



To Have and to Hold

Lesson 2 The Vows of Marriage, Part 1

When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; **I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine.** (Ezekiel 16:8)

This verse contains two important elements of the marriage metaphor:

1. Our identity changes. We become God's chosen, treasured possession.
2. This new relationship and new identity is rooted in the vows of a covenant.

Ezekiel 16 describes God's merciful and lavish actions in choosing His people, but it also contains another important element of the marriage metaphor. What is the focus of verses 15-34?

1. The New Covenant

A. The old covenant was never intended to be the final covenant. It was good, but there is something _____.

For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a **better** hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. . . This makes Jesus the guarantor of a **better** covenant. . . Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is **better**, since it is enacted on **better** promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (Hebrews 7:18-22, 8:6-7)

B. The limitations of the old covenant centered on its inability to make the covenant people _____ so they could perfectly _____ the covenant.

For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (**for the law made nothing perfect**). (Hebrews 7:18)

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered **that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper**, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. (Heb. 9:9-10)

C. The superiority of the new covenant lies in its ability to change the _____ of people so they can _____ the covenant.

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. (Hebrews 8:10-12, quoting Jeremiah 31)

We often say, “You can’t change your spouse.” But God’s marriage covenant with His people is precisely centered on changing us! God says, “This marriage is all about *you changing*. It is the heart of My vow to you, guaranteed because *I will never change* in My faithfulness toward you.”

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (II Corinthians 3:18)

D. The change promised by the new covenant is effected in us through the forgiveness of our sins, bought by the atoning work of Christ on the cross.

But when Christ appeared . . . he entered once for all into the holy places. . . by means of his own blood, thus **securing an eternal redemption**. For if the blood of goats and bulls. . . sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **how much more will the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, **purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God**. (Hebrews 9:11-14)

The radical change promised by the new covenant requires the radical forgiveness bought by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

2. The Heart of the New Covenant

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.
(Hebrews 8:12)

A. _____

Thus says the LORD: “The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the LORD appeared to him from far away.” (Jeremiah 31:2-3a)

B. _____

I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.
(Jeremiah 31:3b-4)

C. _____

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD. . . and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness. (Jeremiah 31:12-14)

D. _____

Is Ephraim my dear son?
Is he my darling child?
For as often as I speak against him,
I do remember him still.
Therefore my heart yearns for him;
I will surely have mercy on him,
declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:20)

3. The Eternality of the New Covenant

In marriage vows we say, “As long as we both shall live.” God’s vows extend far beyond the limits of time and our mortal life.

A. **Eternal** _____

Hence also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
(Hebrews 7:25 NASB)

B. Eternal _____

He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:12)

C. Eternal _____

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15)

D. Eternal _____

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14)

E. Eternal _____

I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)

4. The Additional Promises of the New Covenant.

The pillar of the new covenant is the promise that God will forgive us and transform us into a pure, faithful bride. But there are many other promises that God makes to His people.

List the promises made in Jeremiah 31:10-14

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Conclusion - God's covenant to His people:

1. I will forgive you completely.
2. I will completely sanctify you so that you will be my eternally covenant-keeping bride.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25-27)

Study Questions

Day 1

Read Psalm 136 and as you read imagine it being sung by a congregation of Israelites. Record the repeated refrain here: _____

Repetition is a device used in music and literature for a specific purpose. In this poem/song, what seems to be the purpose of the repetition?

There is evidence that the refrain in this psalm became the national anthem of Israel, sung at notable times in Israel's history. Trace its appearance in the following passages.

Approximately 990bc

Skim I Chronicles 16, noticing the refrain in verse 34 and again in verse 41.

Who was king? _____

What is the occasion being celebrated in this chapter? _____

What are the people told to do in verse 15?

In verses 37-42, David ensures that the priests will continue caring for the tabernacle, maintaining the sacrifices, and making sure God's law was followed. In verses 41-42, Heman and Jeduthan were charged with what sacred task? _____

Approximately 960bc

Read II Chronicles 5.

Who was king? _____

What is the occasion being celebrated in this chapter? _____

What three men are present at this occasion who were also present at the return of the ark to the tabernacle, recorded in I Chronicles 16?

What specifically are those three men doing on this occasion? _____

Day 2

Continue tracing the history of Israel's national anthem: "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever."

Approximately 856bc

Skim II Chronicles 20:1-23

Who was king? _____

What are the circumstances in which Israel is again singing its national anthem?

What purposes would there be in having this song sung under such circumstances?

Approximately 535bc

Skim Ezra 3.

How many years have passed since we last had record of the song being sung? _____

What transpired in Israel between the singing of the song in II Chronicles 20 and the singing of it here in Ezra? _____

What is the occasion of the song being sung in Ezra? _____

How does this song of God's people relate to points 2 and 3 of this lesson? _____

Day 3

Read Luke 1:26-56 and reread Psalm 136. Mary's song of praise in Luke 1 contains many themes from Psalm 136. In the table below, record the phrases from Psalm 136 that are seen echoed in Mary's song. Can we safely say that Mary knew Psalm 136?

Phrases from Luke 1:46-55	Similar phrases from Psalm 136
My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.	
For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.	
For he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.	
And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.	
He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.	
He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.	

Phrases from Luke 1:46-55	Similar phrases from Psalm 136
He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.	
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.	

Day 4

Read I Thessalonians 1. What two points from Lesson 1 does verse 4 of chapter 1 echo?

How does 1:9 describe what happens when God changes our identity? _____

The verses that link God's loving choice (1:4) and our new identity (1:9) describe the process by which we are brought into our new identity as the people of God.

According to 1:5, what was essential for the Thessalonian Christians to come to salvation? (This is a single word that also appears in 2:2, 4, 8.)

Practically speaking, how did the Thessalonians hear the saving Word of God? (See again 2:2, 4, 8.)

Verse 1:5 indicates that hearing the Word through human preachers is not enough. What else must be at work for the Word of God to produce salvation? The power and conviction of _____.

In I Thessalonians 1, we see that salvation involves hearing the Word of God, spoken by human instruments, and applied by the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit. The following chapters of I Thessalonians focus on how we are sanctified, made a perfect, faithful people of God.

List the descriptions of our sanctification given in the following verses:

3:13 _____

5:23 _____

How do these descriptions relate to the promise of the New Covenant? _____

According to 2:13, what is essential for God's people to be sanctified? _____

According to 2:11-12 and 4:1-2, how did the Thessalonians receive the sanctifying word of God?

Read II Thessalonians 2:13. Hearing the Word through human preachers is not enough to guarantee our sanctification. What else must be at work for the Word of God to produce sanctification? _____

According to these verses in I Thessalonians, what do the processes of initially coming to salvation and ultimately being completely sanctified have in common? _____

Day 5

Both salvation and sanctification require hearing the Word of God, usually spoken through human instruments, and having the Word applied to our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. But there is another important element in our sanctification.

Who first took the gospel to the Christians in Thessalonica? (See Acts 17:1-4.) _____

Who was sent to Thessalonica after Paul and Silas had to leave? (See I Thessalonians 3:1-2.)

What does 5:12-13 indicate about the church in Thessalonica after Timothy left? _____

It is essential for a church to have leaders who faithfully teach the Word of God. Based on the following verses, what should the individual members of a church to be doing to help the church grow in sanctification?

3:12-13 _____

4:18 _____

5:11 _____

5:14 _____

5:15 _____

God intends our sanctification to be a group project. But after his many exhortations about the members of a church loving and encouraging each other, Paul ends his letter with two important truths.

What important truth about sanctification does Paul reiterate in 5:23?

What important truth about sanctification does Paul state in 5:24?

Memory verses

Review Jeremiah 31:31-32 and memorize verses 33-34. Find a partner to help!

³¹ Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

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 law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."