not go further unless they agreed. What was being required of them? Give up their old lives, identity, and understanding and give themselves wholeheartedly to the new identity God was now offering them. Listen to their response after He asked for the leadership to come up to the mountain and covenant the nation to His terms: *So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all*

the judgements. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "all the words the Lord has said we will do." Exodus 24:3

The very next day Moses built a symbolic altar, gathered the people again and read the terms of covenant to them a second time. Their reply? *And they said, "All that the Lord had said, we will do and be obedient."* Exodus 24:7. It is with this firm pledge that Moses led the elders up to the mountain for a covenant meal with God.

With that commitment to covenant secured, God used the next seven chapters (Exodus 25-31) to begin to reveal to Moses the mysteries of drawing His presence and creating a place for His abode among them. This level of revelation was only available within the depth or expanse of this level of covenant.

Israel as a nation experienced the tangible, abiding presence of God for the next 40 years during Moses leadership. God dwelled among them. The cloud of His glory was a constant presence among them as a nation to see. He was also visible as a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night visible to all the neighboring nations. The nations were convinced this nation of Israel was a special people.

New Covenant

What about the new covenant initiated by Jesus Christ? Jesus came to earth as a covenanted Son of God. After His baptism and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him, Jesus went about building a team of disciples who would leave all to walk with Him in this covenant.

Among the multitudes Jesus performed all sorts of miracles ministering to the needs of the people. What was He doing? Proving Himself to them that He was the promise sent from His Father. What did He want from them? Believe! That would equate to them repenting of their own ways and turning to the Father in covenant position.

The people willingly received the blessings. They enjoyed being around the great teacher and listened attentively to his teaching. He, however, kept setting the terms of covenant before the nation waiting for them to receive it so He could take them to the next level.

Listen to Jesus' assessment and proclamation on the three first cities where His ministry was focused. *Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works has been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgement than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to the heavens, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of the judgement than for you."* Matthew 11:20-24

Did Israel accept covenant as a nation? Listen to his passionate plea to them: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"* Matthew 23:37.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:10-13

Israel had the temple, the laws of Moses, theological seminaries, and committed leadership zealous for the purposes of God during the days Jesus walked among them. Yet as a nation, they not only rejected covenant with God, they persecuted anyone who did.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Matthew 23:13

It was to a small group of people who heard His terms of covenant and accepted them that He shared His secrets. *And the disciples came and said to Him, "why do you speak to them (the multitudes) in parables?" He answered and said to them, "because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. Matthew 13:11*

Jesus' most intimate teaching was done in this small group of covenant partners, far away from the multitudes. This sharing began in John 13 when He knew His time had come to go to the cross. He spent the next five chapters pouring out His heart to His disciples about the mysteries of walking in covenant position with the Father. He then closed this fantastic sharing by going to His Father in prayer on their behalf. Listen carefully to these amazing promises and the conditions.

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for dwells with you and will be in you. John 15:15-17

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. John 14:21

One of the disciples asked him a follow up question to this above statement: *"Lord, how is that You will manifest Yourself to us and not the world?" Jesus answered and said unto him, "If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father who sent me. John 14:22-24*

You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my father I have made known to you. John 15: 14-15

If the scriptures are trustworthy and cannot be broken, then here is a chance for some personal introspection. It is meant to help analyze whether you are walking in covenant or not. Take some time to review and answer the questions truthfully.

- **Is the Holy Spirit a reality in your life?** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:14, ...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. Romans 8:9*

- **Has Jesus manifested Himself to you?** *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*
- **Do you live in the abiding presence of God and with His Son?** *If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and will come to him and make Our home with him.*
- **Has Jesus revealed to you the secrets of the Fathers heart?** This is a position reserved only for those walking in that level of covenant. This is the position equal to Moses standing in the cloud of God's presence. Jesus refers to these people as His.

What if I cannot check all those boxes?

No covenant equals no presence of God. Are there people who covenanted and still do not experience the promised presence? Yes. There can only be two reasons for this. Either you have not fulfilled your obligations in the covenant or, God has refused to honor His own word. Before considering which side has the fault, read what God said about His own word.

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to be void but it shall accomplish what I please and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11.

Having proved Himself to you and shared with you the terms of covenant, He is standing, waiting for you to respond to Him. *Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with me.* Revelations 3:20. The next move is up to you.